

To Be and Become: Contemplating limitations of life as existence through a posthumanist exploration of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

To pursue a fuller understanding of existence, one must contemplate that which *was* and that which *will be*. This requires starting from the beginning: from the conception of Life and its associated divisions humans have created, to surpassing those crafted dichotomies to perceive the inter-relations and intra-activity between the human and nonhuman participants in the universal fabric of energy. Divided into two primary sections of Post-*Bios* and Post-*Zoe*, this paper will use the multifaceted representations of relationality and experience within Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* to explore strengths and limitations of posthumanist theory found in Rosi Braidotti's *The Posthuman*, and the expanded conceptions of existence afforded by Francesca Ferrando's *Philosophical Posthumanism*. In doing this, we no longer need to ask whether androids dream, for we know in a posthumanist sense that they do; rather, we must ask what comes after the dream.

In order to effectively discuss this coming-after, it will be necessary to not only take a posthumanist approach in revealing life as *zoe*, the life of animals and nonhuman entities, rather than the exclusively human *bios* (Braidotti, c.f. Ferrando xiv); but also to transcend the conception of life itself. Posthumanism—both critical and philosophical—provides an effective tool for this examination of existence through its deconstructions of hierarchical dichotomies that limit access to this expanded understanding. Yet, while posthumanism effectively transcends the humanist and anthropocentric in its move “from generalized universalism to situated perspectivism” and a “relocation which is aware of speciesism and of the devastating effects of anthropocentric habits” (Ferrando 186), its deconstruction of dualism limits itself to a conception of existence defined by Life. To more fully grasp Existence

requires we step beyond the perspective of even a posthuman Life and further extend ourselves into that which is beyond *Chronos*—this time-reliant, limited-perspective view of what it means to Be—and reorient ourselves within *Aion*—“the continuous tense of becoming” (Braidotti 129).

## POST-BIOS

In this beginning, we start with life in its most limited conception: belonging only to the assumedly significant and exemplary human. Life, in this anthropocentric sense, is defined as *bios*—“it is the life that gives life meaning, and it recognizes humans as ‘human’” (Ferrando 110). And so we begin our understanding of life with the image of a human. But what is human? And what does a move beyond the exclusive *bios* entail?

We can explore this concept through the multiple designated others and boundary lines that extend and shift in relation to the determination of applied-meaning in *Do Androids Dream*. In particular, the novel offers a portrayal of two key tenets of posthumanist theory—post-humanism and post-anthropocentrism—in the religion founded after the fallout of World War Terminus (W.W.T.). Mercerism, created to maintain connection between humankind as many emigrate to Mars to escape the radioactive dust left after the war, will serve as an entry into understanding life and relation beyond *bios* via its expanded definition of the human and the value attributed to nonhuman organic species.

*Post-humanism*. Moving beyond the human requires first a base understanding of what it is we’re progressing from. Ferrando defines the human as “a process: one is not born, but rather becomes human...established in the ontological denial of the nonhuman...[and] sustained by a negative

reduction of the others...through concomitant exclusions, marked as the inhuman, the subhuman, the less-than-human, and so on” (71). This strictly human, exclusionary process—referred to as “humanizing” (67)—creates a hierarchical “spectrum of human others between the animal and the human...’excluding as not (yet) human an already human being from itself’ (cf. Agamben)” (74). To be human is to be not-Other, a process and performance that depends upon that Other to define itself in a false forgery of universal representation that cyclically relies on itself to reaffirm that identity.

This tautological process of identity formation is reliant on a method that consistently renews those initial exclusive categories. As Braidotti states, “The human of Humanism...spells out a systematized standard of recognizability—of Sameness—by which all others can be addressed, regulated and allotted to a designated social location” (26). By maintaining a sustained definition of the human over time and place, there is no difficulty in recognition and no need to consider the validity of that definition. However, this preservation of a standardized, universal human is unsustainable when the normalized subject is forced in crisis to reconceive itself. This necessary reconceptualization “express[es] both the crisis of the majority and the patterns of becoming of the minorities” (38). Where one finds destruction and lost meaning, so too is creation and reconstruction.

