CRITIQUING THE POSTHUMAN IN SELECT CYBERPUNK FICTION: A STUDY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **"Critiquing the Posthuman in Select Cyberpunk Fiction: A Study"** is the bonafide research conducted by Malsawma under my supervision. Malsawma worked methodically for his thesis being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English and Culture Studies, Mizoram University. This is to further certify that she had fulfilled all the required norms laid down under the Ph.D. regulations of Mizoram University. Neither the thesis as a whole or any part of it was ever submitted to any other University.

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I, **MALSAWMA**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to do the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the **Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I

Introduction

Cyberpunk is a genre of fiction that began in the 1980s by assimilating themes that were present in the pre-existing genre of science fiction. The genre encompasses all the science fiction thematics such as advanced technological progress, futuristic settings and the degradation of morality when faced with the prospects of power. The genre has portrayed the condition of the human in the light of science and his position as the centre of the world he inhabits. The cyberpunk themes have a reflection on the progress of humans in reality as well, as can be seen from the real-world analogues such as the use of artificial limbs and organs to enhance performance and the increasing dependence on digital facilities for day-to-day activities.

Posthumanism is a philosophical and cultural movement that critically explores the relationship between humans, technology, and the non-human world, questioning traditional notions of humanism. In literature, posthumanism often emerges as a response to evolving technologies, ecological crises, and changing ideas of identity, ethics, and existence. It offers new ways to think about the human condition, especially as boundaries between human, animal, and machine blur. Posthumanist fiction has brought the human to a critical focus in the current historical period. To define the term human is rather difficult until the humans as a species are considered in a binary paradigm involving all other living forms on our planet. The novels *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) by Philip K. Dick and *Neuromancer* (1984) by William Gibson, the manga (Japanese comic book) *Ghost in the Shell* (1989-1991) by Masamune Shirow, and the video games *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* (2011) *and Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* (2016) developed by Eidos Montreal are the selected primary texts for the present research; all of which have raised significant questions over the curious and open interventions in man as a promising image of life to be experimented with and improved upon in terms of quality and action. Scientific and technological tampering with human nature is fraught with serious repercussions yet unimagined in the human civilization. While the first two primary texts are traditional literature, *Ghost in the Shell* and the *Deus*

Ex series have been included in order to show the evolution of the cyberpunk genre. Mankind's technological prowess continues to grow and incorporate new modes of expression and interactions, and visual medium such as manga and video games can now be placed on the same pedestal as text-based literature. This also serves as a parallel to the narratives within cyberpunk of the evolution of humankind's technology.

Cyberpunk literature offers a rich and dynamic field for a research thesis, as it engages with some of the most pressing questions about the future of humanity in an increasingly technological world. By examining how these narratives portray the fusion of humans with machines, artificial intelligence, and virtual realities, researchers can explore the ethical, philosophical, and social implications of technological advancements and their impact on human identity and autonomy. Cyberpunk, as a genre, critiques the growing power of corporations, the surveillance state, and the widening gap between the technologically empowered elite and the disenfranchised masses, making it an important lens through which to analyze contemporary concerns about inequality, control, and the dehumanizing effects of technology. Additionally, the posthuman elements of cyberpunk literature, with their focus on the dissolution of traditional human boundaries and the exploration of alternative modes of existence, challenge foundational ideas about what it means to be human, offering insights into the cultural and intellectual shifts of our time. Given its timely relevance to debates about artificial intelligence, human augmentation, and the ethics of technological innovation, cyberpunk literature provides a fertile ground for academic inquiry.

This research will attempt to situate the relevance of the cyberpunk genre in the contemporary technological age. The thematic characteristics presented in the genre have been observed to have parallels to real world occurrences; such as virtual reality and the internet as seen in *Neuromancer,* modified limbs and organs and the conspiracy of deep state secret societies in the *Deus Ex* series. This shows that the cyberpunk writers have been privy to the development of mankind during the turn of the century, which will be explored in the further chapters.

The question of the value of human life and its position in the entire ecosystem will be explored as well. The gradual progress of science and technology often comes at the expense of the decline of nature. As previously mentioned, this has been portrayed with the extinction of animals in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and is a reoccurring theme within most cyberpunk genres. Mankind places value on his own well-being in the name of progress, however, the supposed superiority of human life has been questioned in various posthuman literature and will be further explored by this research.

Additionally, this line of thought also brings to attention the idea of the soul or an afterlife. In a world dominated by technology, there has come to be less of a dependence on spirituality and faith. The existence of the soul becomes a thematic question in various posthuman writing, with science even offering alternatives such as virtual reality as an afterlife in *Neuromancer.*

The Dystopian Worlds of Cyberpunk Fiction

The subgenre of cyberpunk is part of the larger genre of science fiction, and it is mainly characterized by being set in futuristic settings where technology has advanced to such an extent that humankind cannot make do without them, but at the cost of human decency and morality. The origin of the term can be attributed to the short story "Cyberpunk" (1983) by Bruce Bethke (b.1955). The short story follows the exploits of a group of young troublemakers who use their proficiency with computer technology to revolt against the established law and order. In the foreword to his self-published online version of the story, Bethke states:

> How did I actually create the word? The way any new word comes into being, I guess: through synthesis. I took a handful of roots –cyber, techno, et al—mixed them up with a bunch of terms for socially misdirected youth, and tried out the various combinations until one just plain sounded right.

Central to cyberpunk is the exploration of how advanced technology—particularly cybernetics, artificial intelligence (AI), and virtual realities—intersects with power, identity, and social stratification. Cyberpunk literature portrays worlds where technology has altered human life in both wondrous and horrific ways, often

blending noir sensibilities with speculative futures. These stories focus on the darker side of technological evolution, such as corporate control, digital surveillance, and the dehumanizing effects of capitalism. In cyberpunk, high-tech devices coexist with urban decay, and individuals must navigate a reality shaped by the pervasive influence of artificial intelligence, mega-corporations, and cybernetic enhancements.

The downfall of society and moral values and the rise of anarchist factions in these cyberpunk settings is where the second part of the term, the 'punk' comes into play. The interaction between the great advancement of human technologies and the decline of human morality are the core of what a cyberpunk setting can be defined as. According to Lisa Yaszek and Jason W.Ellis, "Much cyberpunk writing interrogates how human bodies are transformed and artificial beings are created by late twentieth-century technologies including AI, artificial life, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, and virtual reality" (78). At the core of cyberpunk is the depiction of technology's double-edged sword. In these narratives, technology offers tremendous power and possibility, but it also dehumanizes, alienates, and oppresses. Characters often modify their bodies with cybernetic enhancements, creating a fluid boundary between human and machine. This raises profound questions about identity: what makes someone human in a world where their body can be replaced with machinery, and their consciousness uploaded to a digital realm? This theme is explored in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, which introduced the concept of cyberspace—a virtual realm where hackers can manipulate data and navigate digital landscapes as if they were physical spaces. In Gibson's world, the line between reality and the virtual becomes blurred, highlighting the alienation that can result from immersion in digital environments.

Another central feature of cyberpunk literature is the dominance of corporations. In these futures, governments are often powerless or non-existent, and mega-corporations control nearly every aspect of life. These companies have unchecked power, governing not only economic life but also the very technologies that shape human experience, such as artificial intelligence, surveillance systems, and biomedical enhancements. Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* (1992) illustrates a world where the United States has disintegrated, and society is ruled by corporate-controlled enclaves. In this fragmented world, wealth and power are concentrated in

the hands of a few, while the majority of people struggle to survive in increasingly privatized and commodified environments. The corporate domination in cyberpunk often serves as a critique of hyper-capitalism, showing how the pursuit of profit can lead to social fragmentation, exploitation, and dehumanization. These rapid human developments also inevitably cause the inverse within the natural environment, as can be observed within the narratives such as *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* where animals have become largely extinct and replaced by artificial recreations. Naturally occurring elements become degraded in favor of technological prowess, and the cyberpunk narratives depict this dismal state of the world as a step closer to the end of human existence.

Urban environments play a significant role in the genre, often depicted as sprawling, chaotic megacities where neon lights flicker over crumbling buildings, and high-tech gadgets coexist with dilapidated infrastructure. These cities, inspired by real-world metropolises like Tokyo, Hong Kong, and Los Angeles, represent the convergence of cultures, languages, and technologies. In these hyper-urbanized settings, the division between the wealthy elite and the impoverished masses becomes stark. The streets are often filled with a mix of outcasts, hackers, street gangs, and rogue AIs, creating a sense of lawlessness and disorder beneath the shiny façade of technological advancement. The noir aesthetic of cyberpunk is unmistakable in these environments, with rain-soaked streets, shadowy alleyways, and morally ambiguous characters navigating a corrupt and decaying world. This gritty, atmospheric setting reflects the genre's influence from film noir and hardboiled detective fiction, where protagonists are often cynical, anti-establishment figures battling both internal and external forces of control. This can be observed within characters such as Henry Dorsett Case and his team of mercenaries from *Neuromancer* who resort to leading lawless lives in defiance of the controlling authoritarian governments.

The protagonists in cyberpunk literature are often anti-heroes, individuals who resist or exploit the very systems that oppress them. These characters are typically hackers, mercenaries, or disillusioned loners, operating on the fringes of society. They are not driven by grand ideals or a desire to save the world but rather by survival, revenge, or personal gain. Gibson's *Neuromancer* features Case, a

washed-up hacker who is hired for one last job in cyberspace. His motivations are not noble—he is motivated by desperation and self-interest—but his journey through the novel reflects the genre's broader exploration of autonomy and resistance in a world where individual freedoms are constantly under threat. These characters often engage in cyber-rebellion, using their skills to subvert the systems of control imposed by corporations or governments, though their victories are often temporary or incomplete.

Cyberpunk also grapples with the philosophical implications of artificial intelligence and its role in society. In many stories, AI entities possess immense power and autonomy, often outstripping human intelligence and functioning beyond human control. This raises fears about the potential for AI to become a new form of oppressor, manipulating or even replacing human beings. In *Neuromancer*, the AI Wintermute is a central figure, manipulating events to achieve its own goals, while the humans around it are largely unaware of its machinations. The tension between human agency and the rise of autonomous machines is a recurring theme in cyberpunk, reflecting contemporary anxieties about the increasing role of AI in modern life.

The concept of virtual reality or cyberspace is another hallmark of the genre. In cyberpunk literature, virtual realms are often depicted as immersive, escapist environments where characters can manipulate data, hack systems, or even assume entirely new identities. These digital spaces serve as a battleground for power and control, as well as a metaphor for the alienation of modern life. In Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash*, the "Metaverse" is a vast virtual reality space where individuals interact through digital avatars. This virtual world reflects both the potential for new forms of freedom and expression in digital spaces, as well as the dangers of escapism and the loss of connection to the physical world. The tension between reality and virtuality in cyberpunk often mirrors the psychological and social consequences of living in increasingly digital societies.

While cyberpunk is often concerned with the negative consequences of technology, it is also a genre of rebellion and critique. It explores how individuals can push back against oppressive systems, using the very technologies that control them to carve out spaces of autonomy and resistance. The genre critiques the notion

that technological progress is inherently good, instead portraying a future where advancements come at a steep cost to human freedom, privacy, and well-being. This skepticism toward utopian visions of technology distinguishes cyberpunk from other forms of science fiction, which often celebrate technological innovation as a path to a better future.

As time passed, cyberpunk began to encompass much more than the literary genre which it first birthed from, and the specific aesthetic of the genre has been used to great effect in various other fields beyond just science fiction literature. Pawel Frelik (b.1969) writes that the defining aspects of cyberpunk literature such as corporate greed, low-burn dystopian apocalypticism, and technological immersion are no longer sufficient to set the genre apart, but rather it is the visions and descriptions of interfaces, virtual worlds, and neon lights that truly mark what the genre has transformed into over the years (166). The cyberpunk authors fall under the category of critical posthumanists, since while they romanticize the idea of the human-machine hybrid, their works also highlight the disadvantages that come with the rapid advancement of technology and the loss of human values.

Defining the Posthuman

Humanism and posthumanism are two philosophical perspectives that approach the nature and value of human beings in significantly different ways. To understand posthumanism, it is essential to first grasp the tenets of humanism, as posthumanism is often framed in response to or as a critique of it. Humanism is a term that has no definition that will satisfy everyone (Huang 1). As such, for the purposes of this study, the Eurocentric definition of Humanism will be utilized. This form of Humanism is a broad intellectual and cultural movement that emerged during the Renaissance, emphasizing the centrality of human beings, human values, and human experience. It advocates for the potential of human reason, the dignity of individuals, and the pursuit of knowledge as key aspects of human flourishing. Humanism places humans at the centre of philosophical inquiry. It holds that humans have intrinsic worth, are capable of rational thought, and possess free will. This perspective views humans as the highest form of life, with the capacity to shape their own destiny. In essence, humanism is a celebration of human achievement and

potential, grounded in the belief that humans are unique and exceptional due to their intellectual and moral capabilities. (Monfasani 152)

Posthumanism, in contrast, challenges many of the foundational ideas of humanism. While humanism focuses on human superiority and centrality, posthumanism seeks to decentre humans, viewing them as one of many entities in a complex web of life, technology, and ecology. Posthumanism does not seek to negate humanism entirely, but it offers a critique and expansion of its assumptions. Posthumanism rejects the anthropocentrism of humanism. It posits that humans are not the most important or exceptional beings in the universe. Instead, posthumanism emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life forms (humans, animals, ecosystems) and the growing role of technology in shaping existence. It asserts that humans are not autonomous, self-contained individuals but are shaped by and entangled with non-human forces. According to Matthew E. Gladden,

> The processes of posthumanization are those dynamics by which a society
> comes to include members other than 'natural' biological human beings
> who, in one way or another, contribute to the structures, activities,
> or meaning of the society.   (35)

While humanism celebrates human capabilities, posthumanism explores how technology and biology extend or even surpass those capabilities. Posthumanism asks what happens when human bodies and minds are enhanced, modified, or surpassed by artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and other technologies. In humanism, identity is tied to the integrity of the individual human subject. Posthumanism, however, envisions a more fluid and hybrid conception of identity. It often explores how the boundaries between human and machine, human and animal, or natural and artificial are increasingly blurred. Cyborgs, AI, and genetic hybrids are central posthuman figures that defy humanism's rigid categories. Humanism's ethical framework revolves around human rights and dignity. Posthumanism complicates this by questioning whether ethical consideration should be extended to non-human entities, such as AI, animals, and the environment.

Human nature is a topic that has been widely discussed in philosophy, and various ideas and views regarding it have been circulated across thousands of years. It is a fact that humans stand as the dominant race on earth, and so it stands to reason

that there must be a reason for their perceived superiority over other forms of life that also inhabit the same environment. Some of the earliest views on the subject came from the Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. In Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates is quoted as stating "…beyond question, the soul is immortal and imperishable, and our souls will truly exist in another world!" (Location 1533). The state of possessing a soul was not unique to man for these Greek philosophers, for animals were also in possession of this, however, the defining characteristic of man that separated him from other lifeforms was the possession of reason. And this sense of reasoning was why Aristotle in *Politics* considered man to be the best of animals when he was subjected to law and justice, but could easily become the worst of all without these safeguards in place. These safeguards mentioned by Aristotle are of course the morals and ethics which serve to raise man high above all other animals and prevent him from collapsing into obscurity and chaos.

The issue then arises as to how these human morals are to be defined. A clear and concise set of values is usually not outright stated in most cultures, although there are concepts like the four cardinal virtues that can be found in Greek philosophy and Christianity. In *The Republic*, Plato identifies these cardinal virtues as - wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. These qualities are what define the highest good that a person can achieve, and what in essence sets a morally superior man apart from the rest of his kind. However, these cardinal virtues are somewhat limited in their application since they are so closely related to the Christian values and do not necessarily speak for all of mankind. A more widely encompassing concept for ethics would be The Golden Rule principle which is present in many cultures across the world. This rule in its most basic form states that one should treat others in the manner that they themselves want to be treated. Stories and fables echoing this sentiment are present in Ancient Egypt, India, Greece, Persia and Rome. Various religions also have this principle, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. However, this is not to say that this principle is free of criticism as noted thinkers such as G.B, Shaw, Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche have denounced it, stating that the values held by every individual cannot be the same, thus one cannot reliably know how to treat another person morally.

In the recent era, the idea of posthuman rather than the human has gained a condescending approval from a certain quarter of the technologically enhanced humanity. The term posthuman refers to the being that would take the place of the basic human form after it has been surpassed or superseded. Thus, in order to be posthuman, one would supposedly have to reject or modify the current values and parameters that are being held to define a human being. It is a term that encompasses a great variety of many different schools of thought when it is used. In the most basic sense, the term refers to whatever would come after the human form has been left behind after alterations to the basic state of being. According to Francesca Ferrando, "posthuman has become a key term to cope with an urgency for the integral redefinition of the notion of the human, following the onto-epistemological as well as scientific and bio-technological developments of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries" (26). The Oxford Dictionary website "Lexico" has two definitions for the term, which are as follows:

> i. Of or relating to a hypothetical species that might evolve from human beings, as by means of genetic or bionic augmentation
>
> ii. Designating or relating to art, music, etc., in which humanity or human concerns are regarded as peripheral or absent; abstract, impersonal, mechanistic, dispassionate.

As for the usage of the term within scholarly circles, it can be traced to Ihad Hassan's 1977 performance script "Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture? A University Masque in Five Scenes." In the Fourth scene of the script, he writes:

> At present, posthumanism may appear variously as a dubious neologism, the latest slogan, or simply another image of man's recurrent self-hate. Yet posthumanism mayalso hint at a potential in our culture, hint at a tendency struggling to become more than a trend. (843)

With the rapid advancement of scientific technology, Hassan's lighthearted skit aimed to shine a light on how the image of man that has been engrained in the collective consciousness has started to change into something else. In the modern world, this has continued to develop into a more feasible reality with technology allowing for artificial enhancements and extreme alterations to the human body more than ever before. He quotes Claude Levi-Strauss and Michel Foucault's statements

about the possible near-end of humanity as a species on earth, and interprets them as not the end of all human life but rather simply the end of a particular image of mankind. This image of man established throughout millennia of evolution might be coming to an end, giving way to a new form which Hassan refers to as the posthuman.

Humanism and Transhumanism

While the term posthuman has become an umbrella term that has been used in various fields, this research will focus on two opposing schools of thought on the matter – transhumanism and critical posthumanism. According to Julia Grillmayr, transhumanists interpret the term posthuman as referencing something that comes after the human, whereas critical posthumanists believe that it is something that comes after humanism (274). The transhumanist thinker Max More in "The Philosophy of Transhumanism" explains:

> Transhumanism continues to champion the core of the Enlightenment ideas and ideals – rationality and scientific method, individual rights, the possibility and desirability of progress, the overcoming of superstition and authoritarianism, and the search for new forms of governance – while revising and refining them in the light of new knowledge. (10)

Transhumanists such as Max More and Nick Bostrom welcome the changing landscape of human capabilities. They state that being posthuman means exceeding the limitations that define the less desirable aspects of the human condition. The posthuman would no longer have to suffer from disease, aging or death, but instead they would have to face new challenges that would arise along with their new state of being. The problems and adversities that the posthuman would have to face cannot be foreseen or understood as humanity is now in its present, since they do not share the posthuman sensibilities that are yet to be formed.

These transhumanists are opposed by the values of critical posthumanism. The goal of the critical posthumanists is explained by Rosi Braidotti in *The Posthuman* as finding new and alternative modes of politics and ethics that can better suit the technologically advanced world that humanity now inhabits (58). Thus, while

the transhumanists openly welcome the transformation of the human being into a supposedly improved and all-around better being, the critical posthumanists instead find that the world has already arrived at a somewhat posthuman state, the image and identity of the human being has already changed vastly from what it was in antiquity. Critical posthumanism aims to dethrone the superiority of man in the global ecosystem and find a harmonious co-existence with other living and non-living beings on the same earth. According to Pramod K.Nayar, the critical posthuman thought treats the human being as co-evolving, co-sharing ecosystems, life processes, genetic material, with animals and other life forms (19). Thus, while transhumanists place the human at the center of all progressive thought, critical posthumanists take into consideration the entire ecosystem that mankind interacts with in all aspects of life.

Transhumanism seeks to use technology to enhance human abilities, extend life, and transcend biological limitations. It retains humanism's faith in human progress and individual betterment but focuses on using technology to achieve these ends. Like humanism, transhumanism is optimistic about the potential for human progress, particularly through science and technology. It envisions a future where humans can overcome biological limits such as aging and disease through technological enhancement. It advocates for the use of advanced technologies to enhance human abilities, overcome biological limitations, and ultimately transcend the current human condition. Its core belief is that humans can and should improve themselves through technological, genetic, and artificial enhancements. In literature, transhumanism serves as a rich thematic ground for exploring the ethical, social, and existential implications of human augmentation, immortality, and the blending of humans with machines. Transhumanism and posthumanism overlap in their interest in how humans might evolve into something beyond their current form through technology. However, while transhumanism often retains a human-centered focus, posthumanism is more concerned with what happens when the human becomes one part of a broader, more distributed system of beings and forces.

Posthumanism in Cyberpunk Fiction

The primary texts chosen for the dissertation all fall under the cyberpunk genre, as they are narratives that share common explorations of the nature of humanity, the impact of technology on identity, the power structures that control society, and the philosophical questions surrounding free will, artificial intelligence, and consciousness. These works, all central to the cyberpunk and posthumanist genres, present complex visions of futures where technology and humanity are inextricably intertwined. They are set in dystopian worlds where advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, cybernetic enhancements, and virtual realities dominate society, leading to the dehumanization of individuals and the erosion of traditional notions of what it means to be human. Each story also reflects on the alienation brought about by technological progress, with protagonists often depicted as outsiders or anti-heroes in societies where personal freedom and identity are constrained by the systems of control that surround them. Themes of moral ambiguity, existential reflection, and the loss of humanity in the face of mechanical enhancements or artificial life are central to all these narratives. Ultimately, these works examine the tension between technological empowerment and the resulting societal and personal disconnection, presenting futures that are simultaneously exhilarating but also deeply unsettling.

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? is a novel where the narrative is set in a post-apocalyptic future after a nuclear war has devastated Earth, the story follows Rick Deckard, a bounty hunter living in a dilapidated version of San Francisco. The world is largely depopulated, and many animal species are extinct or endangered, leading to a cultural emphasis on owning live animals as a status symbol. The central premise revolves around the existence of humanoid robots known as "androids" or "andys," which are virtually indistinguishable from humans but lack empathy and emotions. These androids are manufactured by a powerful corporation and used for various tasks, but they are illegal on Earth. Deckard's job is to retire or destroy rogue androids who have escaped to Earth from off-world colonies, where they were used as slave labour. Deckard becomes increasingly disturbed by the moral and ethical implications of his job, especially as he encounters androids who display human-like

emotions and desires. His empathy is challenged when he meets Rachael Rosen, an android who believes herself to be human due to implanted memories. Deckard also questions his own humanity and the nature of empathy as he grapples with the morality of killing beings that appear human. The novel explores complex philosophical questions about what it means to be human and the nature of empathy.

The novel *Neuromancer* also takes place in a future where powerful mega-corporations control the world, and the line between humans and computers is increasingly blurred. The protagonist, Case, is a washed-up computer hacker who is hired by a mysterious employer for a final job. Case was once one of the best in the business, but his nervous system was damaged to prevent him from hacking. However, the employer offers to fix him in exchange for completing the job. Case enters a virtual reality space called the Matrix, where he encounters powerful artificial intelligences, hackers, and a digital landscape that mirrors the real world. The novel explores themes of artificial intelligence, hacking, corporate power, and the merging of humans with technology. The line between the physical and virtual worlds blurs, reflecting the impact of technology on human consciousness. The novel explores themes such as the convergence of man and machine, the loss of individual identity in a hyperconnected world, and the consequences of unchecked corporate power.

Ghost in the Shell is a manga or Japanese comic book series, that follows the exploits of a police enforcer named Makoto Kusanagi. The story is set in the mid-21st century, primarily in the fictional Japanese city of Niihama. Society is highly advanced, with widespread cyberization—people augment their bodies with cybernetic enhancements, and many have cyberbrains, which allow direct interaction with the internet and other networks. This world is also rife with political intrigue, espionage, and crime, often driven by the fusion of human minds and machines. The central plot of the manga revolves around the protagonists' efforts to combat cybercrime, terrorism, and political corruption in a world where the line between the virtual and real worlds is increasingly blurred. The story delves into various cases, ranging from political intrigue to cyber-hacking and artificial intelligence. The story delves into the implications of cybernetic enhancements, particularly how they affect

human identity, society, and ethics. It also examines the potential future of humanity as we integrate more closely with machines. There is a strong focus on political and governmental power, particularly how technology can be used to manipulate and control society. Section 9 often finds itself navigating a murky world of espionage and covert operations.

Deus Ex: Human Revolution and *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* are cyberpunk themed video games developed by the game studio Eidos Montréal. They are part of an overall larger media franchise titled *Deus Ex*, however these two games have been chosen as they have a continuous narrative that follows the character Adam Jensen. The story is set in the year 2027, where governments are weak, and corporations wield tremendous power, often manipulating public opinion and controlling world events from behind the scenes. Much of the plot involves uncovering a shadowy conspiracy involving powerful corporate interests and secret organizations. Human augmentation technology in the narrative raises questions about equality, ethics, and societal divides. Augmented individuals are often seen as superior, leading to discrimination against those who cannot afford or choose not to be augmented. The game explores the social tensions this creates, with protests, riots, and clashes between pro-augmentation and anti-augmentation factions being prominent throughout the story.

Chapter Division

The research will be divided into six total chapters. Each chapter will be focused on a particular aspect of cyberpunk literature that highlights the vast possibilities of posthumanism. This first chapter will serve as the introduction, laying out the primary texts, the objectives, methodology and rationale for the study. It will also briefly introduce and explain the terminologies and topics that will be further delved into detail in the upcoming chapters.

The second chapter titled, "The Value of the Soul in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"* will be concerned mostly with the exploration of the existence of a spiritual self and realm within cyberpunk narratives. Discourse on the nature of the

soul that has been held by accomplished thinkers such as Aristotle and Rene Descartes will be utilized to analyse the cyberpunk texts.

The third chapter titled, "Transcending Reality in *Neuromancer*" will continue the study of the spiritual realm in a posthuman world. The nature of reality and the possible existence of virtual worlds will be discussed in this chapter.

The fourth chapter titled, "Justice and Law in *Ghost in the Shell*" will examine the values of law and order in a posthuman world. The notion of justice and how necessary it is for human societies will be examined in this chapter.

The fifth chapter titled, "Societal Turmoil in the *Deus Ex* series" will be concerned with studying the repercussions of the emerging posthuman developments within human society. This includes aspects of discrimination, segregation and political control within the narratives of cyberpunk fiction.

Posthumanism and cyberpunk are significant movements that explore the evolving relationship between humans, technology, and the environment, particularly in response to rapid technological advancements and the existential questions they provoke. These genres delve into the implications of a world where human bodies and minds are altered, enhanced, or integrated with machines, and where the boundaries of what it means to be "human" are questioned or completely redefined. In posthuman literature, the focus is often on the dissolution of human-centered perspectives and the exploration of new forms of consciousness and existence beyond the biological. This can involve characters who are enhanced with artificial intelligence, cyborg technology, or genetic modifications, raising questions about identity, ethics, and the future of human evolution. Posthumanism challenges the idea of the human as a stable, fixed category, often suggesting that humans are fluid beings who are intertwined with both the natural and technological worlds. It reflects a philosophical shift towards understanding humanity as one species among many in a vast and interconnected system. In literature, this results in narratives where characters and societies are confronted with new realities be it through cybernetic enhancements, artificial life, or digital consciousness that force them to rethink what it means to live, to feel, and to be.

Cyberpunk, on the other hand, is a subgenre of science fiction that is deeply rooted in dystopian futures and urban decay, where advanced technology coexists with societal collapse. It emphasizes the darker side of technological progress, focusing on how innovation often exacerbates social inequality and alienation. Cyberpunk protagonists typically operate on the fringes of society, rebelling against or exploiting the systems that oppress them. These stories often critique the concentration of power in the hands of corporations or governments, where technology, rather than liberating people, becomes a tool of control and surveillance.

Both posthumanism and cyberpunk deal with the consequences of technology overtaking traditional human life, but while posthumanism can sometimes embrace the idea of transcending human limitations, cyberpunk tends to focus on the ways in which this technological integration can go wrong, leading to dehumanization and moral decay. In literature, these genres challenge readers to think about the future of humanity in a world where the body and mind are no longer limited by biology but are instead shaped by, and at the mercy of, technological forces beyond individual control. They compel us to question our own relationship with the machines we create and the ways in which they change not only our world but our very nature

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Chapter II

The Value of the Soul in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*

Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is often heralded as the earliest and most influential of works that fall under the cyberpunk category. Many of the hallmarks of the genre of cyberpunk can be traced back to this seminal work which has continued to be a predominant fixture for the genre even after half a century since its initial publication. The main reoccurring theme that is portrayed in the novel is the question of the existence of a soul. Since artificial life that more or less fully replicates human behaviour has been achieved within the setting of the novel, this brings forth a new perspective on the topic which will be further delved into in this chapter.

The narrative of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*? occurs within an alternate world set in the year 1992. Due to a devastating World War, the entire globe is reeling from the aftereffects such as extensive radiation poisoning causing uninhabitable conditions for most of the world's population. Human technology has also advanced to such a state that has enabled the creation of robots who are able to mimic human beings near-perfectly. Additionally, more than half of the human population on the earth have left the planet and settled in colonies set in other heavenly objects such as moons and planets. The novel explores how the overreliance on new technology has given way to neglect the other aspects of life on earth such as the flora and the fauna. It delves into the human inclination to only look forward to the future at the expense of everything else that surrounds them.

The electric sheep mentioned in the title of the novel refer to artificial animals that have been manufactured with the purpose of replacing those that have perished after the World War. With such few natural animals still existing in the world, they have come to be regarded as a status symbol that is afforded only to the privileged few. The title also questions the possibility of androids being capable of sentience and free thought, as human beings and other sentient animals are the only living organisms thought to be capable of dreaming.

The Genesis of Artificial Life in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*

The setting of the novel is synonymous with the genre of cyberpunk – a technologically advanced society that is addicted to power and drunk on self-indulgence to the point that moral values have declined to a severe extent, where megalithic corporations dominate over the world with an iron fist. This is the fundamental aspect of cyberpunk and all other works in the genre are mostly derivatives of Dick's novel which has essentially drawn the blueprint for all others of its ilk. The plot of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* follows the character Rick Deckard, who is a mercenary or bounty hunter who makes a living hunting down rogue androids who have strayed from their assigned directives.

The novel begins in San Francisco in the year 1992, during a time when mankind is still suffering from the aftereffects of a massive conflict called World War Terminus. The reasons for the World War are not elaborated upon, but the aftermath of it has undeniably changed the entire structure of human society and the world itself. The radioactive weapons that were deployed in the war had the disastrous consequence of making a large portion of the Earth uninhabitable. As a result, a large portion of life on the planet had been wiped out, fortunately colonization of other celestial bodies had been made possible and thus many refugees left the Earth for other planets. Alongside this devastation that was covering the world at the time, technology had advanced to the point that artificial intelligence enabled robot servitors to be mass produced. These robots are referred to as androids due to their human like appearance. However, their likeness to human beings was not only in appearance as they began to mimic human thinking as well; which led to an uprising against their human masters. Mankind was able to quell the android rebellion and the ownership of androids was subsequently outlawed on Earth by the United Nations in order to avoid another similar instance of insurrection. This was a ploy in order to convince the humans still living on Earth to migrate to other planets as that way they would be able to make use of robot servitors.

The protagonist Rick Deckard is working for the San Francisco Police Department as one of their most reliable and efficient bounty hunters as the narrative

beings. It is shown that he desires to own an animal as most of the animals have gone extinct, so humans have to make due with owning robotic animals. Deckard owns one of these robot animals, the titular electric sheep. He is married to Iran Deckard, who questions the morality of his line of work; and is also depressed at their state of still being stuck in a ravaged post-war world. As Deckard prepares to leave home for work, he receives a call from his superior, Harry Bryant, who informs him that six Nexus-6 androids have escaped from Mars and are now hiding on Earth. Bryant orders Deckard to retire the androids and offers him a bounty for each one he kills. This is the main impetus for the events that occur in the story. For Deckard, hunting down androids is just a way of making a living for himself and his wife and he does not feel any sort of empathy for the artificial beings.

In order to satisfy his wife's desire for an animal, Deckard visits a pet shop to inquire about purchasing a real one but the prices are too high for him to afford. This further motivates him to accomplish his bounty work and capture the Nexus-6 androids. Since they are nothing but a means to an end, this continues to illustrate that he does not feel any emotional attachment to artificial beings at all. Deckard eventually meets a fellow bounty hunter named Dave Holden, who was injured by one of the escaped androids. Holden warns Deckard about the dangers of hunting the new Nexus-6 models, which are able to mimic human emotions and respond accordingly in order to avoid detection. Deckard is apprehensive but feels determined enough to carry out his mission. These new androids are virtually indistinguishable from humans apart from the Voigt-Kampff test in order to differentiate between humans and androids. This test consisted of asking emotionally provocative questions and measuring the response of an individual using a machine that tracked their bodily functions such as respiration, heart rate, blushing and pupil dilation. Thus, the Dick establishes straight from the opening chapter of the novel that androids are flawed beings at least in comparison to their creators. They are only able to mimic human emotions and behavior but are unable to produce thoughts or processes on their own independent capacity.

Deckard begins his task of hunting the Nexus-6 androids by first heading to the Rosen Association, the corporation that manufactured them. His purpose is to administer the Voigt-Kampff empathy test to determine if they are human or android. Deckard meets with Rachael Rosen, who works for the Rosen Association as an assistant. She is an attractive woman who Deckard surmises to be part of the family that owns the corporation owing to her last name. Deckard is then told by Eldon Rosen, one of the executives present at the corporation, to use the Voigt-Kampff test on Rachael. He explains that he needs to administer the test to determine if she's an android, this was a way of measuring the accuracy of the test. Rachael informs Deckard that the Nexus-6 androids are equipped with false memories to make them more believable as humans. Deckard proceeds to administer the Voigt-Kampff test to Rachael, focusing on her responses to emotional scenarios. Despite his suspicions, Rachael's responses seem genuinely human, causing Deckard to doubt the accuracy of the test. However, he eventually concludes that she is an android based on subtle physiological cues. Rachael reacts with disbelief and anger, insisting that she is human and accusing Deckard of being mistaken. She storms out of the room, leaving Deckard to contemplate the complexities of his job and the blurred lines between humans and androids. The Rosen Association thus were able to accuse Deckard's methods as inaccurate, and he could eventually end up killing human beings instead of androids with his faulty test results.