In the posthumanist turn set into motion by the catalyst of W.W.T. and its radioactive fallout, Mercerism guides this reconstruction and represents the post-humanist “pluralistic symphony of the human voices who had been silenced in the historical developments of the notion of ‘humanity’” (Ferrando 103). Though “regulars,” those on Terra who did not emigrate and are yet unaffected by the lingering dust, still maintain a sense of hierarchical thinking towards “specials,” exemplified by the restrictions placed on their emigration and demeaning label “chickenhead,” specials are nonetheless

recognized within the definition of human. This expanded inclusion is shown in their ability to participate in the act of fusion via ownership of an empathy box. J.R. Isidore, deuteragonist and self-described as “only moderately [special]” (Dick 63), describes this box and the experience of fusion as “an extension of your body; it’s the way you touch other humans” (62). Following the unprecedented crisis of W.W.T., a sense of the human is obtained only through dissolution of the majority and integration of minorities.

Despite *Do Androids Dream*’s post-humanist expanded definition of human to include those specials alongside the previously-universal regulars, it is necessary to point out that identification via difference is not confined to humanism; this exclusionary and dualistic practice can be understood most clearly in the human-android dichotomy of Dick’s work. The allowance afforded to specials because “that’s what Mercer doesn’t care about” (Dick 63) is directly in contrast to the android, excluded from the experience “due to a deliberately built-in defect” (170). With this example, we are able to obtain further understanding of dualism’s pervasive nature, a necessary acknowledgement in considering posthumanism’s limitations.

An always-present concern of bounty hunters is the potential of killing a human by failing to differentiate between the non-empathic android and a special that has a flattened affect. As androids become more ‘humanlike’ new tests are progressively developed to ensure a continued ability to maintain differentiation; yet this boundary is a construction created not on objective difference but from a fear of lost self-definition. This construction is called into question when we first see Dick’s protagonist, Rick Deckard, use the most recent advancement in android detection: the Voigt-Kampff scale. Designed to test for empathy—a trait considered purely human in connection with the post-

humanist, post-anthropocentric aspect of Mercerism that will be discussed in the following subsection—the newest generation of android threatens to make it obsolete.

Rachael Rosen, a Nexus-6 android with memories of being a niece to Eldon Rosen, the head of the android-manufacturing Rosen Association, is the first we see subjected to this test. Although Deckard correctly manages to identify Rachael as an android, the representation of this testing experience and debate around the result of the test highlights the complexity of this capricious construction when the Rosen's adamantly deny the accusation. In response to the insistence of having her take a bone marrow analysis and Deckard's defense of the legality of it—serving as the only certain method of distinguishing android from human—Eldon asserts: “The issue is not the legality of the bone marrow analysis...The issue is that your empathy delineation test failed in response to my niece” (Dick 50). His proceeding explanation of her android-like score on the test amounts to the determination that this method of testing fails to detect “humans with underdeveloped empathic ability” (52), resulting in the probable retirement—death—of said humans.

In light of the perceived failure to correctly recognize a Nexus-6, this faulty differentiation is directly addressed:

‘If you have no test you can administer, then there is no way you can identify an android. ...So if the Voigt-Kampff scale has to be abandoned—’

‘A new scale,’ Rick said, ‘will Replace it. This has happened before.’ (Dick 53)

Indeed, it is in wrestling to maintain an ideological definition of humanness that Deckard's posthumanist perspective begins to develop, an experience Ferrando describes as “the posthuman recognition of nonhuman alterities start[ing] with the recognition of human alterities” (2). Whereas

Deckard's experience with Rachael Rosen provokes his initial uncertainty of where that difference truly lies, it is his interaction with fellow human and bounty-hunter Phil Resch that profoundly challenges his conception of human as separate from the android Other.

Following Resch's violent, near-impulsive retirement of Luba Luft, a Nexus-6 android posing as an opera singer, Deckard becomes almost certain that Resch may also be an android. His empathy towards Luba and disdain for the actions of someone who could be human causes his initial uncertainty to be increasingly shaken and unsteady, a state recognized by Resch. As Deckard prepares the Voigt-Kampff test to determine if Resch is Other after all, the human in question states: "If I test out android...you'll undergo renewed faith in the human race. But, since it's not going to work out that way, I suggest you begin framing an ideology which will account for—" (Dick 130). Cut off by Deckard as the test begins, Resch finishes the inquiry once confirmed to be human: "Do you have your ideology framed? ...That would explain me as part of the human race?" (130). The answer, however, points to the arbitrarily conceived boundary of what it means to be human; Deckard mistakenly thought Resch was an android because of "a defect in [his] empathic, role-taking ability. One which we don't test for. Your feelings toward androids" (132). Even in Mercerism's post-humanist expanded definition of the human, the forced Otherness of the android exemplifies the limitations in a dualistic posthumanism.

*Post-anthropocentrism.* Just as Mercerism exemplifies the post-humanist deconstruction of *bios* that permits the expanded inclusion of human difference, so too does it represent the post-anthropocentric dimension that not only deconstructs "species supremacy...[but] also inflicts a blow to any lingering

notion of human nature, *anthropos* and *bios*, as categorically distinct from the life of animals and non-humans, or *zoe*. What comes to the fore instead is a nature-culture continuum in the very embodied structure of the extended self” (Braidotti 65). Despite the maintained hierarchical and dualistic sensibility in the world of *Do Androids Dream*, the devastation caused by W.W.T. was the catalyst for the necessary post-anthropocentric acknowledgement of nonhuman life, forcing humans to come face-to-face with the nature-culture continuum and reconsider their position in relation to, and prioritization of, nonhuman life.

Immediately following the war and alongside the development of Mercerism, it was a crime to not take care of an animal; and though no longer against the law at the time of the novel, not having an animal is still considered “immoral and anti-empathic” (Dick 13). In the sense that participating in fusion is how humans find connection and meaning in their existence, not meeting the expectation of caring for an animal is an insurmountable barrier. Upon refusal from a neighbor in his conapt to sell him the colt of his pregnant horse, Deckard says, “[but] for you to have two horses and me none, that violates the whole basic theological and moral structure of Mercerism” (10). Without an animal in his care, the religion considers him to be “[deprived] of true fusion with Mercer” (10-11). A posthuman experience, represented in *Do Androids Dream* by the religion of Mercerism, is unobtainable without a post-anthropocentric approach to life.

Yet, similarly to how there are still varied levels of worth assigned to humans despite the Mercerist post-humanistic inclusion of specials via the empathy box, animals, too, are unequally determined on a scale of value. In *Sidney’s Animal & Fowl*, an annually released catalog, each species whether alive or extinct is given a monetary value differing on its size and capacity of use. In this sense,

although W.W.T. marks an important event in the posthumanist post-anthropocentric direction examined through the typically human-animal understanding of *bios-zoe*, there remains the hierarchical prioritization of some over others. Additionally, this hierarchical system still present in the nonetheless post-anthropocentric acknowledgement of animals as necessary inter-relation is counterintuitively exacerbated by that recognition.

Though *Do Androids Dream* depicts an acceptance of *zoe* in the understanding of human-animal relationality, the remaining dualism results in inorganic beings remaining solidly Other and unreal. The exacerbation mentioned above in regard to the post-anthropocentric recognition of animal value in identity formation is highlighted in this forced division. To avoid accusations of being anti-empathic and therefore nonhuman, the requirement of an animal—whose monetary cost was often well beyond one’s general income—was a need met by technological developments: an example being Rick Deckard’s electric sheep. In thinking about the war’s fallout and mass species’ extinction:

[Deckard] thought, too, about his need for a real animal; within him an actual hatred once more manifested itself toward his electric sheep, which he had to tend, had to care about, as if it lived. The tyranny of an object, he thought. It doesn’t know I exist. Like the androids, it had no ability to appreciate the existence of another. He had never thought of this before, the similarity between an electric animal and an andy. The electric animal, he pondered, could be considered a subform of the other, a kind of vastly inferior robot. Or, conversely, the android could be regarded as a highly developed, evolved version of the ersatz animal. (Dick 40-41)

The necessity of having a “living” animal and shame associated with owning an electric one reaffirms a hierarchy and dualism not only in the differentiation of organic animal/human from electric animal/android, but further, enforces the conflation of, and opposition between, real/living and unreal/dead.