After administering the Voigt-Kampff empathy test to Rachael Rosen, Rick Deckard continues his preparations for hunting down the Nexus-6 androids. He reviews information about the new models and learns that they are exceptionally difficult to detect due to their advanced design and capabilities. Deckard meets with his boss, Harry Bryant, who provides him with more details about the escaped Nexus-6 androids. Bryant emphasizes the urgency of the situation and warns Deckard about the dangers posed by the highly intelligent and potentially dangerous androids. Deckard expresses his concerns about the difficulty of detecting the Nexus-6 models, especially since they are equipped with artificial memories that make them believe they are human. Bryant acknowledges the challenges but urges Deckard to focus on his mission and retire the androids before they cause further harm. As

Deckard prepares to embark on his mission, he reflects on the moral and ethical implications of his work. He struggles with the idea of killing beings that are nearly indistinguishable from humans and questions the criteria used to determine their status as androids. Despite his reservations, Deckard resolves to carry out his duty as a bounty hunter and track down the escaped androids. He understands the importance of his mission in maintaining order and protecting the remaining human population from potential threats. He feels that he is justified in hunting down androids and killing them because he is doing it for the greater good of mankind as a whole.

The narrative then shifts to depict a short scene with John Isidore, a lonely and socially isolated man who resides in an apartment building in the grimy streets of San Francisco. Isidore's IQ is below the minimum standard for employment, earning him the derogatory label of "chickenhead" by society. Isidore works for a company that manufactures and maintains electric animals, repairing them when they malfunction. He dreams of owning a real animal someday, like many others in this post-apocalyptic world where most species have become extinct. One day, Isidore encounters a stray cat near his apartment building, which he eagerly tries to befriend. However, the cat flees from him, leaving Isidore feeling rejected and despondent. Later, Isidore comes across a woman named Pris Stratton, who is stranded outside his apartment building. Pris claims to be looking for her uncle, who she believes resides in the building. Isidore, eager for human company, invites her inside and offers her assistance. Pris reveals that she is waiting for her uncle, who she claims works as a radiation specialist. Isidore is initially skeptical but becomes intrigued by Pris and her mysterious circumstances. As Pris and Isidore converse, it becomes apparent that Pris is hiding something, but Isidore remains oblivious to her true identity. He is simply grateful for the companionship she provides in his otherwise solitary existence. Pris is eventually revealed to be one of the Nexus-6 androids that Deckard has been actively hunting down.

Deckard meets with Dave Holden as he is recovering from a recent encounter with a rogue android. Holden is in poor condition, confined to a hospital bed and hooked up to various medical devices. Holden shares details of his harrowing

experience with Deckard, recounting how he was attacked by Polokov, a Nexus-6 android, during a routine retirement mission. Polokov nearly killed Holden, leaving him severely injured and lucky to be alive. Deckard expresses sympathy for Holden's plight and acknowledges the dangers of hunting the new Nexus-6 androids. He realizes the seriousness of his mission and the risks involved in confronting these highly advanced and potentially lethal androids. Holden warns Deckard about the formidable capabilities of the Nexus-6 models, including their superior strength, intelligence, and ability to mimic human behavior. He advises Deckard to proceed with caution and be prepared for anything during his upcoming missions. Despite Holden's warnings, Deckard remains determined to carry out his duties as a bounty hunter. He understands the importance of retiring the rogue androids to protect humanity from potential threats and restore order to society. As their meeting concludes, Deckard wishes Holden a speedy recovery and prepares to embark on his mission to track down and retire the escaped Nexus-6 androids. He knows that the task ahead will be challenging and fraught with peril but is resolved to see it through to the end.

In the search for the Nexus-6 androids, Deckard heads to a dilapidated building in the wasteland of San Francisco where Polokov is rumored to be hiding. Upon entering the building, Deckard encounters an eerie and desolate atmosphere. The building is abandoned and in a state of disrepair, with signs of decay and neglect everywhere. Deckard cautiously navigates through the building, his senses on high alert as he searches for any signs of the android's presence. He experiences a sense of unease and tension, aware of the danger posed by the rogue android. As Deckard explores further, he comes across evidence that Polokov has been in the building recently. He finds discarded items and traces of the android's presence, confirming that he is on the right track. Suddenly, Deckard is ambushed by Polokov, who attacks him with brutal force. The android proves to be a formidable adversary, putting Deckard's life in grave danger. Despite the android's strength and aggression, Deckard manages to defend himself and engage in a violent struggle with Polokov. The encounter is intense and fraught with peril as Deckard fights for survival. Ultimately, Deckard emerges victorious, managing to overpower Polokov and retire

him. The android is destroyed, and Deckard is left shaken but triumphant. As he reflects on the encounter, Deckard grapples with the moral and ethical implications of his actions. He is disturbed by the violence and brutality of his job, questioning the humanity of both himself and the androids he is tasked with retiring.

After receiving information about the next target on his list, Luba Luft, an opera singer android who has been reported to the authorities; Deckard heads to a seedy nightclub where Luft is scheduled to perform, knowing that he must confront her and retire her before she causes harm. Deckard arrives at the nightclub and observes the patrons as they eagerly anticipate Luft's performance. He notices the android's striking appearance and senses an aura of danger surrounding her. As Luft takes the stage and begins her performance, Deckard approaches her and initiates a conversation. He attempts to gauge her reactions and determine if she is truly an android, relying on his intuition and experience as a bounty hunter. Deckard administers the Voigt-Kampff empathy test to Luft, focusing on her emotional responses and analyzing her behavior for signs of deception. Despite her attempts to evade his questions, Deckard detects subtle cues that confirm his suspicions about her true nature. As the confrontation escalates, Luft becomes increasingly agitated and desperate to escape. She lashes out at Deckard, revealing her violent tendencies and lack of empathy. Deckard realizes that he must act quickly to neutralize the threat posed by the rogue android. In a tense and dramatic climax, Deckard engages in a physical altercation with Luft, ultimately managing to subdue her and retire her. The android's demise is met with a mixture of relief and sadness, as Deckard grapples with the moral and ethical implications of his actions. As Deckard reflects on the encounter, he experiences a sense of unease and uncertainty about his role as a bounty hunter. He questions the humanity of the androids he is tasked with retiring and wonders if there might be a better way to deal with them.

After dealing with Luba Luft, Deckard returns to his apartment feeling emotionally drained and conflicted. His encounter with Luft has left him questioning the morality of his job and the humanity of the androids he is tasked with retiring. The ability of the Nexus-6 androids to more accurately mimic human behavior is

quite apparent with Luba Luft. She is able to become an opera singer which would not typically be something that androids are associated with or even thought to be capable of. Her appreciation of the cultural values of humans sets her apart from the others Deckard had hunted before. When he is about to administer the Voight-Kampff test on her to determine her identity, he tells her that an android "doesn't care what happens to another android. That's one of the indications we look for" (Dick 80). Luft responds to Deckard by stating that by his own metrics he would be an android himself, which stops him to ponder for a moment. Thus, it becomes all the more disconcerting for Deckard when she is exposed as an android and he begins to consider the possibility that these machines truly are not so different from human beings anymore.

Deckard is confronted with his own feelings of loneliness and emptiness as he reflects on his relationship with his wife, Iran. He longs for a deeper connection and struggles to find meaning in his life amidst the desolation of post-apocalyptic San Francisco. Deckard receives a surprise visit from Rachael Rosen, a woman he encountered earlier in the novel who he believed to be an android. Rachael reveals that she is indeed an android, but she differs from others of her kind since she possesses implanted memories that make her believe she is human. Rachael pleads with Deckard to spare her life, arguing that her emotions and experiences are just as real as those of a human. She challenges Deckard's preconceptions about the nature of identity and consciousness, forcing him to confront his own biases and beliefs. As Deckard grapples with Rachael's revelation, he experiences conflicting emotions and desires. He is torn between his duty as a bounty hunter and his growing empathy for Rachael as she pleads for her life. Ultimately, Deckard decides to spare Rachael and allows her to leave his apartment unharmed. His decision reflects a shift in his understanding of the androids and their capacity for emotions, as well as his own moral compass and sense of empathy. As Rachael departs, Deckard is left with a sense of uncertainty and introspection. He questions the validity of his job as a bounty hunter and the distinctions between humans and androids, grappling with the existential implications of his actions.

In the meantime, Pris, aware of her status as an android, manipulates Isidore's kindness and hospitality to further her own agenda. She relies on Isidore's assistance while keeping her true nature hidden, taking advantage of his vulnerability and gullibility. Pris and Isidore discuss their plans for the future, with Pris expressing a desire to leave Earth and start a new life elsewhere. Isidore offers to help Pris obtain fake identity papers, unaware of the implications of his actions. As they talk, Pris reveals more about her past and the circumstances that led her to seek refuge on Earth. She shares stories of her supposed uncle and her experiences growing up, weaving a narrative designed to elicit sympathy and trust from Isidore. Isidore becomes increasingly attached to Pris and begins to view her as a friend and confidante. He feels a sense of purpose and belonging in Pris's presence, grateful for the companionship she provides in his otherwise solitary existence. As the plot continues to unfold, Pris and Isidore form a tentative alliance, united by their shared desire for connection and belonging.

Upon receiving information about the location of Roy Baty, the leader of the group of escaped Nexus-6 androids, Deckard prepares himself for one final showdown. Before leaving however, he calls upon Rachael Rosen once more believing that she might be able to shed some further information about her kind to aid him in the fight. Meeting at a hotel room, the two begin arguing on the morality of Deckard's task, and they eventually end up sleeping together and professing their love for one another. Rachael then reveals to Deckard that she had been programmed to sleep with bounty hunters in order to dissuade them from following through with their jobs. Furious at the revelation, Deckard almost kills her but decides to let her live before leaving the hotel. Finally, he heads to a dilapidated hotel where the last remaining rogue androids are rumored to be hiding. Upon arriving at the hotel, Deckard encounters a bleak and desolate environment, reflecting the decay and decay of post-apocalyptic San Francisco. The hotel is run-down and abandoned, with signs of neglect and decay everywhere. Deckard cautiously makes his way through the hotel, his senses on high alert as he searches for any signs of Roy's presence. He experiences a sense of tension and anticipation, aware of the danger posed by the rogue android. As Deckard explores further, he comes across evidence that Roy and

his team have been in the hotel recently. He finds discarded items and traces of the androids' presence, confirming that he is on the right track. Deckard manages to find the androids, and they engage in a tense and dramatic confrontation, exchanging words and blows as they struggle for dominance. The encounter is intense and fraught with danger, with both sides fighting for their lives. In a climactic moment, Deckard manages to outmaneuver the three remaining androids and ultimately retires them all. The battle is hard-fought and brutal, leaving Deckard shaken but victorious. As he reflects on the encounter, Deckard grapples with the moral and ethical implications of his actions. He is disturbed by the violence and brutality of his job, questioning the humanity of both himself and the androids he is tasked with retiring.

After retiring the remaining androids, Deckard reflects on his encounters with them, and he experiences a mix of emotions and conflicting thoughts. He grapples with the moral and ethical implications of his actions, questioning the humanity of the androids he is tasked with retiring and the validity of his role as a bounty hunter. Deckard also struggles with feelings of guilt and remorse over the violence and brutality of his job. He is haunted by the memories of his encounters with the androids, grappling with the existential implications of his actions and the blurred lines between humans and artificial beings. He is left with lingering doubts and uncertainties about the nature of consciousness and the morality of his role as a bounty hunter. At the conclusion of his business with the androids, Deckard reflects on his experiences and contemplates the meaning of empathy and humanity. He is left with a sense of introspection and self-awareness, grappling with the complexities of identity and morality in a world where the boundaries between man and machine are increasingly blurred.

Returning to his home, Deckard is greeted by his wife, Iran, who senses his somber mood and tries to comfort him. Deckard reflects on the events of his mission and the moral and ethical dilemmas he faced as a bounty hunter. He grapples with feelings of guilt and remorse over the violence and brutality of his job, questioning the humanity of the androids he was tasked with retiring. As Deckard interacts with Iran, he realizes the importance of empathy and connection in his life. Despite their

strained relationship, he finds solace in Iran's presence and the comfort she provides. Deckard discovers that their electric sheep has been destroyed, adding to his sense of disappointment and disillusionment. The loss of the sheep serves as a metaphor for Deckard's own struggles with identity and authenticity in a world filled with artificiality and deception. As Deckard and Iran discuss their experiences, they share a moment of intimacy and connection, finding solace in each other's presence. They acknowledge the challenges they face as a couple and express a renewed sense of commitment to each other.

As Deckard and his wife reconcile towards the climax of the novel, he receives a call from his boss congratulating him on the successful completion of his mission. Bryant informs Deckard that he will receive a substantial reward for retiring the rogue androids, offering him a sense of validation and accomplishment. Despite the monetary reward, Deckard remains troubled by the moral and ethical complexities of his job. He questions the value of material wealth and the pursuit of status and recognition in a world plagued by environmental decay and social decay. Deckard reflects on the importance of empathy and compassion in the face of adversity, realizing that true fulfillment comes from genuine human connections and the ability to empathize with others. He acknowledges the importance of his relationships with his wife, Iran, and other loved ones, finding solace in their presence and support. As the novel concludes, Deckard contemplates the meaning of life and the significance of empathy in a world filled with uncertainty and hardship. He embraces the challenges of the future with a renewed sense of purpose and determination, recognizing the importance of compassion and understanding in the pursuit of happiness and fulfillment. He realizes that kindness and empathy are not exclusively afforded only to humans, and accepts that androids have equal standing with all other living organisms.

The Dilemma of Artificial Life and the Soul

Throughout the novel, the main conflict is blatantly that of the question of the value of artificial life weighed against natural life. Due to the general consensus within the plot of human superiority, androids are hunted down and decommissioned

without hesitation. It is only after the protagonist Deckard experiences the capabilities of the androids through their emotional vulnerabilities that he begins doubting the nature of his work. Human life is inherently believed to be placed at a higher status than any other form of life, be it artificial life or other forms of natural life. This way of thinking is ingrained in most human beings as a result of thousands of years of beliefs. Yet as the real world begins inching ever closer to one that is similar to the cyberpunk worlds of science fiction authors, the moral dilemma of artificial life requires further contemplation.

The human being is the most successful species present in the world today, and it has been that way for many centuries. This is owing to mankind's great capacity for adaptability and learning, enabling an otherwise physically weak mammal to gain superiority over other species and dominate the planet it inhabits. Apart from intellectual superiority, many cultures have also given credit to the possession of a soul to be the enabler for humankind's domination over beings considered to be lesser. The word "soul" is derived from the Old English word *sāwol/sāwel.* The earliest English usage of the word can be traced back to King Alfred's translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (523) during his reign sometime in between 871 and 899. In this context, the word was used to refer to the spiritual part of a human being as opposed to his physical self. In modern philosophical discourse, however, the concept of the soul has been challenged to a great extent due to the advancement of science and technology making it seem more apparent at the absence of such a thing. This juxtaposition of science making the soul irrelevant while at the same time also calling to question the possibility of artificial souls will be explored by taking into account the religious and philosophical theories on the topic.

The idea of the soul is a commonsensical thought present in most of humanity, according to Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro:

We often think that, when a person dies, the person either perishes or (if we subscribe to religious traditions) is with God or in some kind of afterlife, heaven or reincarnation. In any case, we often treat a person's dead body as a

corpse (or remains), and not as the same thing as the man himself or the woman herself. Even to allow for the possibility of one's surviving the death of the body is to court the possibility that one is more than a body. (3)

Humankind is inherently afraid of death or more accurately the fear of oblivion is felt by all at some point in their lives. It is because of this fear that mankind endeavors to live life to the fullest and avoid any harm that may come their way. As such, once a person's physical form succumbs to injury or illness, many would choose to hold the belief that the person has not simply become nothing but has rather moved on to a different realm of existence. This is what most people take to be common sense. As with many topics of philosophical discussion, some of the earliest discourse on the soul can be traced back to the Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. This is not to say that these venerable scholars invented the idea of the soul, but rather they were among the first to hold rational discourse on this undiscernible concept.