Just as the boundary created to determine human from android is arbitrary, so too is this separation of real/unreal in association with life/death. As the tension of Resch’s uncertain human status increases, he asks Deckard, “Did you ever hear of an andy having a pet of any sort?” (Dick 120). He asks this in hope of a definite answer: that the care for his own squirrel is proof enough that he is human. This question, however, is inherently flawed. If caring for a ‘living animal’ is a requirement to be human, Deckard and many other Voigt-Kampff-passing ‘humans’ would not fit the criteria. The dualistic approach present in this conception of the world is progressively revealed to be at best inconsistent, and at worst entirely unfounded.

This understanding makes clear that it is not the inability to view androids as feeling-beings that limits Resch’s capacity to empathize with them; instead it is the desperate attempt to find any possible difference that will enable distinction. Whereas the mandatory care of animals to be considered appropriately human is representative of the “posthuman recomposition of human interaction [as] an affirmative bond that locates the subject in the flow of relations with multiple others” (Braidotti 50), androids are separated by a negative dialectical differentiation that “[results] in the active production of half-truths, or forms of partial knowledge about these others” (28). Ferrando provides an explanation for how this harmful dichotomy manages to persist despite advancements in inclusion and relationary considerations otherwise adopted:

Even if post-humanistic and post-anthropocentric social performances may eventually overcome some forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, and speciesism, if we do not embrace post-dualism and critically address, and deconstruct, rigid forms of dualistic identity-formation practices, other forms of discrimination will consistently continue to arise... According to post-dualism, the posthumanist radical deconstruction shall not assert any type of absolute dualism, assimilation, or centralization... Philosophical Posthumanism criticizes the need to establish symbolic essentialized 'Others'; instead, it recognizes the human as the others within. (189)

Though W.W.T. and Mercerism facilitate the post-human and post-anthropocentric reconceptualization of life in the inclusion of the nonstandardized, "special" human and in the emphasis on animal importance, effectively representing the shift from *bios* to *zoe*, the issue of dualism remains. Whereas Ferrando maintains a perspective of targeting identity-formations restricted to beings inhabiting the state of Life in their sense of recognition, I seek to push her posthumanist conception even further: deconstructing life itself.

### (POST-)DUALISM

The use of *Life/zoe* in understanding interrelations of selves and a monistic existence is powerful but ironically limited by its multitude of applications. Though *zoe* is typically taken to mean life not simply beyond the human but beyond the biological, Braidotti extends its definition: "*Zoe* as the dynamic, self-organizing structure of life itself...stands for generative vitality" (60). With this extension she argues "that a focus on the vital and self-organizing powers of *Life/zoe* undoes any clear-cut

distinctions between living and dying. It composes the notion of *zoe* as a posthuman yet affirmative life force” (115) and goes on to describe it as “an inhuman force that stretches beyond life, to new, vitalist ways of approaching death as an impersonal event” (193-194). This extension, intended to trouble the dualistic division of life and death in the manner that post-anthropocentrism deconstructs categorical distinction between *bios* and *zoe*, merely shifts the framing of the dichotomy while maintaining separation between the two concepts.

To progress beyond a post-*bios*—or in posthumanist terms, a post-humanist and post-anthropocentric—approach, a post-dualistic methodology must be adopted. In this transition, one seeks to surpass the limitations of segmented being present in the concept of *zoe* and experience Being in the whole of Becoming. Drawing from Ferrando’s explanation of what the use of “post-” offers (6; 66), as well as her description of “the notion of ‘life’” (111), I posit the term post-*zoe* as necessary to facilitate contemplation of Existence beyond dualistic understanding.