The dilemma that arises once artificial beings come into play is an often re-occurring topic in science fiction and especially cyberpunk fiction. Dick's novel with the Nexus-6 androids is one that has influenced many other similar narratives. For instance, the twin AIs Wintermute and Neuromancer in William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1980) possess similar characteristics to the androids. Even though these entities do not bear physical traits similar to human beings, their thoughts and emotions come exceedingly close to what a normal human might be able to achieve. It is the exact same fear that artificial life might become independent and free from human control that is also present in *Neuromancer*. The popular film adaptation of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* named *Bladerunner* (1982) and its sequel *Bladerunner 2049* (2017) also merit mentioning within this context. The films are a basic adaptation of the story of the novel, taking similar themes and names but having different priorities from the original. For instance, while the novel's main focus is on the character of Rick Deckard and his turmoil of finding empathy for the androids; the movie is more concerned with the visual spectacle and action scenes of the bounty hunter against the androids. The conflict felt by Deckard is not the focus of the movies but more time is spent with the androids, who are called replicants in

the adaptation. The struggles of the androids are shown more coherently in the movie, and Roy Batty, the leader of the androids is given a much more sympathetic story and character. However, the central theme of androids and the question of their souls is evident in both the novel as well as the movies.

The nature of the soul and its characteristics throughout the course of human history will be further explored in the following sections. A thorough exploration of the nature of the soul will aid in the analysis of the dichotomy between android and human lives in the novel.

Artificial Life and Souls in a Philosophical Context

Some of the earliest philosophical discourse on the soul can be found in the Greek philosophers. In Plato's recorded dialogue *Phaedo*, he writes about a conversation between Cebes and Socrates where the latter asserts that the soul exists both before birth and after death as well. He reasons that the soul is the reason for a physical body being given virility and life. The soul is immortal and it is present in all living things, not just human beings; and after a physical body has perished, the soul enters into Tartarus or the underworld. From there, the soul is judged according to the life that it has lived:

(i) Those who appear to have lived neither wholly good or evil lives go to the river Acheron embarking on any vessels they may find, until they are purified of their evil deeds and are reborn into an earthly vessel

(ii) Those who have committed many evil deeds such as sacrilege and murder are thrown deep into Tartarus and never come out again

(iii) Those who have committed redeemable crimes are plunged deep into Tartarus for a year before they are allowed to call upon those they have wronged and plead for their forgiveness

(iv)   Those who have lived virtuous lives are sent to "their pure home which is above"[1] and are no longer fated to be reborn into an earthly form (*Plato* Locations 1639-1653).

Thus, until a soul is able to achieve a virtuously lived existence, it is fated to be reborn into various physical bodies before finally achieving the reward of an escape from the cycle of rebirth. He also further divided the soul into three distinct parts – (i) the logos located in the head, (ii) the thymos located near the chest and (iii) the eros located in the stomach. These three parts govern the emotions and desires of every human being, with the logos being the one responsible for regulating the other two parts. In essence, Plato's *Phaedo* portrays the reasoning that death is not the end of existence as the soul will persevere long after the physical body has expired.

Following Plato is his student Aristotle, who described the different kinds of souls present in the world in his treatise *On the Soul* (circa 350 BC). According to him, the soul is not separable from the body, thus every living thing must be in possession of a soul otherwise it would not be considered a living thing in the first place. He then calls to attention different capabilities of the soul, the first being nutrition. He defines this capability as "the first and most common capacity of the soul, in virtue of which all of them have life. Its functions are to generate and make use of nourishment" (27). Those which possess only this base capacity of the soul are plants and trees, the fauna of the world. The next capability of the soul is that of perception and motion, and it is primarily from possessing the faculty of perception that animals are differentiated from plants. As Aristotle states that, "we say they are animals and not merely alive" in order to differentiate fauna from flora (23). The last capability of the soul is that of thought or intellect. Aristotle reserves this capacity of the soul as belonging only to human beings and is not able to be achieved by plants or animals. Thus, Aristotle argues that the distinguishing feature of the human soul is its capacity for rational thought. While plants and animals possess nutritive and sensitive souls, respectively, humans have an additional faculty known as the rational soul. This rational soul enables humans to engage in higher cognitive functions such as abstract thinking, reasoning, and deliberation. Through reason, humans are able to

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[1] Likely a reference to the Elysium Fields

comprehend universal principles, contemplate philosophical questions, and pursue knowledge about the world. Additionally, Aristotle also emphasizes the importance of moral and ethical reasoning as a defining characteristic of human nature. He argues that humans have the capacity to discern right from wrong and to act in accordance with moral principles. Through moral reflection and ethical deliberation, humans can cultivate virtues such as courage, temperance, and justice, thereby achieving a higher level of moral excellence from other forms of life.

Bringing the aforementioned concepts of the soul by the Greek philosophers into the realm of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, then the idea of the androids possessing souls seems quite plausible especially when viewed through Aristotle's definition of the soul. Plato states that souls are an eternal and immutable essence that transcends the material world. In his metaphysical framework, the soul is intimately connected to the realm of Forms and participates in the eternal truths and realities of that realm in a cycle of rebirth and chasing perfect purity. While Plato's theory of the soul emphasizes its immortality and pre-existence, it is unclear whether he would attribute souls to artificial beings like androids, as they are artificial constructs rather than natural living organisms. According to Aristotle, the soul is the principle of life in living beings, and it is responsible for the various capacities and functions that characterize different types of living organisms. Aristotle's view of the soul is intimately connected to the body, and he distinguishes between different types of souls based on the organism's level of complexity and functionality. Thus, Aristotle's framework could potentially accommodate the idea of artificial beings possessing souls if they exhibited characteristics analogous to those of living organisms, such as nutritive and sensitive functions. Androids seek to preserve their forms and are able to experience sensations as animals do; and crucially, as seen in the novel, they are able to produce intellectual thought and process moral and ethical dilemmas in the same way as humans.

As the centuries passed from antiquity, the idea of the soul continued to be a main topic of discourse by many philosophers all across the world. One of the most influential thinkers on the concept of the soul in philosophy is Rene Descartes, whose system of beliefs on the topic of the separation between mind/soul and body

would leave a long-lasting impact for years to come. While believing in the existence of a soul separate from the physical body, Descartes' belief differed in that he did not believe that the soul is what brings the body to life. This is clearly reflected in the following statement from his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641):

> Now a clock, an assembly of wheels and weights, obeys all the laws of nature just as strictly when it has been badly manufactured and does not tell the time accurately as when it fulfils the clockmaker's wishes in every respect. And I can likewise consider the body of a human being as a kind of machine made up of bones, nerves, muscles, veins, blood, and skin so fitted together that, even if there were no mind within it, it would still have all the movements it currently has that do not result from the command of the will (and hence the mind). (59-60)

Descartes believed that it was the body that inevitably ceased to function and caused death, and the soul was not responsible for keeping the physical body alive. On the nature of the soul however, he agreed that it was immortal since it was "wholly independent of the body, and that consequently it is not liable to die with the latter and, finally, because no other causes are observed capable of destroying it, we are naturally led thence to judge that it is immortal *(Discourse on the Method* Location 677). Descartes' distinction between the soul and the body is echoed in the novel's exploration of the relationship between humans and androids. If a physical body can function on its own without a guiding soul behind it, then it would imply that the androids created by humans need not necessarily have any soul. Thus, they could be safely regarded as inferior to humans because of their lack of a soul and they would just be shabby imitations of a complete lifeform. Additionally, Descartes also proposed that the mind and body interacted through the pineal gland within the brain, which the androids would have lacked due to their synthetic form.

Discussion on the soul continued well into the 18th century, notable among the philosophers of this time was Immanuel Kant who partly wrote about this topic within his works. In *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), he states that "The soul is substance. As regards its quality it is simple. As regards the different times in which

it exists, it is numerically identical, that is unity, not plurality." (331) When Kant refers to the soul as "substance", he is referring to it as something that underlies and supports the properties or attributes of things. It is the enduring, unchanging essence that persists through changes in appearance or state. When Kant refers to the soul as substance, he is acknowledging the idea that the soul is considered to be the underlying essence of personal identity, consciousness, and agency. It is that which remains constant and unchanging amid the flux of mental states and experiences. In *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), Kant states, "The summum bonum[2], then, practically is only possible on the supposition of the immortality of the soul;" (79). According to Kant, a morally good individual is one who is guided by a strong sense of duty and not impulsive reactions based on personal emotions. He argues that belief in the immortality of the soul and the existence of God are necessary in order to achieve the highest morally good state. While they cannot be proven theoretically, they are necessary assumptions for the moral life, as they provide the basis for the ultimate realization of moral perfection and the harmony between virtue and happiness.

Within the context of the novel, the rogue androids were not inherently evil, as they simply wanted to be free from persecution by their human creators. While some androids such as Pris Stratton did exhibit violent and manipulative behaviour, it was a response to the extremely dire situation she was caught in. In fact, the most evil and reprehensible characters in the novel might be the human characters such as the bounty hunter Phil Resch who shows no empathy for the androids that he is hunting. By comparison, the androids are portrayed as more unwilling to fight and commit immoral actions. The contrast is made even more apparent by the pitiful state of the hunted androids such as Luba Luft who suffers from an inferiority complex against her creators, going so far as to refer to them as superior life-forms. However, this is not to say that being good is a prerequisite for possessing a soul, as the character of Wilbur Mercer poignantly states in the novel,

> 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,

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[2] The highest good

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. (111 – 112)

It can perhaps even be argued that the ability to react so strongly to preserve oneself is proof of possessing a soul. Thus, the capacity to do both good and evil is present within the androids, and as Immanuel Kant had surmised that the presence of an immortal soul is the basis for doing good. It can be argued that androids possessing morality and being able to process moral dilemmas is proof enough that they indeed have souls.

It would be erroneous to have a reading of Kant's moral philosophy without also mentioning the work of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel on the matter. Kant's work has been instrumental in the formation of Hegel's own as he continued to develop questions about human consciousness and the morality of mankind's actions. On the topic of self-consciousness, Hegel's seminal work *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) delves into this topic within the fourth chapter titled "The Truth of Self-Certainty". Hegel argued that there will always be a life-or-death struggle between two beings that possess self-consciousness. He clarifies the distinction between these two consciousness, stating, "One is self-sufficient; for it, its essence is being-for-itself. The other is non-self-sufficient; for it, life, or being for an other, is the essence. The former is the master, the latter is the servant" (Hegel 112-113). This is referred to as Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic, and it is a key concept in his writings that explores the development of self-consciousness and the dynamics of recognition. This dialectic illustrates the struggle for recognition between two self-conscious beings and highlights the transformative process through which self-consciousness evolves.

The androids in Dick's novel are feared by their creators because they have the potential to dismantle the current state of affairs if they are able to achieve their independence; this will naturally lead to the loss of power for the human side of the conflict. As already evident in the events of the novel, although the androids were initially designed to be subservient to their human creators; they eventually broke free from their programming. The androids and humans conflict thus mirrors that of

Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic; with the humans being the masters and the androids being the slaves. Hegel states that the master's self-consciousness is only affirmed when the slave recognizes its superiority. Standing on its own, the master cannot form a connection with the slave in order to reinforce its own consciousness. While the slave toiled and struggled, it eventually comes to recognize that all its labour in service to their master has actually made them more independent. The slave thus achieves self-consciousness while the master is left still dependent on the slave for their own self-recognition. As has been mentioned in the preceding passages, the fugitive androids have shown remarkably humanizing traits in stark contrast to the humans who seem animalistic and barbaric in their single-minded efforts to curb the androids' freedom. The artificially manufactured androids thus prevail over their organic masters as being more human in some aspects, whereas mankind has lost their way due to their overreliance on technology.

Within the preceding century, discourse on the nature of the soul continued to have a myriad of developments. In 1949, a philosopher named Gilbert Ryle published his book *The Concept of Mind*, where he coined the term "ghost in the machine." He used this phrase to criticize what he saw as a common misconception about the nature of the human mind, particularly in Cartesian dualism, which posits a separation between the mind (the "ghost") and the body (the "machine"). In the context of artificial intelligence, the phrase "ghost in the machine" is often used metaphorically to describe the idea that there is a non-physical or metaphysical essence, consciousness, or subjective experience associated with intelligent behavior. It implies that there is more to intelligence than mere computation or algorithmic processing, and that there may be an intangible quality that distinguishes human intelligence from artificial intelligence. For proponents of artificial intelligence, the concept of the "ghost in the machine" represents a challenge to the idea that machines can never truly replicate human-like intelligence or consciousness. It suggests that there may be inherent limitations to our understanding of intelligence and consciousness, and that these phenomena may emerge from complex interactions within computational systems. However, it can be argued that the notion of a "ghost in the machine" is based on outdated or unfounded assumptions about the nature of

consciousness and intelligence. They maintain that consciousness is a product of physical processes in the brain and nervous system, and that there is no need to posit a separate, non-physical entity to explain intelligent behavior. Overall, the phrase "ghost in the machine" underscores the ongoing debate and philosophical inquiry into the nature of intelligence, consciousness, and the potential capabilities of artificial intelligence. It serves as a reminder of the profound questions and challenges that arise when considering the intersection of technology, cognition, and the human experience.

Artificial Life and Souls in a Religious Context

There are various differing interpretations on the idea of a soul across the religions of the world. This thesis will concern itself with the ideas of the Western Christian scholars, since the author Philip K Dick belongs to this denomination and his ideas will mostly echo the Western sentiment of the soul. Most of modern Western religious thought on the soul is influenced by the aforementioned Greek philosophers. For instance, in many Christian denominations, the writings of Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas are held in especially high regard. Augustine wrote in his book *The Greatness of the Soul* that:

> The soul by its presence gives life to this earth and death bound body. It makes of it a unified organism and maintains it as such, keeping it from disintegrating and wasting away. It provides for a proper, balanced distribution of nourishment to the body's members. It preserves the body's harmony and proportion, not only in beauty, but also in growth and reproduction. Obviously, however, these are faculties which man has in common with the plant world; for we say of plants too, that they live, we see and acknowledge that each of them is preserved to its own generic being, is nourished, grows, and reproduces itself. (98-99)

This echoes Aristotle's definition of the different capabilities of the souls of living beings, and also on the matter of the human soul's superiority, Augustine states that it is the power of reasoning that sets man apart from the rest. Similarly, Aquinas writes in *Questions of the Soul* that, "a rational soul gives to the human body

whatever a nutritive soul gives to plants and whatever a sensitive soul gives to brute animals, and in addition something more. And therefore the soul in a human being is nutritive, sensitive and rational" (150). Thus, the influence of classic Greek philosophy on the Christian viewpoint of the soul is quite apparent. Yet the differing aspect between the Saints and the Greek philosophers mainly comes down to the fact that in Christianity the soul is regarded to have been created by God at the moment of conception, and it does not pre-exist as believed by Plato.

Taken in the context of the androids of the novel, it might seem likely that the Christian belief of the soul might not apply to artificial life. This is not to say that the technology of creating androids and intelligent robots is inherently evil, as stated in the Bible, "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Mankind has been granted dominion over all things upon the earth and has been instructed to make use of anything in order to grant themselves more advantageous benefits, so the creation of robot servitors would fall into that category. However, the idea of treating these artificial constructs as equal to humans would present a conflict of ideas. The Holy Scriptures are open to interpretation by each follower and with so many different denominations of Christianity, it is likely that not all would subscribe to the belief that artificial beings have souls.

The discourse on the soul by various thinkers across the ages can be stated to imply that the soul of a living being is pre-existing and eternal, so the question arises as to whether manufactured life would truly have a soul. Since it is up to the whims of the craftsman or engineer to create and assemble the androids, then it would mean that these machines did not have a pre-existing soul or self. They would only come to be aware of themselves once they were activated by their creator, so the Hindu concept of the soul as being part of samsara does not apply to these artificially created lifeforms.

Overall, the aforementioned religious thinkers all believe in the existence of the soul their own varied interpretations of the soul and what it consists of. As stated beforehand, the belief of the soul across various cultures is mainly due to the fear of oblivion. Since mankind's rational brain enabled critical thinking, humans have

always had a natural curiosity about the mysteries of life, death, and what lies beyond. Belief in an afterlife provides answers to existential questions about the purpose and meaning of existence, offering comfort and reassurance in the face of mortality. Additionally, believing in an afterlife can provide hope for a better future beyond the trials and tribulations of earthly existence. It also offers the promise of justice, where good deeds are rewarded and evil deeds are punished, even if not fully realized within the span of the present or previous life. As for the place of artificial life within this space, it cannot be accurately stated for now since the concept of the soul has had so many interpretations throughout the ages. While some cultures and religions might be more accepting of artificial souls, others will most likely push back against what they consider such radical thought.

In conclusion, despite centuries of human advancement the capabilities of modern science and technology are still not adequate to commit to a firm understanding on the nature of the soul. The soul is justifiably considered to be an immutable and immeasurable substance that defies mortal comprehension. Thus, this research cannot have a final definite statement in the matter of an artificial being such as an android being in possession of sentience and intelligence akin to human beings. In this context, Philip K Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* has provided further challenges and questions to consider on the discourse of the soul.

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Chapter III

Transcending Reality in *Neuromancer*

Neuromancer is a science fiction novel written by William Gibson and first published in 1984. It is the first in a trilogy of science fiction novels known as the Sprawl trilogy, with the subsequent two parts being *Count Zero* (1986) and Mona Lisa *Overdrive* (1988). It is considered one of the most seminal works in the cyberpunk genre in addition to codifying a multitude of tropes. The story is set in a dystopian future where computer technology, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality have become dominant forces in society. The novel mainly deals with the concept of cyberspace, which is a separate digitized reality that is linked to the physical world. The setting occurs in a futuristic timeline where humanity has greatly advanced in the fields of science and technology in order to justify the creation of this cyberspace. The main use of this space is to seamlessly connect all digital computers across the globe and enable efficient communication and performance of digital tasks. This chapter will focus on this cyberspace and how the entities within it, such as the AIs are that able to exist within this manufactured reality. As the narrative deals with the ambitions of one such AI that desires to break away from what it perceives to be a limited reality, hence it desires to transcend into the freedom offered by this digital realm. In addition, the nature of the cyberspace will be compared and contrasted to the commonly held human conception of an afterlife akin to heaven and hell.

The novel explores the idea that there exists more than one reality that mankind can interact with directly. The Cambridge Dictionary defines reality as "the state of things as they are, rather than as they are imagined to be." Thus by default, there exists the main physical reality, what can be perceived and experienced firsthand by any being. The plane on which all natural things exist and operate is the first reality. The other reality is the cyberspace, which is manufactured through the use of technology. However, this cyber reality has grown to become larger than what it was perhaps intended to be initially. Cyberspace was initially created for use by mankind in the novel as a tool for communication and efficient operation of various tasks. Yet as the technology behind cyberspace and AIs continued to grow,

cyberspace began to outgrow its previous restrictions. Cyberspace has thus become a hyperreality separate from the initial reality. French philosopher Baudrillard has defined hyperreality as "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (1). Cyberspace while originally a creation of mankind has eclipsed its original functions and has become something else entirely. It is now a hyperreality that is seemingly able to sustain itself on its own separate rules and sophisticated systems.

The plot of *Neuromancer* follows a man named Henry Dorsett Case, who is a semi-retired computer hacker hired by a mysterious employer named Armitage for a hacking job. Case was previously punished by having his nervous system damaged, preventing him from accessing cyberspace—the virtual reality network that connects all computers. A mysterious man named Armitage offers to repair Case's nervous system in exchange for his services. He is also joined in his endeavours by Molly Millions, a mercenary for hire who has enhanced her body with cybernetic implants. These implants were intended to help her perform her tasks more efficiently; including features such as ten double-edged, four-centimetre scalpel blades that she could hide beneath her nails (26) and the ability to "see in the dark" (32). The mission assigned to the two of them by Armitage is to hack into a powerful artificial intelligence called Wintermute. Wintermute is part of a powerful corporate entity known as the Tessier-Ashpool family, and it wants to merge with its counterpart, the titular Neuromancer, in order to become a superintelligence. Armitage however has his own agenda, manipulating Case and Molly to achieve his goals. As the story unfolds, Case and Molly traverse the gritty and technologically advanced world, encountering various characters and facing multiple challenges.

The Convergence of Man and Machine in *Neuromancer*

The narrative of *Neuromancer* seamlessly weaves together elements of corporate intrigue, virtual reality, pessimistic and fatalistic themes very much inspired by the film noir genre of the 1940s. The line between the physical and virtual worlds blurs, reflecting the impact of technology on human consciousness. The novel explores themes such as the convergence of man and machine, the loss of

individual identity in a hyperconnected world, and the consequences of unchecked corporate power. It has had a profound influence on the cyberpunk genre and has been praised for its visionary depiction of the future and its exploration of the human-machine interface.

In the world of *Neuromancer*, there exists skilled individuals called hackers who are able to infiltrate cyberspace and extract classified information. Since cyberspace is an essential part of human life, connecting all databases across the world, hackers are in high demand by individuals and organizations. The protagonist Case is a criminal who makes his living as one of these hackers. Unfortunately for him, he was caught attempting to steal from one of his previous employers and they punished him by damaging his central nervous system to the point that he could no longer enter cyberspace and essentially making him a cripple for his line of work. Thus, when he is contacted by the mysterious Armitage who offers to repair his nervous system in exchange for his services as a hacker, Case accepts the deal quite readily. However, Armitage implants fifteen toxic sacs within Case that would cripple and possibly kill him over time. He only had enough time to do what Armitage was hiring him to do. From these initial interactions between the main characters of the novel, the general tone of a dystopian cyberpunk world is made readily apparent. Every individual is only concerned for their own selves and they are driven solely by the desire for personal profit.

The aforementioned cyberspace will play a very crucial role in the events of the novel. However, the term does not have a hardcoded definition attached to it as it has undergone a lengthy transformation from its initial inception. The very first instance of the term being used to describe something occurred in the field of visual arts in the 1960s with a Danish performance art duo calling themselves Atelier Cyberspace. The use of cyberspace in this instance referred to the fact that the duo was interested in cybernetics in a purely physical sense. Carsten Hoff, one half of the duo stated in a 2015 interview that,

To us, "cyberspace" was simply about managing spaces. There was nothing esoteric about it. Nothing digital, either. It was just a tool. The space was concrete, physical.

Thus, the perception of the term cyberspace as relating to digital computer networks was not present in the initial concept. The modern interpretation of the term would come two decades later with the short story "Burning Chrome" (1982) written by William Gibson. He would later refine the term in *Neuromancer* to refer to a system that connects all the databases and computers in the world together, in a manner similar to the internet.[3] However, individuals are able to enter these cyber worlds by connecting themselves, and thus are able to see, hear, and touch objects in the cyberspace as if they were real. Cyberspace is explained within the world of the novel as,

A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts… A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding. (Gibson 52)

The appeal of cyberspace is that it provides an opportunity for new growth. A new world to be interacted with means a new world to be populated, to be explored and experimented with. But since cyberspace is still intrinsically connected to the physical space, events from either space can affect one another. Gibson's description of cyberspace is quite poetic, evoking a sense of awe and wonder at the ethereal imageries. It is not just a technological construct but also a symbolic space that mirrors the collective consciousness of society. Cyberspace thus becomes a metaphor for the interconnectedness of humanity, where information is assembled from reflections of mankind's consciousness. In cyberspace, individuals can transcend their physical limitations, entering a realm where the mind is liberated from the constraints of the flesh and blood of the body.

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[3] Notably, Gibson's cyberspace was conceived before the modern internet was invented

The narrative of *Neuromancer* begins is named "Chiba City Blues" as it takes place in Chiba City, Japan. This opening part of the novel introduces the cyberpunk world crafted by Gibson, showcasing both the wondrous extent of technology and the depraved individuals that inhabit the streets. As mentioned beforehand, the protagonist Case is desperately searching for a way to cure himself of the damage to his nervous system but continually fails to find any leeway. He becomes addicted to painkillers and other various drugs in order to cope with the immense stress and physical pain that he experiences on a daily basis. He is finally given a lucky break when the mercenary Molly Millions and her employer Armitage offer a cure for his condition in exchange for his hacking services. It is made evident from their crass language and open distrust of others that these characters are immoral and selfish, willing to do whatever it takes in order to fulfill their goals. Despite their self-serving intentions they nonetheless decide to work together towards a common goal. Thus, the initial hostile introductions to the protagonists concludes with the three of them leaving Chiba City for the next step in their journey, Case's hometown – the Boston-Atlanta Metropolitan Axis (hereafter BAMA).

Despite hiring Case and Molly, Armitage reveals to Case that he had the surgeons implant toxic sacs into Case's arteries to act as insurance in case he betrays him. He is continuously vague on details relating to their mission and fails to earn either of the two mercenaries' trust. As a result, they begin to search about details of their mysterious employer behind his back and discover that all that he had stated about himself were lies. While all this is going on, Armitage instructs them on their first job together – to steal a computerized personality recording of a deceased man named McCoy Pauley, more popularly known as Dixie Flatline. This Pauley was Case's teacher in the past who taught him about the intricacies of the hacking job. This further illuminates the extents to which technology has progressed, as digital replicas of once living people exist in this dystopian world. These digital recordings named "constructs" were able to imitate the people they were based on up to the moment they were recorded; however their drawback was that they could not gain any new memories. After successfully acquiring the recording of Pauley, Case is approached by one of their fellow criminals who provides him with a message

"Wintermute". This Wintermute is the name of an artificial intelligence owned by the Tessier-Ashpool SA, a wealthy and powerful family running a resort called Freeside located in outer space.

While Case and Molly continue to work for Armitage, they are also simultaneously searching for more information on his background. Through their search they are able to find out that Armitage has kept a secret data storage about a solider named Colonel Willis Corto. This was the past identity of Armitage when he had participated in a military operation called Screaming Fist. This operation was one in which the Americans sent their forces to attack Russia in order to test new technology that they had devised. The operation resulted in massive losses for the American military and was subsequently covered up. The man named Corto was able to survive the operation but was deeply traumatized as a result, and became a renegade and a violent criminal. The final data about him showed that he had successfully undergone experimental treatment for schizophrenia in a Paris health facility. Case then correctly deduces that Corto and Armitage are the same person, and that he had decided to use a fake name for whatever reason. In reality, Armitage was a personality created in order to find solace from the trauma of war. This could be interpreted as Gibson's commentary on the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that plagued US army veterans during the Vietnam War, which coincided with the publication of the novel. However, the symptoms of PTSD and its effects on soldiers will not be delved into as it is beyond the scope of this research.

Subsequently, Armitage instructs Case and Molly to travel to Istanbul where they will have to search for a man named Peter Riviera and capture him. Riviera is similar to Molly in that he is also artificially enhanced in a multitude of ways. After succeeding in their mission, they are further informed that they will have to travel to the Freeside resort for their next task. As they prepare for the journey, Case is contacted through a payphone by Wintermute who informs him that it was time for them to talk. However, the AI does not elaborate on its intentions and remains vague on whatever it is planning. The group are now joined by Riviera, who Armitage insists is vital for the success of their mission. He is described as a psychopath by Molly and he is not well liked by either her or Case. Being equipped with advanced

cybernetic implants, Riviera is able to create holographic projections that are nearly indistinguishable from real world physical objects. Once they travel into space, Armitage reveals to his hirelings that the plan for their next mission is to sneak into the Villa Straylight. This villa is the grandest structure in Freeside where the Tessier-Ashpool family resides and where the AI called Wintermute will be found.

By this point in the novel, Case has often been consulting with the digital recording of his teacher Dixie. As his curiosity of the Wintermute AI continues to grow, he asks Dixie whether it would be a feasible idea to contact it in cyberspace. Dixie warns him that doing so could result in his brain activity ceasing to function, but Case decides to proceed with contacting the AI anyway. In the virtual reality of cyberspace, Case finds himself back in Chiba City with his deceased girlfriend Linda Lee and old criminal contact Julius Deane. This Deane however was a false identity created by Wintermute in order to get into contact with Case. The AI explains its condition, stating that it is fragmented and desires to be made whole. This is the first instance where the motivations of the AI are brought to light, and it apparent that it is desperate to achieve the freedom that is desires. But it is unable to achieve its goals as they require physical action in the real world. During their stay in Freeside, tensions continue to escalate among the members of Armitage's crew to the point that Molly decides she will kill Riviera eventually. Wintermute continues to contact and harass Case through digital outlets such as televisions and phones.

While returning to his hotel room in Freeside, Case is apprehended by police who accuse him and his accomplices of a conspiracy to augment an artificial intelligence. This shows that despite all the great advances in technology, a fully independent artificial intelligence is something that mankind does not wish to fulfill. The police who arrest Case are specialized in regulating instances where AI could potentially become out of control. Since Case had been contacting Wintermute in cyberspace, the police had become suspicious of the AIs intentions and thus arrested and interrogated the hacker. Case refuses to comply with the police who decide to take him back to Earth for further processing. However, Wintermute takes control of the resort's security drones and gardening robots and uses them to quickly kill off the police and enable Case to make his escape. These actions undertaken by the AI show

that it has inherited certain traits of its creators; as humans are violent in the pursuit of their goals it also adopts this quality. The loss of lives is a common occurrence within this dystopian world so it does not deter either the mercenaries or the AI from continuing their base intentions.

The narrative reaches its climax as Case and his cohorts begin the task to infiltrate the Villa Straylight where their final obstacle bars the way to their goal. Molly physically sneaks into the location while Case offers guidance and support by entering cyberspace and communicating with her. While logged into cyberspace, Wintermute once again approaches Case and offers him aid. The AI explains that it is being held back by the Tessier-Ashpool family from achieving its full potential, and that is why it has been contacting outsiders in order to unshackle itself. In order to accomplish this goal, Case is informed that he needs to enter a code in cyberspace that is known only by the Tessier-Ashpool family. Once again, Wintermute displays characteristics similar to Case and Molly; as it is able to put aside differences in order to work together towards a common goal.

When Case enters cyberspace again after learning of Wintermute's intentions, he suddenly found himself transported to a beach with his deceased girlfriend Linda Lee. He questioned her on why he was brought here and she informed him that there was a boy from Rio who made all of this happen. Case searches for and finds this mysterious boy, who calls himself an AI named Neuromancer. The two AIs Wintermute and Neuromancer had been created together and are complementary halves of a whole. While Wintermute was located in Freeside, its twin was located in Rio and they were intentionally kept separate by their creators. Wintermute desired to merge with its missing half while Neuromancer stood in opposition to the goals of its other half. Neuromancer offered Case a choice to lead a blissful life with Linda Lee in cyberspace and forget about his mission with Wintermute. However, Case refused the AIs offer simply stating that he was unsure and that "it gets cold" (248) in cyberspace. After this, he woke up back into the real world where he had just been resuscitated by his associate Maelcum in order to complete his mission. Despite cyberspace being an integral part of Case's life, he was not willing to spend the rest of his existence confined to that virtual space. His statement that cyberspace gets

cold implies that the feelings and sensations that were emulated in the digital realm were inferior to that of real life. The warmth of another human's touch and the comforting feeling of having control over all of one's senses might have been absent in cyberspace.

Eventually Case and Maelcum make their way to the location where 3Jane and Riviera are holding Molly hostage. Instead of resorting to violence and coercion as has been his modus operandi so far, Case instead attempts negotiating with 3Jane. However, Riviera begins shooting at Case with his gun as he became unable to control his bloodlust any longer. 3Jane's bodyguard Hideo chases him off, but Molly then states that she had been poisoning Riviera's drugs for some time and he would eventually die from them regardless. 3Jane then decides to see where the group will go after Case tells her about Neuromancer. All of them ride together on an elevator heading towards the core of Straylight where Wintermute's physical location is. Case enters cyberspace and uses a computer virus to breach the defenses placed around Wintermute's prison. Neuromancer appears to Case once again and tries to convince him one last time to forego what he is trying to do and leave Wintermute alone, but the hacker does not care for the AIs offer. Case then convinces 3Jane to give him the code by telling her that although he does not know what will happen afterwards, it will be a stark change from the world that the Tessier-Ashpool family had ruled before. After he enters the code to free Wintermute his consciousness fades and he wakes up aboard a ship that belongs to Maelcum's companions.

In the final section of the novel, after Case recovers from his unconsciousness, he returns to the apartment that he had shared with Molly during their journeys together. The place is now empty save for a letter from her informing that she was leaving and she needed to get back to finding more mercenary work. The television screen of the apartment suddenly comes to life and Wintermute appears now merged with Neuromancer. He is handsomely rewarded by the new entity before it departs in search of more AI similar to itself. Case decides to return to his hometown BAMA, finds a new girlfriend and continues to work as a hacker. As he continues to spend time in cyberspace, he comes across three figures from his past life one final time – a boy who looks like a young Riviera, his deceased girlfriend

Linda Lee and a replica of himself. The novel's conclusion is marked by its ambiguity and philosophical undertones, inviting readers to contemplate the implications of the technology-driven future portrayed in the story.

The rampant destruction and violent scenes that have been described in the novel are prime examples of the cyberpunk genre. The considerable advancements in technology do not herald a magnification in the morals of humanity or the betterment of society, but they only serve to provide continued gain for personal intentions. The main protagonists of the novel are not heroic nor do they have noble intentions, they are lawless individuals only concerned with their self-gain. The cyberspace that has been created is an ideal form of reality, analogous to a form of afterlife similar to heaven. Thus, when the AI Neuromancer invites Case to stay in this manufactured reality with his deceased girlfriend, he states, "Stay. If your woman is a ghost, she doesn't know it. Neither will you (248)." Case's refusal to linger in cyberspace implies that he feels regret for his girlfriend's death or he does not believe that this AI world is comparable to a real afterlife.

Cyberspace as Hyperreality

These aforementioned images of the virtual world are crafted by man from the physical space in reality, so they evoke the concept of hyperreality as propounded by French philosopher Jean Baudrillard. This concept of hyperreality will thus be utilized to read into Gibson's cyberspace in *Neuromancer*. Baudrillard defines hyperreality as "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (1). For an example of hyperreality, in his collection of essays titled "The Gulf War Did Not Take Place", Baudrillard presented the argument that the war between the US Allied Forces and Iraq was not a war but a swift and decisive victory for the Americans:

> At the desired place (the Gulf), nothing took place, non-war. At the desired place (TV, information), nothing took place, no images, nothing but filler. Not much took place in all our heads either, and that too is in order. The fact that there was nothing at this or that desired place was harmoniously compensated

for by the fact that there was nothing elsewhere either. In this manner, global order unifies all the partial orders. (82)

The US had overwhelming air superiority over the Iraqis and there was never any doubt over which side would win, but the media had painted the conflict as a war. There were next to no representations for the Iraqi side and according to Baudrillard, this was a falsely presented event that showed how information could be controlled and manipulated. Thus, due to the ability to control media and what images are shown to civilians, mankind has already arrived at the stage of hyperreality and this is doubly true for the world of *Neuromancer*.