## POST-ZOE

Ferrando describes the notion of life as both exceeding the notion of the human, which “[is] included in it, but [does] not extinguish it,” and as preceded by the human because life “is a human notion, created by humans for the purpose of self-locating themselves in the larger picture; it is a species-specific notion based on shifting canons, and it greatly varies in different cultures and epochs” (111). While life in this more human-focused sense could be interpreted as *bios*, I argue that *zoe* maintains the same dilemma. Although it expands the picture beyond a single species and aims to self-locate beings as

a whole within existence, its prioritization of life fails to encompass Existence itself. *Zoe*, with this understanding, is then inherently limited.

To transcend this limitation requires a ‘post-’ be applied to the term. As Ferrando notes, “‘Post’ implies a continuity, a discontinuity, and a transcendence (in its literal meaning of exceeding) of the term to which it is a ‘post,’ and so it necessarily reconciles its own identity to it in a symbolic relation” (6). Yet it is not just a concept of *postzoe*, but more specifically *post-zoe*, requiring the inclusion of a hyphen which serves as:

[the] term of mediation; it communicates the fact that there is another term, or other terms, which shall be acknowledged, and so it situates the ‘post’ within a multiplicity of possibilities. [The hyphen] can be employed to join different notions into a single one, when its manifestation occurs between terms; it is preceded and proceeded, emphasizing a relationality which, as we will see, is specific to the posthuman approach. (66)

In this sense, *post-zoe* does not forfeit life. Rather, it transcends the limitation of Life and affords a multi-dimensional posthuman understanding of what existence is. To move beyond *Chronos* and embrace *Aion*, we must accept that Life itself is not Being; rather, like death, it is simply a state of Being integral to the process of Becoming.

*Being*. In line with the limitations found in Braidotti’s concept of *zoe*, the main characters of *Do Androids Dream* fail to move beyond a dualistic perception of life and subsequently fear death, refusing to embrace Being and thus preventing themselves from Becoming. The presence of

nonhuman but still-living ‘kipple,’ described by Isidore as “useless objects [that] when nobody’s around...reproduces itself” (Dick 61), is useful in considering how this maintained dualism limits one’s experience of Existence.

Viewing the kipple as opposition, an enemy of sorts with which there is a constant battle, Isidore explains that: “No one can win against kipple...except temporarily and maybe in one spot, like in my apartment I’ve sort of created a stasis between the pressure of kipple and nonkipple for the time being. But eventually I’ll die or go away, and then the kipple will again take over” (Dick 62). The stark dichotomy of kipple and nonkipple not only affects his day-to-day perception of the world around him, but additionally fuels a negative hierarchical dichotomy that associates kipple to his own and other specials’ existences: “Maybe when you deteriorate back down the ladder of evolution as I have, when you sink into the tomb world slough of being a special... He and the thousands of other specials throughout Terra, all of them moving toward the ash heap. Turning into living kipple” (68). Despite the acknowledgement of kipple “living,” that transformation is, to Isidore, representative of a personal death—his experience of existence is restricted to *Chronos*.

Though other characters are unable to reach a post-*zoe* understanding, trapped in the death-fearing posthumanist dualistic prioritization of life exemplified by Isidore and his negative interpretation of kippleization, Mercer transcends this limitation. While followers of Mercerism are limited by *zoe*, viewing dualistically “the curse...that Mercer talks about” as being “the killers...[that] told him he couldn’t reverse time and bring things back to life again” (223), I suggest instead a post-*zoe* interpretation of his experience that rests on the concept of compost.

Discussing Haraway's consideration of the human as compost in an environmental onto-epistemological turn where the human nourishes the earth upon death, Ferrando describes how "the idea of being compost, or better *com-post*, underlines the never-ending nuanced passage between life and death, which are inevitably coexisting" (107-108). The act of composting, then, can be used to understand Mercer's endless navigation of the tomb world and his experience in-between life/death. Rather than being described as "[moving] along with life, going where it goes, to death" (223), as if it is a separate destination, Mercer embraces the harmony of kipple and nonkipple in his endless, continual climb.