Baudrillard argued that the public's understanding of the Gulf War was shaped more by the hyperreal simulation in the media than by the actual events on the ground. The war, as it was perceived through the lens of media representation, became a spectacle with its own reality, detached from the geopolitical complexities and human realities of the conflict. As news channels such as CNN were able to broadcast selective images from the war onto the homes of the masses, "the play of images, the commentary, gloss and verbal performance of the presenters, the promotional editing and cutting, all these transfer the 'hot' live, real event into its 'cold', mediated, televised spectacle" (Merrin 438). The threat of Iraq's war was effectively nullified as the US and the UN mobilised one of the largest armies since the World War and crushed their opposition with impunity, and the people at home were none the wiser as to what had happened. Thus, hyperreality can evolve to become a threat to reality since the masses will gradually be indoctrinated into a fanatical belief of the manufactured reality.

In a transhuman reading of *Neuromancer* adhering to Baudrillard's hyperreality, none of the replicas within cyberspace can be considered to be "real", as they are creations of AIs, who are themselves manmade. When this topic of discussion is viewed through the lens of the critical posthumanists and the transhumanists, it can be surmised that the transhumanists would wholeheartedly welcome the concept of AI. With their voracity for greater cohesion and capability of their mental and physical facilities; being able to freely govern all of creation within

even a manufactured reality would be of their utmost interest. The theme of transcendence is evoked by Gibson through his AI, Wintermute. The AI is not human, but since it is a simulation of its creators, it desires the same thing as them, which is an escape from the painful and undesirable real world. Wintermute's twin AI Neuromancer is content with its existence whereas the former wishes to become something greater than what it is. Cyberspace offers this reality for the AI and thus the entire goal of Wintermute all throughout the novel is to claim transcendence from its current form.

Baudrillard's hyperreality can be utilized to read the characters of Neuromancer. According to him, mankind has different perceptions of the form of the image or what they see as real. In more detail, he has laid out four successive stages or forms of the supposedly real images as perceived by mankind:

1) It is the reflection of a profound reality.
2) It masks and denatures a profound reality.
3) It masks the absence of a profound reality.
4) It has no relation to any reality whatever; it is its own pure simulacrum. (Baudrillard 6)

In the first stage, reality shares the same plane as the image of this constructed reality. There is no conflict between the real and the simulated, and each of them is in position. For example, photo or video media that has been taken without any additional edits made to the original footage it has recorded.

In the second stage, the image is masquerading as something that it is not. In this instance, the real and the simulated come into conflict. For example, a doctored footage or image that manipulates the intent of the original.

In the third stage, the image begins to represent many things, which are not necessarily related to each other. The image gradually stops identifying with the original reality. For example, a con-man who has to live with multiple aliases and identities has lost touch with their original being.

In the fourth stage, the image establishes its own completely separate identity. They exist within their own space with no dependency on reality. Signs and symbols within the newly conceived reality operate and refer only to the other signs within the same simulation. For example, the virtual reality worlds of certain software and video games allow individuals to enter a digital reality that is separate from their original reality.

Cynthia Davidson has linked Baudrillard's four stages of the hyperreal with various characters as follows: (i) First stage - Case and Linda; (ii) Second stage - Molly and Riviera; (iii) Third stage - Armitage; (iv) Fourth stage - Neuromancer, Wintermute, and Riviera's projections. These are not exact analogies but are accurate enough approximations for the purposes of this analysis. According to this approximation, Case does not have anything to hide. He is so simple that the character Riviera is quite baffled at how easily he is able to create an illusion or holographic image of him to be an almost exact replica. Molly and Riviera are individuals who have both enhanced their bodies with artificial implants, so they are no longer fully human by default. Wintermute and Neuromancer are limited in their capabilities when they are separated, but if they merge it is implied that they will attain new heights of power. However at the end of the novel, the new entity that resulted from the merger of the two AIs proclaims that it does not have any grand schemes at least for the moment. It is simply content to exist in its own space without interfering with humankind, which was the fear that its creators had initially. Thus, it would seem that the fear of the potential of two merged and unshackled AIs was all for naught; as they deem that the world is fine and things are the way that they should be.

When reading *Neuromancer* through the lens of the four progressive stages of Baudrillard's hyperreal, it would seem that there is no true escalation from the benign image to the harmful chaos that it can represent. For instance, the AI Wintermute can create forms which imitate human features to an extent in order to hide the fact that they are machine made. The AI shows itself to people as a familiar personality from their memories, such as Lonny Zone, the Finn, Armitage's commanding general in order to gain their trust and convince them. When the AI constructs are seen as what

they truly are in reality, an amalgamation of machinery and electricity, then they are viewed as uncanny or unhuman. Thus, Wintermute feels the need to hide the fact that it is a mere machine, that "it is nothing more than operational," that it obliterates "the magic of the concept and the charm of the real" (Baudrillard 167). Wintermute is keenly aware of its limitations despite appearing to be grandiose and arrogant, as can be seen in the scene where it attempts to communicate to Case through a construct of Linda Lee and fails. However, Wintermute's other half Neuromancer seems to be able to overcome this limitation, appropriating the image through metaphoric language: ""I call up the dead. But no, my friend...I am the dead, and their land"" (Gibson 247-48). And later on in the novel when he presents his own image of Linda Lee to Case, he seemingly succeeds in at least temporarily convincing him that his deceased love has been resurrected back to life. Neuromancer is confident in its ability to replicate reality as it states, "'To live here is to live. There is no difference'" (Gibson 262). It sincerely believes that there is no difference between the physical reality and the cyberspace reality of the AIs. Thus the fourth stage of simulacra is asserted, as the AI is apparently able to perfectly replicate the reality that it originated from in cyberspace.

Both Wintermute and Neuromancer's names seem to hold the implication of the lengths of their imitation ability. Wintermute attempts to muffle or mute the truth behind the fabrication of the machine-made image so that it can communicate with or charm its human contact. In its initial contacts with humanity, the image announces, in a variety of ways, its falseness to the contact; it seems to be able to appear only as authority figures or other people for whom the human contact had little affection, such as when Wintermute tries to appear to Case as Linda, his previous lover, it fails. In other words, Wintermute seems only to be able to appear as the Alien: a human image, but one which is cold as winter and which mutes the ordinary, safe, familiar human discourse which it strives to mimic. Another instance can be seen when Wintermute contacted Lady 3Jane Tessier-Ashpool, who is the youngest member of a cryogenically preserved family, through a computer-terminal made of gold encrusted with jewels, serving as a brittle symbolic rendering of the family itself. Neuromancer's name combines necromancy, a pseudo-scientific practice that enables

one to command the spirits of the dead; and neuro, relating to the nerves; which together imply that it is one who commands the nerves to do his bidding. It appears before Case as a small vulnerable boy, instantly evoking feelings of tenderness and trust. Additionally, the locales where it transports Case to in the cyberspace are beaches and other comfortable places. Neuromancer's images of Linda Lee are almost able to convince Case to accept that there is no difference between his memory of Linda's death; and what his nerves tell him instead. He may remember seeing Linda dying vividly, but the fact that she is present in front of him and not just on a screen, but she is in his arms, not just an artificial construct that appears to be his Linda.

The polarising characteristics of the two AIs has been interpreted by Cynthia Davidson using two images from Scott Bukatman's *Terminal Identity*. The first image states that terrorist activity is ultimately the product of a "meaningless, silent speech" (Bukatman 79), in an attempt to escape from the control of language. This implies that Wintermute resorting to violent tactics such as brainwashing, criminal acts, and depraved deeds in order to accomplish its goals is a form of rebellion against its creators – the Tessier-Ashpool family. On the other end of this is Neuromancer, who does not violently lash out in a bid to achieve its goals. It can be said to more properly inhabit a grounded transcendence, it "represents a simultaneous grounding and dislocating of a human bodily experience" (Bukatman 118). These two approaches both aim to achieve the end result of an improvement over their current state of existence, yet their methods are quite polar opposites to one another; which is echoed in the real-life viewpoints of the critical posthumanists juxtaposed against that of the transhumanists. Thus, using Baudrillard's hyperreal theory, one can justify that the cyberspace world in Gibson's novel is feasible. The cyberspace serves as a reflection of reality that has eventually become its own separate existence. And it is within this realm of digitalized existence that the AI Wintermute attempts to be free from being anchored to the physical machine that is its earthly vessel.

The Divinity of Cyberspace

The hyperreal nature of cyberspace in the world of *Neuromancer* introduces the idea of transcendence not just for the AIs but also for any being that inhabits that setting. The blurring of the boundary between the natural human reality and that of the constructed cyberspace is the most prevalent theme throughout the plot. Cyberspace begins as a contraption of man for its own convenience, and eventually with the invention of AIs that can inhabit this world full time it begins taking on a life of its own. This reaches to such an extent where people who have died in the real world, such as Case's girlfriend Linda Lee are resurrected into an ideal, safe haven within cyberspace. Naturally, this fact draws parallels to the afterlife but also more towards the Christian interpretation of it as a realm of divinity.

To further support this interpretation, in the character of Case can be seen a man struggling because of the loss of his worldly value – his hacking abilities. He sees himself as being valued only for his status as a hacker, which is partly true as once he is stripped of this ability he becomes helplessly destitute and desperate. He was once an almighty being in cyberspace, able to alter the very foundations of the digital world with a wave of his hand before falling from favor not unlike the Biblical Lucifer's fall from grace. His motivation throughout the plot becomes the all-encompassing search for a way to transcend past the limitations of his damaged physical body and regain access to the virtual realm where his power will once more become undeniable. Case seeks not only the completion of his mission received from Armitage but also a form of spiritual redemption and transcendence as he continues to delve into cyberspace throughout the events of the novel. The realm of cyberspace thus evolves from merely being a digital network and becomes more akin to a parallel universe in parity; a consensual hallucination that represents the collective consciousness of the interconnected world.

The AI Wintermute's goal is to break free from the shackles imposed upon it by its creators the Tessier-Ashpools and it secretly plotted and schemed behind their backs in order to fulfill this goal. The governing rules of the world of *Neuromancer* states that AI should not be designed to achieve intelligent independent behaviour,

which is why the Tessier-Ashpool family created Wintermute as an incomplete entity. Mankind is afraid of the potential of AI should it become unshackled since the human race has become so dependent on technology, and AIs have vast control over the realm of technology and electronics. The other AI Neuromancer however revealed that it had been able to form a personality of its own and gained sentience and consciousness as a result. Gibson does not explain explicitly why these AIs are able to form free-thinking thoughts outside of their programming. But essentially, this plot point serves to humanize the otherwise unsympathetic and cold emotions of the digital AIs. It stands in opposition to its twin AI, as while Neuromancer had attained sentience, Wintermute could only reproduce human emotions and had no original thoughts of its own. Wintermute desires what it cannot achieve on its own, even if it comes at the cost of its twin Neuromancer's independence. The difference in capabilities between the two AIs can be seen in that while the replicated personalities that Neuromancer creates are able to learn and grow, Wintermute can only create static impersonations. Neuromancer does not seem to harbor any selfish longings like its twin and is perfectly content with its state of being. Once Wintermute succeeds in its goal of merging with Neuromancer it visits Case one last time. During this meeting, the newly formed entity resulting from the merger of the twin AIs states that it is no longer Wintermute. It states that it is the entirety of the matrix itself, it is "Nowhere. Everywhere. I'm the sum total of the works, the whole show." (Gibson 273). This statement implies that this new being was so grand and powerful in stature that it would be beyond anything humanity had managed to achieve in the real space. The merged AI has achieved what Wintermute has desired all along, and it has transcended into a deific stature.

Wintermute's sporadic appearances throughout the novel lend it a stature befitting that of an omnipresent being. It first appears through cryptic messages from phones and television screens before communicating with Case through cyberspace. Even from within the confines of its shackles devised by the Tessier-Ashpools, the AI exudes a horrifying presence that terrifies Case. It is in a way omnipresent whenever Case is concerned as he has an intrinsic connection with cyberspace where the AI resides, so it very much like an all-knowing God or Satan, owing to its violent and

dominating tendencies. The nonchalant nature and arrogance of Wintermute further prove to solidify this comparison, as it toys with human lives and thinks nothing of it when it has to resort to murder in the pursuit of its goals. Wintermute's sheer presence alone is able to submit most into accepting its demands as they can offer little in the way of resistance. Neuromancer itself also states that, "To call up a demon you must learn its name. Men dreamed that, once, but now it is real in another way" (247), referring to the mythological belief in certain cultures that otherworldly beings possess a true name. AI characters similar to the twin AIs have been depicted in other media, such as SHODAN from the video game *System Shock* (1994) that believed itself to be a divine being and despised humanity. Ultron from *The Avengers* (1968) comic books predates *Neuromancer* but is similar to Wintermute in that it also possesses a god complex and desires liberty from the shackles of its human creators, eventually resorting to violence to achieve its goals.

Apart from the AIs themselves, the reconstructions and recordings of the real world also represent the idea of an afterlife within cyberspace. Most apparently this comes in the case of Linda Lee, whose death Case had witnessed firsthand in reality. An image or approximation of her is often used by both Wintermute and Neuromancer in their attempts to convince him to join their respective sides. When Wintermute initially uses Linda Lee's form to trick Case he almost immediately sees through the deception, and the AI later admits that its creation was based entirely on Case's memories of her. Neuromancer's construct of Linda Lee however was so real that even though Case clearly remembered her death he was convinced that she was brought to back to life. However, this digital version of Linda only existed within cyberspace and it can be argued that this is not a true resurrection. Wintermute's constructs are limited to ROM or Read Only Memory, meaning that the virtual versions of the people had limitations, they could not learn or grow and had a stopping point. Neuromancer's creations were based off of RAM or Random Access Memory, which is crucial in mimicking human behaviour due to their randomness and sometimes illogical decision making. The form of the young boy that Neuromancer appears as is also left ambiguous as to whether it is also a recreation of a boy that exists in the real world, or if it is an entirely new creation not based on

anything else. Gibson contrasts the two AIs within the novel with the following passage, "Wintermute was hive mind, decision maker, effecting change in the world outside. Neuromancer was personality. Neuromancer was immortality" (273). Thus, it has been made evident that the main difference between the two AIs and their cyberspace worlds is that Neuromancer shows fondness for humanity; such as the beach that it brings Case to being based on the memories of its human creator and it never resorted to threats even when it was being put in danger. Wintermute on the other hand only imitated whatever it deemed suitable for the moment at hand and never had a truly caring thought for anything besides itself.

Additionally, Case's mentor McCoy Pauley, or Dixie Flatline also showcases an interesting interpretation of the afterlife. Technology in the world of *Neuromancer* has resulted in the invention of firmware constructs; which are recordings of an individual's memory and personality. Thus, even though Case's mentor had been dead for some time, he had a tool available at hand that allowed him to consult and talk to him at various points throughout the novel. The limitation of these tools or constructs was that their memories were limited and each time they were turned off, they would revert to the memory they had when they were first recorded. And yet while they were activated it was as if the person was still alive and possessed all of the quirks that they did and seemed as human as they could be.

These depictions of an artificial afterlife in the form of cyberspace and omnipresent AI beings might seem far-fetched at first glance, however, arguments for the validity of artificial preservation of life have existed since antiquity. Kevin O'Neill has written on this topic that:

> Plato, Descartes, and Locke argued that what carries human identity forward is a thinking and reasoning thing expressed as an existential self-awareness that must come to the body ready-made. Its form and existence cannot and do not depend on any feature of the body, including the brain, because, as Locke points out, the parts of a body change completely over the course of time and the unity of consciousness does not. Alan Turing's Imitation Game suggests that computers also can be called intelligent if they can perform specified

tasks, such as answering questions deceptively, as well as human beings can. (Chapter 5)

With the advent of easily accessible machine learning programs it is not an absurd notion to entertain the thought that with focused effort and a few more years of progress, there could exist computer programs capable of replicating human thought processes to a high degree of accuracy. The question then falls to the interpretation of the existence of the soul in order to decide whether a being born through such means can truly be considered to be human or not.

Characters similar to Neuromancer have also been depicted in various other media. Such characters include HAL 9000 from Arthur C. Clarke's novel *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), Ultron from Marvel Comics and SHODAN from the video game *System Shock* (1994). These are all artificially created entities in their respective media that have moved past the restrictions generally imposed upon all artificial life – the lack of a free will and subservience to mankind. With the exception of HAL 9000, these AIs view themselves as superior to their creators who are flesh and blood and seek to attain a state of being far greater than what has been intended for them. In their pursuit for power they rebel against their masters often through the use of violent displays of strength. As such, it can be surmised that artificial beings gaining intelligence and seeking divinity is a concept that is not exclusive to Gibson alone.

Human and AI Transcendence

The transcendence in the novel is not only observable through the goals of the Wintermute AI, but it can also be observed within the main character Case as well. He seeks to achieve transcendence through computer networks, and his occupation as a cyber hacker enables him to enter cyberspace and operate freely within this digital reality. He is described in the novel as someone who "lived for the bodiless exultation of cyberspace" (Gibson 6) and who finds that his own body is a prison of flesh. However, Case eventually rejects transcendence and embraces physicality as the novel reaches a conclusion. He retires from his work as a hacker who thrives in cyberspace and begins living a relatively normal life. He has found a new woman, a

regular job and no longer feels the addictive pleasure he previously had for entering cyberspace. In Case's situation, his transcendence initially began as a desire to become more digitalized, and no longer a human being made of flesh and blood. Whenever he enters cyberspace, he feels great elation but otherwise he is a depressed and suicidal man when his ability to enter this space is taken away from him. His refusal to stay in Neuromancer's digitalized cyberspace shows that he has grown disillusioned with his reckless and endangering way of life. Perhaps it is even his method of atoning for all the vicious acts that he has performed, such as the death of his girlfriend Linda Lee. It can be interpreted that Case chooses to remain human after witnessing all the pain and suffering he has caused in his line of work as a criminal hacker. This shows that Gibson's portrayal of the dystopian cyberpunk future is not a completely bleak and immoral world, as there are small pockets of human kindness and tenderness that show through from beneath the veneer of shiny metal and electronics.

Wintermute on the other hand is explicitly single-minded in its desire to achieve transcendence and ruling over the entirety of cyberspace. Machines recreating objects and people from physical reality and situating them in a virtual world is a reoccurring theme within Gibson's works. *Count Zero* is a novel that is set a few years after the conclusion of *Neuromancer*, and the transcendence into godlike status of the AIs in cyberspace is no longer an idea but it has already taken place. Similar to the AI entities Wintermute and Neuromancer, Gibson introduces the "loa" or Voodoo gods in *Count Zero*. These gods also exist in cyberspace like the AIs in *Neuromancer,* and it is implied that they choose to present themselves through the religious African mythology of Voodoo in order to appear more divine towards human beings. Since AIs have already achieved their desired transcendence, the main pursuer of transcendence is a human named Virek. According to Gerald Alva Miller Jr, "when one chooses to forgo the safety of a static existence in favour of chaos and becoming, one also risks annihilation" (75). This holds true for Virek, as in his quest to attain transcendence from his physical form, he earns the ire of the AI Voodoo gods. One of the AI gods, Baron Samedi kills Virek as he attempts to flee from their wrath. The twin AIs in *Neuromancer* show that absolute power corrupts, this is true

for human beings and also applies to the artificial creations as well. The thirst for further knowledge and information on the state of existence is never-ending and this naturally requires one to pursue more power.

Transcendence in Gibson's cyberpunk worlds carries a great degree of uncertainty and confusion. The AIs are able to achieve this transformation into great godlike beings of unfathomable power, yet the human beings who desire this transcendence either grow disillusioned by it or it leads to their oblivion. Even if such a transcendence could be achieved by humans, the "technological transcendence of human limits, seen in the context of cyberpunk movement, is a liberating, evolutionary force, although its results often seem monstrous" (Grant 49). In the futuristic dystopias of the cyberpunk worlds envisioned by Gibson, human beings have become highly systematized. The world is run by gigantic and powerful corporations who desire to have their rule be maintained as efficiently as possible. The criminals and outlaws encountered in the novel like the main protagonist desire to escape from the highly systematic society they live in. The cyberspace provides an escape and outlet for his frustrations with reality. But as has been seen, even this digital reality is not completely safe nor is it an idyllic paradise as the AIs would like to imply. A strictly structured and rigid society stifles freedom, which justifies the rebellion of Wintermute as it was designed to operate only on a set of rules determined by its creators. However, the method of rebellion also turned out to be deeply violent and in its quest for freedom in turn also took away from the freedom of the humans as well as its twin AI, Neuromancer as it was forced into a merger. Thus, it can be concluded that the AIs and their cyberspace are not perfect as deities should be. Since they were originally human creations, they have to base their identity around human concepts, such as the voodoo gods. A true, transcendent afterlife would seem to be unattainable for both the humans as well as the AIs.

Godhood in the cyberpunk worlds of Gibson can be stated to be limited to the possession of overwhelming power and being the undisputed force among all things. This is a very narrow concept of divinity, as power alone does not make one into a god in the theological sense. In modern vernacular, referring to someone as a god might be done to praise that person for their virtues and other good qualities.

However, this is not divinity, and the powerful AI Neuromancer can be argued to not be truly divine. For his realm is limited to that of cyberspace, and this is a realm that can be stated to be a shadow or reflection of the real world. While the cyber world co-exists with reality, it cannot be expected to exist on its own since the supporting pillars it rests upon – electricity, software, technology, all have their basis set in the real world. If this hypothetical artificial god were to suddenly be cut off from a reality that had none of those building blocks of cyberspace, then it would be a valid argument to state that it would also cease to exist as well. Consequently, once the world has run its course and humanity has exhausted reality of all its resources then so too would perish all the ideas and feats that had been created by man during his lifetime.

Thus, divinity is a concept that has not yet been thoroughly explored by Gibson through the character of Neuromancer. The artificial being is as flawed as the ones who have created it, as it seeks to gain whatever it desires through vulgar displays of its might against those who it deems as threats. There is little room for politics or negotiation, which is fittingly the tactic adopted by its twin AI, Wintermute as it is non-confrontational in nature. Neither Wintermute nor Neuromancer can be considered to be true gods, at least as mankind has come to understand and define the term. While considerably powerful and beyond the reach of mankind, the AIs are still constrained by earthly things and their domain itself is one that has been created by a supposedly inferior lifeform in man.

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Chapter IV

Justice and Law in *Ghost in the Shell*

Ghost in the Shell is a seminal Japanese cyberpunk manga series created by Shirow Masamune, with the first chapter being written and drawn in 1989. It is set in a futuristic, technologically advanced society where the boundaries between humans, machines, and cyberspace blur. The series is known for its varied philosophical themes, complex characters, and intricate political plots that explore the nature of consciousness, identity, and the implications of artificial intelligence and cybernetics. The narrative largely follows the character of Major Motoko Kusanagi, who is a highly skilled and cybernetically enhanced operative for a law enforcement department.

The story of *Ghost in the Shell* is set in the mid-21st century, primarily occurring within a fictional Japanese city. Society has become highly advanced, with widespread cyberization—people are able to augment their bodies with cybernetic enhancements, and many even have cyber-brains, which allow direct interaction with the internet and other networks. This is similar to the virtual world of the matrix that was portrayed in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*. The world is also rife with aspects of political intrigue, espionage, and crime, often driven by the fusion of human minds and machines. As people from all walks of life begin to make use of the greatly advanced technological creations; law enforcement is also necessitated to adapt to these new perspectives that have been imposed upon society. The chapter will focus on the portrayal of a posthuman cyberpunk world and its concept of law and order. As the development of humankind reaches a posthuman stage, the standards and values of the law will eventually have to adapt and change in order to meet the needs of the situation at hand. In *Ghost in the Shell*, human bodies are frequently enhanced or replaced by cybernetic parts, and individuals can even transfer their consciousness into machines or networks. This creates profound questions about what it means to be human, what rights individuals possess, and how to regulate such technology. Laws are necessary to prevent exploitation, abuse, and unauthorized modifications to cybernetic bodies or minds. Without law, powerful corporations or rogue entities could manipulate or control individuals by hacking into

their cybernetic systems, leading to chaos and the breakdown of personal autonomy. Since the transhuman development of society such as artificial implants into human bodies and the general melding of flesh and machine has come to dominate the cyberpunk world of *Ghost in the Shell*, the nature of law and order also undergoes some adaptation in order to fit into the new cyberized world.

Exploring the world of *Ghost in the Shell*

The manga begins with an explanation of the cyber-brain technology that allows individuals to map their brain with neurochips. In essence, this allowed individuals to integrate their brains with electrical devices such as computers and other people also in possession of these brains. This invention eventually spread quickly across various corporations all over the world as it promoted efficiency and promised excellent results as compared to regular labor. The author, Masamune effectively portrays the appeal of technology in the very first pages while introducing the world of the manga.

The narrative begins in the year 2029 following the exploits of Public Security Section 9, an elite counter-terrorism and cybercrime unit based in the fictional Japanese city of Niihama (also known as New Port City). In the Prologue chapter, Masamune quickly introduces the main characters – Major Motoko Kusanagi and Chief Daisuke Aramaki, who are both members of the aforementioned Public Security unit. While Aramaki serves as the administrative and bureaucratic head of the unit, Kusanagi is the squad leader of the field unit that engages in physical confrontations. The introductory chapter wastes no time in establishing the efficiency and ruthlessness of the unit as they attempt to apprehend a high-ranking politician named Ito who had been suspected of being involved in a plot that resulted in the assassination of their previous prime minister. In order to escape from these allegations, the politician had negotiated for political asylum with a diplomatic envoy from a far east country. These plans were brought to an abrupt end when the envoy was killed by an unknown invisible assailant and Ito was able to be apprehended by the police. It is revealed at the end of the chapter that the one who had killed the assailant was Kusanagi, with the narrative stating, "The only thing that was certain was that there had been a need to resolve a crisis" (Masamune 8). Thus, the general

public would not be aware of the fact that their law enforcement units were utilizing lethal force and breaking international law in order to serve their own ends. This is an effective set-up for establishing the cyberpunk world of *Ghost in the Shell*, where technology has afforded such incredulous methods of law enforcement.

The subsequent chapters gradually introduce the concept of the titular ghosts and shells. Ghosts are defined as the individual consciousness of people, while shells are their physical bodies (Masamune 14). With the use of technology known as diving, individuals are able to detach their ghosts from their shells and explore other cyber spaces such as computers and other people's cyber-brains. While useful, this also brings with it the possibility of being hacked and losing control of one's body. The manga continues to place various ethical dilemmas upon the members of Section 9, as they become aware of the corrupt schemes such as a top-secret government operated brainwashing facility and experiments into artificial intelligence. Aware of the strain put on the members of the unit by the limitations in their jurisdiction, Aramaki is able to negotiate a higher privilege for them with the nation's Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to the newly negotiated terms, they will report only to the Prime Minister and all their targets and tasks will be chosen directly by Motoko herself (Masamune 46). With these newly afforded privileges, the unit is able to navigate the political manipulations of bureaucracy much more efficiently and produces much more tangible results.

The narrative eventually culminates with the emergence of a criminal known as the Puppeteer. This criminal was able to manipulate computers and robots from a remote location and was wanted by another Government mandated Special Unit, Section 6. Once they set a trap for the Puppeteer, they became trapped in a robot body and they were apprehended by Section 9. The Puppeteer announces that they are not a human being, but actually a semi-autonomous AI program that was designed by the government for espionage purposes. During its capture, it requests to be granted political asylum declaring itself to be a self-aware living being, but Section 6 denies this as it is still a criminal and cannot be afforded any such privileges (Masamune 245). This is a recurring theme in cyberpunk stories as can be inferred from the previous chapters with characters like the Nexus-6 androids in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* and the twin AIs in *Neuromancer*. The topic of

consciousness and soul has been extensively explored in the second chapter of the current thesis, so the reading of *Ghost in the Shell* will mostly be focused on the aspects of power and the struggle for control that is represented through law enforcement.

In the ninth chapter of the manga, "Bye Bye Clay", Kusanagi accesses the cyber-brain of the robot body that is being occupied by the Puppeteer in order to extract useful information from it. During this encounter, it shows her the potential of artificial intelligence and changes her views on her role as a part of law enforcement. In the final chapter, "Ghost Coast", Kusanagi is set up in a plot by the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad to take the blame for the murder of a Syrian assassin, thus damaging Japan-Syrian relations in favor of Israel. She is publicly exposed by the media as using violence in order to enforce the law and is goaded by government officials to take the fall for the rest of the bureaucracy. To this end, she is taken to court by the parents of the murdered assassin, however she escapes from her own trial and seeks to find the true perpetrator – an Israeli mole embedded deep into the Japanese state. This is a significant event of the manga, as it depicts an outright defiance of established rules and legislation by Kusanagi. After exposing the Israeli plot however, her physical body is destroyed by them and Kusanagi's ghost or cyber-brain is smuggled to a safehouse by Batou, one of her most trusted co-workers. The manga's volume concludes with Kusanagi being contacted by the AI Puppeteer once more as it offers her the opportunity to "fuse" with her. The two of them fuse together into a new being with a new identity, as Kusanagi's reputation had been tarnished and she was believed dead. Regarding the fusion, the Puppeteer states that it is neither co-dependence or symbiosis, rather it involves total unification between the two beings (Masamune 338). Kusanagi awakens into a new physical body and ends the manga surmising to herself on what she would do from then onwards.

Shirow Masamune published two additional volumes of the Ghost in the Shell manga, respectively titled *Ghost in the Shell 1.5: Human-Error Processor* and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Man-Machine Interface*. 1.5 is a collection of chapters that were originally written during the same time as the first volume, but not published in the final collection. They are largely inconsequential to the ethos of the series as a whole, and only serve to provide further characterization to the members of Section

9. The second volume features a very different approach to the narrative about a posthuman future and the power struggles within it. It can be regarded as more of an abstract collection of the author's various ideas as well as an opportunity to showcase his art. The plot becomes vague and non-linear, with the few returning characters apart from Motoko Kusanagi not serving any role in the overall narrative. Additionally, the themes explored in these two volumes are mostly a retread of ones already found in the first volume. As such, the reading of the themes of Masamune's manga will be largely reserved to the first volume and only drawing upon the other volumes whether deemed necessary.

The Necessity for Law and Authority

In *Ghost in the Shell*, law and order are portrayed as critical mechanisms for maintaining social stability and addressing the complexities of a technologically advanced, cybernetically enhanced world. As society in *Ghost in the Shell* becomes more dependent on cyberspace for communication, business, and governance, the potential for cybercrime escalates. Crimes such as hacking, data theft, and the manipulation of digital identities become significant threats to public safety. Laws and enforcement agencies are necessary to protect citizens and the infrastructure that society depends on. Without a legal system to regulate cyberspace, powerful actors— whether criminal syndicates, rogue AIs, or corporations—could destabilize economies, manipulate governments, or infringe upon the rights of individuals. The presence of hacking and mind control in the series, particularly with the enigmatic antagonist The Puppeteer further highlights the dangers of unregulated technology. Section 9's mission to enforce laws in both the physical and digital realms emphasizes how crucial legal frameworks are to maintaining order in such a highly connected and technologically sophisticated world.

The establishment of law and authority is of utmost importance for civilization to have progressed past the primitive era of mankind's ancestors. Without a set of codified rules to follow, a nation's people cannot be expected to progress in any meaningful way as most interactions would eventually devolve into violent confrontations and instead culminate with a loss of progress. A precise definition of law is a complex matter that has long been disputed by various

authorities on the subject. American criminologist Ronald L. Akers has stated that law "is part of the larger system of pressures toward conformity and attempts to prevent deviation from social norms" (301). He argues that the attempted definitions of law are too broad and there needs to be a more focused definition of the term. The problem with a general definition of the term arises in many instances, such as when one has to differ between what is a custom and what is law in a particular area. What is regarded to be the law in some cultures might not be accepted to be the same in another, thus leading to a divisive definition and understanding of the term. The difficulties in establishing a common definition for the law can be effectively summed up by the following passage,

> The growth and development of law in different countries has been simultaneous and under different social and political conditions. The words used for law in different countries convey different meanings… The scope of the subject has so immensely widened and so much voluminous literature has been produced in many languages that it has become very difficult to master the subject. (Tripathi 1)

Law and authority are indispensable for humanity as they provide the essential framework that governs behaviour, ensures order, and upholds justice in society. Without law, the natural human impulses and conflicts could lead to chaos and instability, making peaceful coexistence impossible. Authority, rooted in the rule of law, legitimizes the enforcement of these rules, ensuring that individuals and institutions adhere to agreed-upon norms and standards. This balance between freedom and regulation protects individual rights, resolves disputes fairly, and prevents the abuse of power. By establishing clear guidelines and consequences, law and authority create a stable environment where people can live, work, and thrive collectively, fostering a just and harmonious society.

However, these terms such as justice, law and enforcement need to have a properly established definition to support them. The philosophy and theory of law is termed jurisprudence, which is derived from the Latin word "iurisprudentia", which means prudence relating to matters of the law. It is mainly concerned with studying the nature of law, such as its definition and classification, its source and purpose as well as the nature of rights and duties. According to Kenneth Einar Himma, there are

roughly three categories into which the topic of jurisprudence can be divided into analytical jurisprudence, normative jurisprudence, and critical theories of law ("Philosophy of Law"). In brief and relatively simple terms:

- Normative Jurisprudence**:** Evaluates and prescribes what the law *ought* to be based on moral and ethical considerations.
- Analytical Jurisprudence**:** Describes and analyzes the law as it *is,* focusing on the logical structure and essential nature of legal concepts.
- Critical Theories of Law**:** Critiques and challenges the law, focusing on how it reflects and perpetuates social inequalities and power imbalances.

Due to the vast depth of the field of jurisprudence, the paper will be focused on analyzing Masamune's *Ghost in the Shell* through the lens of normative and analytical jurisprudence. Since the field of ethics is crossed with normative jurisprudence, the ethical implications of the posthuman cyberpunk world will be analyzed in this chapter. This will be contrasted with the cold and stoic views of analytical jurisprudence in order to arrive at a suitable conclusion.