To avoid the dualistic downfall of Mercer's followers one must reframe a perspective that is willing to accommodate discomfort and seemingly incompatible states in the process of becoming. This necessity is discussed between Isidore and Mercer following the declaration of Mercerism as a "swindle" (Dick 193):

'Is the sky painted?' Isidore asked. 'Are there really brush strokes that show up under magnification?'

'Yes,' Mercer said.

'I can't see them.'

'You're too close...You have to be a long way off, the way the androids are. They have a better perspective.' (197)

Although androids themselves may have limited understanding of what it means to Be and Become, a dilemma too large to discuss in this paper but simplified as a consequence of *Do Androids Dream's* dualistic posthumanism, Mercer's comment addresses the post-dualistic approach required for

Becoming. Though the sky is painted, there is indeed still a sky; though Mercer admits he is a fraud, “nothing has changed. Because you’re still here and I’m still here” (197-198). Just as kippleization persists via states of kipple and nonkipple, and truth coexists with falsity, so too do the states of life and death exist alongside and within each other. With this perception, whereas Isidore is unable to perceive kippleization beyond negative dichotomies, Mercer is in a position to recognize both kipple and nonkipple as states of Being necessary in Becoming.

*Becoming.* To understand this post-dualistic perception of Becoming it will be useful to discuss the fundamental yet largely unaddressed presence of dust in *Do Androids Dream*. Representative of the life/death relationality, its relevance persists despite the greater emphasis on kippleization in the character’s immediate interactions. In the aftermath of W.W.T., Deckard experiences the morning air as having “the taint of death” (Dick 8), though acknowledges that compared to its initial strength after the war, “the dust, weaker now and confronting the strong survivors, only deranged minds and genetic properties” (8). Transitioning from a cause of death to “degenerat[ion],” its effects are not an end but something of a beginning: “Continually, new specials came into existence, created out of regulars by the omnipresent dust” (8). At once destructive and generative, dust is the process of Becoming that encompasses and facilitates the states of Being within it. Where Isidore considers his deterioration as a negative consequence of kippleization, we are able to perceive it as merely part of dust’s endless process.

This perspective can be more fully developed when taking into account Braidotti’s vitalist notion that death “frees us into life” (134). By simultaneously destroying and creating states of Being,

dust in its varied capacities is representative of being freed into life by death. Following Deckard's merger with Mercer, dust and its degenerative creation is once again brought to attention. Reflecting on the impossibility of finding an animal thought to be extinct, Deckard considers that "Maybe it's due to brain damage on my part: exposure to radioactivity. I'm a special, he thought. Something has happened 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" (Dick 218). The radioactivity, or dust, is the first considered cause for his encounter with life presumed dead. And, in a sense, this is true, though not in the limited-scale perspective he conceives it as. Dust, as representative of Becoming, embraces life and death as they necessarily coexist.

As previously mentioned of his interaction with Isidore, and evidenced again in this reference, Mercer can be considered to inhabit a place of perspective beyond the limited dualistic posthuman experience. Prior to merging with him, Deckard describes this difference in comparison to his own moral dilemma of retiring the androids: "Mercer doesn't have to do anything alien to him. He suffers but at least he isn't required to violate his own identity" (Dick 164). In the conversation that takes place when Deckard grasps the empathy box and enters fusion, the first and only time he does so in the span of the novel, we witness outright the difference between a *zoe* and post-*zoe* perception of existence.

Whereas Mercer's identity remains intact despite the perpetual experience of life and death, his encouraging response to Deckard's hesitance to retire the final Nexus-6 androids expresses the understanding that Deckard has not yet progressed beyond the dualistic Life:

You will be required to do wrong no matter where you go. It is the basic condition of life, to be required to violate your own identity. At some time, every creature which lives must do so. It is the ultimate shadow, the defeat of creation; this is the curse at work, the curse that feeds on all life. Everywhere in the universe. (Dick 164-165)

This explanation of the condition of life “emphasizes how traditional strategies of identity-formation, routinely based on essentialist dichotomies, must be addressed, deconstructed, and constantly revised” (Ferrando 189). Without a transcended perception of *zoe*, the relationality of life and death is experienced not as reciprocally freeing but instead as a curse, where Life is devoured instead of reconstructed.

Although it may seem counterintuitive that Mercer’s support of android-retirement permits Deckard to progress closer to a post-*zoe* posthumanism, this interaction can be best understood if we take a step back from the individual *Chronos* to the extended *Aion*. By doing this, one is able to see how the co-constitutive states of Being “[exceed] the notion of a one-dimensional becoming” (Ferrando 180) and, within that post-*zoe*, posthuman framework partakes in “a network of energies, alliances, matter, and perspectives, relating to any other forms of existence, allied through different material outcomes, and possible, in different quantum dimensions, in a radical onto-existential re-signification of being” (180). Such an approach considers the relationality of life/death Being as a perpetual simultaneity where meaning is obtained in the reciprocal freeing of life into death and death into life.

It is with this interpretation of *Do Android Dream*’s plot sequence that we can understand Mercer’s discussion with Deckard prior to retiring the androids within the post-*zoe* posthumanist perspective I have argued Mercer embodies. If not for Rachael Rosen killing his goat, a reaction to

Deckard retiring her android companions, he would not have journeyed into the desert and encountered the toad that afforded his shifted perspective on electric life. Although Deckard is ultimately unable to fully transcend the dualism that fails to recognize the co-constitutive nature of life and death, we can understand his posthuman progression as encouraged by Mercer's embrace of Being within the post-*zoe* conception of Becoming.

## CONCLUSION

By contemplating the events of *Do Androids Dream* and the portrayed perception of androids, it is possible to understand the negative effects of misunderstanding the relationship between life, death, and time. Life, and living, is tied for Rick Deckard to the matter of existing and recognizing other's existence; indicated early on in his comparison of androids to ersatz animals (Dick 40-41). After Luba Luft's death and the confirmation that Resch is human, Deckard's question of the determination of androids as objectively other is explicitly tied to this question of living: "Empathy toward an artificial construct? he asked himself. Something that only pretends to be alive? But Luba Luft had seemed *genuinely* alive; it had not worn the aspect of a simulation" (Dick 131). Although he reaches what can be considered an exceptional example of posthumanism in the merger with Mercer and acknowledges that "the electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are," (Dick 222), there remains still that pervasive dimension of the limited concept of life as a requirement for existence. In this sense, posthumanism fails to overcome the dualism of the life/death dichotomy and is thus unable to access Existence and Becoming in its totality.

Life, for all that it is understood to be, is a term that confines itself to a perspective not fully capable of representing Being in its process of Becoming. What is and isn't exists together in a monistic plurality defined within and without each other; to capture what it means to Become requires moving beyond conceptions of life rife with preconceived notions, even Life understood as *zoe* rather than *bios*. Just as existence in *Do Androids Dream* can be understood as a culmination of the multitudinous possibilities connected to dust and states of kippleization, so too can Existence in a post-*zoe* posthumanism be understood as a culmination of the continual and endless states of Being that partake in the process of Becoming.

Existence, then, is not best considered as that which *was* and *will be*; it is not an objective thing to be defined. Rather, we exist within a perpetual *is*. Though posthumanism steps beyond the human to incorporate the animal and nonhuman and acknowledges the agentic nature of the nonorganic in the nature-culture continuum, I argue that to truly progress towards a pluralistic monism representative of Existence, we must extend our deconstruction to embrace what is simultaneously post-*zoe* and pre-*bios*; we must reject dualism in order to escape the cursed limitation of Life. In the great web of existence, the process of Becoming consists purely of the continual, endless, and simultaneous states of Being, and it is in the culmination of Becomings that meaning is accessed.

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