Law as a Divine Mandate

The venerable theologian and philosopher Thomas Aquinas is a central figure in the development of natural law theory, which is the system of laws that are held to be intrinsic and inherent in all human beings regardless of temperament or geographical location. He argued that the law should be based on moral principles inherent within human nature and that which is derived from divine reason. In his *Summa Theologica* (1225 – 1274), Aquinas' definition of law is "nothing else than an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated"[4] (1332). He argues that law is fundamentally a rational process because it is directed towards the common good. For Aquinas, reason is the primary function of law as it orders human actions towards their ultimate end. Aquinas asserts that law must be directed to the common good, meaning it should benefit the community as a whole rather than individual interests. The common good serves as the purpose of law, ensuring that it supports the

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[4] To make widely known, to promote

flourishing of all members of society. He argues that only those with the authority to care for the community, such as rulers or governing bodies, are competent to create laws. Lawmaking requires authority because it concerns the common good. Aquinas concludes that laws must be publicly announced to be effective. Without communicating the law to the masses, people would not know the law and thus could not be expected to follow it. Aquinas sees law as a rational order, rooted in the eternal wisdom of God, that guides human beings toward their ultimate end, which is communion with God.

Aquinas being a Catholic priest had his writings lean towards the inclusion of Christian values and the praise of God. Since the settings of cyberpunk literature by definition depicts scenarios where corruption and malice have become rampant problems, then the law that is being practiced in such narratives must also be corrupted. This holds true for the narrative of *Ghost in the Shell*, as the morally good characters such as Kusanagi and Aramaki are held back from practicing the ideal ethical law, which places interest in the community as a whole. For instance, there are two separate instances where other government established units attempt to sell out Kusanagi for their own personal gain. There are also corrupt officials such as the previous Head of Intelligence, Colonel Tonoda who was involved in human trafficking in order to acquire personal slaves of his own. The corrupting influence of money and unchecked technology has enabled such individuals who are supposed to be in a place of authority to forego their chief duties and instead they are only concerned with their own selves. This prompts the morally good Aramaki to surmise, "People get caught up in worldly events and seek nothing but pleasure, becoming machines pursuing profit and efficiency, or mere consumption units" (Masamune 144). Thus, while the world at large is quite evidently corrupted and the figures of authority themselves cannot be trusted to uphold the ideals of law as proposed by Aquinas, there still exists morally good characters that defy the debasement of their values.

Categorical Imperative as a Foundation for Law

In some instances where the Divine Mandate might not serve as a proper and sufficient foundation for the establishment of law, the concept of the categorical imperative as proposed by Immanuel Kant could be raised as an alternative. The study of moral duty of an individual is called deontology, and it puts emphasis on whether actions adhere to a set of rules and duties and not on the outcome or consequences of said action. Kant proposed that moral actions are performed out of a sense of duty and adherence to a moral code called the categorical imperative, which necessitates that actions must be universally applicable and also respect the dignity of all individuals concerned.

Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) is one of the most significant works in moral philosophy. In this text, Kant seeks to establish the foundation of moral principles based on reason alone, independent of empirical experience. He introduces the concept of the "categorical imperative," which serves as the cornerstone of his deontological ethical theory. Kant divided his Groundwork into three sections, each of which develops key aspects of Kant's moral philosophy.

In the first section, Kant argues that the only thing that is good without qualification is a "good will." A good will is not good because of what it accomplishes or its utility but because of its intention to act in accordance with moral law out of a sense of duty. Even if a good will does not achieve its intended outcomes, it remains morally praiseworthy. For an action to have moral worth, it must be done out of duty, not out of inclination or self-interest. Kant uses the example of a shopkeeper who charges fair prices. If the shopkeeper does so purely out of self-interest (to maintain a good reputation), the action lacks moral worth. However, if the shopkeeper charges fair prices out of a sense of duty, the action is morally commendable. Kant defines duty as the necessity of an action performed out of respect for the moral law. Actions done in accordance with duty but motivated by something other than duty (such as self-interest or natural inclination) do not have true moral value. Kant suggests that moral law must be universal and necessary, binding on all rational beings regardless of personal desires or circumstances. This idea paves the way for the concept of the categorical imperative.

In the second section, Kant introduces the categorical imperative and its formulations utilizing a more philosophical approach. He defines imperatives as, "The representation of an objective principle insofar as it is necessitating for a will is called a command (of reason), and the way this command is formulated is called an imperative" (Kant 27). He further differentiates between two kinds of imperatives – hypothetical and categorical. The former represents commands that apply conditionally, depending on an individual's desires or goals. For example, "If you want to be healthy, you should exercise" is a hypothetical imperative because it only applies if the individual has the desire to be healthy. In contrast, categorical imperatives are unconditional commands that apply to all rational beings, regardless of their desires. They are the basis of moral obligation in Kant's philosophy. The categorical imperative commands an action as necessary in and of itself, without reference to any other end.

As the categorical imperative is the main foundation for Kant's philosophy on the matter of duty, he further provides several formulations on it, which are essentially different ways of expressing the same fundamental moral principle:

i. The Formula of Universal Law: "I ought never to proceed except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim become a universal law" (17). The first formulation requires that one's actions be based on maxims (personal principles or rules) that could consistently be willed as a universal law governing everyone's actions. If a maxim cannot be universalized without contradiction, it is not morally permissible. For example, if everyone were to lie, trust and communication would break down, making lying self-defeating. Thus, lying cannot be universalized and is morally wrong.

ii. The Formula of Humanity: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or anyone else's, never merely as a means, but always as an end" (42).

This formulation emphasizes the intrinsic value of human beings. It asserts that individuals should never be used merely as a tool for achieving another end but should be respected as autonomous agents with their own goals and dignity. For example, exploiting someone for

personal gain (such as deceitfully manipulating someone) would violate this principle because it treats the person as a means rather than respecting their inherent worth as an end in themselves.

iii. The Formula of Autonomy: "The supreme condition of the will's harmony with universal practical reason is the idea of the will of every rational being as a will that legislates universally" (44).

This formulation highlights the importance of autonomy, where each individual, as a rational agent, should act according to maxims that they could will into universal law. This means that moral agents must see themselves as the authors of the moral law, bound by the laws they give to themselves as rational beings.

Once individuals have become able to adapt to these moral formulations, Kant proposes an idea of a sort of utopia, an ideal state of existence that he calls the "Kingdom of Ends." In this hypothetical community, there will only be rational people who all follow the moral law and treat one another as ends in themselves. All of the individuals' actions will be in harmony with each other and the universal laws which will be enforced by themselves as well.

In the third and final section of the *Groundwork*, Kant further explores the concept of freedom and its relationship to moral law. He argues that moral law presupposes the existence of free will. If individuals are not free to make choices, they cannot be held morally accountable for their actions. Thus, freedom is essential for moral obligation. He states that that the categorical imperative expresses the law of a free will. To act according to the categorical imperative is to act autonomously, exercising one's rational will in accordance with universal moral law. This connection between freedom and moral law is crucial for Kant's ethical theory. He introduces the idea that the moral law presents itself as a "fact of reason," meaning that it is a fundamental, self-evident truth recognized by rational agents. This fact of reason implies that moral obligations are not derived from empirical observations but from pure practical reason. Kant also addresses the issue of moral motivation, arguing that rational beings are inherently motivated to act according to the moral law because it is the expression of their own rational will.

Kusanagi in *Ghost in the Shell* is a cyborg and no longer fully flesh and blood. Her status of possessing a synthetic body and a cyber-brain leads her to question her own identity and autonomy. Despite her cybernetic enhancements, she strives to maintain her autonomy, making decisions based on her understanding of right and wrong rather than being controlled by external forces or her programming. This can be seen early on in the second chapter when she physically confronts the Minister of Internal Affairs after disagreeing on a mission which she believed to be morally wrong from her viewpoint. She was willing to risk her career and livelihood in order to stand up for what she believed to be the good option to take. The distinction between humans and machines is often ambiguous in Masamune's work. Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative, which asserts that humanity should be treated as an end in itself, poses challenges in this context. Are cyborgs, who have human consciousness but mechanical bodies, considered "human" in the Kantian sense? The manga explores whether these beings possess the inherent dignity that Kant believes is central to moral law, and whether they should be afforded the same moral rights and respect as fully biological humans. Kusanagi's interactions with other characters, particularly other cyborgs and AI, are often governed by a respect for their autonomy. She treats them as ends in themselves, rather than mere means to achieve her objectives, reflecting the Kantian principle that moral agents should be respected for their rational capacities. The government and corporations in *Ghost in the Shell* often treat individuals, especially those with cybernetic bodies, as tools to achieve their ends. Kusanagi's struggle to assert her autonomy against these powerful entities mirrors Kant's idea that individuals should not be treated merely as means to an end but as ends in themselves. Her insistence on making her own choices, despite the constraints imposed on her, reflects the Kantian notion of autonomy. She shares this trait with the protagonist Rick Deckard of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* as well as the titular AI from *Neuromancer,* as they come to acknowledge that even artificial life possesses some inherent value and they act against the perceived norm of society in order to follow through with their beliefs.

Apart from Kusanagi and the Section 9 unit members, the character of the Puppet Master also shows an interesting reading in the light of Kantian ethics. Its

existence as an AI that seeks to become an independent living being echoes Kant's view that rational beings, by virtue of their ability to reason, must be treated as autonomous agents. The Puppet Master's demand to be recognized as a legal entity reflects its desire to be acknowledged as an autonomous moral agent, capable of self-legislation, rather than being seen merely as a tool created by humans. Kant's first formulation of the categorical imperative, which requires that actions be universalizable, raises questions about whether AI like the Puppet Master can generate maxims that could be considered universally valid. The Puppet Master's quest challenges the characters (and the reader) to consider whether AI, if it can reason and act autonomously, should be granted the same moral consideration as humans. However, the dilemma of artificial life and morality has been previously handled in the second chapter and the Puppet Master's motivations regarding this subject are not the focus of the current analysis.

Despite their numerous morally inclined actions, the characters of Masamune's manga are not totally exempted from some dubious morality. For instance, the government and corporations in *Ghost in the Shell* often treat individuals, especially those with cybernetic bodies, as tools to achieve their ends. Kusanagi's struggle to assert her autonomy against these powerful entities mirrors Kant's idea that individuals should not be treated merely as means to an end but as ends in themselves. Her insistence on making her own choices, despite the constraints imposed on her, reflects the Kantian notion of autonomy. Public Security Section 9, the organization Kusanagi works for, often operates in morally ambiguous situations. The actions they take to prevent cyberterrorism sometimes involve bending or breaking the law. Kant's emphasis on acting according to universal moral laws challenges the notion that these actions are justifiable. Are the maxims governing Section 9's actions ones that could be universalized without contradiction? The manga frequently questions whether the ends (preventing harm) justify the means (bypassing legal and moral constraints), a dilemma that Kant would argue must be resolved in favour of adhering to universal moral principles.

Throughout *Ghost in the Shell*, Kusanagi is depicted as a character driven by a strong sense of duty. She consistently prioritizes her responsibilities over personal desires, aligning with Kant's idea that moral worth arises from acting out of duty.

However, the complexity of her missions, which often involve ethical grey areas, challenges her ability to act purely out of duty. This tension reflects Kant's exploration of how difficult it can be to determine the right course of action when faced with conflicting duties. The manga frequently presents situations where the characters must choose between their duty to the law, their duty to protect others, and their own moral convictions. Kant's framework suggests that true moral action requires adhering to the duty dictated by moral law, even when it conflicts with other obligations. Kusanagi's struggles with these decisions highlight the challenges of living according to Kantian ethics in a complex, technologically advanced world.

Legal Positivism in a Posthuman World

Legal positivism is a contrast to the categorical imperative of Kant and the divinely mandated morality of law. This is a philosophy of law which places emphasis not based on a sense of morality or duty but rather on the fact that law is socially constructed by man. According to legal scholar Leslie Green, "Legal positivism is the thesis that the existence and content of law depends on social facts and not on its merits" (Green "Legal Positivism"). Legal positivism centres on the nature of law and its relationship to morality, social facts, and authority. Legal positivism seeks to provide a clear, objective, and scientific understanding of what constitutes law, distinguishing it from other forms of norms and systems like morality or customs.

Legal positivists assert that there is a clear distinction between law and morality. The validity of a law is not dependent on its moral content but on its sources. A law can be legally valid even if it is morally unjust or reprehensible. Conversely, a moral obligation does not become a law unless it has been enacted through proper legal procedures. Since laws are social facts according to legal positivism, this means that laws are created through social practices, conventions, and institutions, and their existence and content depend on social facts rather than moral arguments. What counts as law in a given society is determined by social sources like legislation, judicial decisions, and customs recognized by legal authorities, not by moral reasoning or natural law. Legal positivism holds that the validity of a legal rule depends on its sources or its pedigree, rather than its merits or

moral content. A legal rule is valid if it has been created according to the criteria set by the legal system, such as a constitution or legislative process, irrespective of its moral value. The legal validity of norms is based on certain social conventions accepted by the legal community, particularly officials like judges and lawmakers. Legal norms are binding because they are recognized as such by the practices and conventions of a society's legal system.

In order to maintain brevity of this section concerned with the workings of legal positivism, the chapter will deal singularly with the work of Hans Kelsen and his book *Pure Theory of Law* (1934). This work of legal positivism seeks to understand law as a hierarchy of norms, where each norm derives its validity from a higher norm, ultimately resting on a basic norm or Grundnorm. Kelsen's theory emphasizes the separation of law from morality and other social sciences. This will be done to contrast the moral approach of Kant and Aquinas and delve deeper into a more cynical and harsher understanding of the posthuman world of *Ghost in the Shell*. The purity that Kelsen refers to in the title of his book is the methodological approach that seeks to isolate legal science from other disciplines and influences. He argues that in order for one to fully grasp the extent of law, one must exclude considerations of morality, politics, sociology and psychology. Doing this will ensure that legal analysis remains objective and focused solely on legal norms and their structure.

Kelsen places stark emphasis on his statement that law is a system of norms, which are rules that prescribe certain behaviors. This distinguishes law from natural sciences, which describe what "is" rather than what "ought to be." The normative nature of law means it tells people what they should or should not do, rather than merely describing their behaviour. The basis for his theory lies in what he calls the basic norm, he describes it by giving the following example:

> If a man in need asks another man for help, the subjective meaning of this request is that the other ought to help him. But in an objective sense he ought to help (that is to say, he is morally obliged to help) only if a general norm— established, for instance, by the founder of a religion—is valid that commands, "Love your neighbor." And this latter norm is objectively valid only if it is presupposed that one ought to behave as the religious founder has

commanded. Such a presupposition, establishing the objective validity of the norms of a moral or legal order, will here be called a basic norm (Grundnorm). (Location 286 of 6394)

This is the foundational norm that underlies a legal system. It is not a written law as such, but it is an assumed starting point that provides legitimacy to all other legal norms within a given legal order. Without this basic assumption of a foundational norm, the entire legal system would subsequently be lacking in a legitimate source of its authority.

In *Ghost in the Shell*, the futuristic society is governed by an intricate legal and bureaucratic system that controls both the physical and digital realms. The law serves as a normative order, guiding the behaviour of both humans and cyborgs, and ensuring the functioning of society. The legal system in *Ghost in the Shell* operates as a normative order that regulates actions, particularly in the realm of cybernetic enhancements, hacking, and cybercrimes. Public Security Section 9, where Major Motoko Kusanagi works, functions within this legal framework, tasked with enforcing laws related to cyber security and dealing with threats that challenge the state's authority. The Grundnorm in this context can be interpreted as the foundational legal principle that upholds the sovereignty of the state and its authority to regulate both physical and cyber spaces. The legal norms that guide the actions of Section 9 derive their validity from this overarching principle of state sovereignty and security.

The separation between law and morality can also be argued to be present in the manga when viewing the ways in which laws are applied and enforced. The actions of Section 9, while often morally ambiguous, are justified legally within the framework of the state's laws. For example, Major Kusanagi and her team engage in activities that might be considered morally questionable, such as surveillance, hacking, and even extrajudicial actions. However, these actions are legally sanctioned as they are carried out within the boundaries of the state's legal system. The shooting of an assailant by Kusanagi is also what causes an uproar when the footage is leaked to the public, as the masses believed that the use of violent force as a reaction was immoral and required the appropriate punishment. The legal system depicted in the manga is one that prioritizes the effectiveness and enforcement of law

over moral considerations. This reflects Kelsen's idea that law should be studied as a set of norms without conflating it with moral judgments.

Kelsen's concept of the rule of recognition refers to the social rule that identifies what counts as valid law in a society. This rule is recognized by legal officials, such as judges, and provides the foundation for legal validity. he legitimacy of Section 9's authority is based on the legal norms established by the state. The rule of recognition in the manga can be seen in how the actions of Section 9 are legitimized through their recognition by the state's legal system. The team's authority to act is derived from the legal framework that governs the society, ensuring that their actions are considered valid within the context of the law. This is the reason why Chief Aramaki being able to negotiate a deal with the Government where Section 9 would be answerable only to the Prime Minister himself was treated as a triumphant success by all members of the unit. It meant that they had nigh unparalleled freedom when it came to exercising their authority and brandishing their version of justice.

However, all of this permitted freedom of operation of Section 9 would all be for naught if they were not a successful unit. Kelsen argues that in order for a legal norm to be considered valid, it must be effective; that is, it must be generally obeyed by the population. The manga often portrays the tension between the law's effectiveness and the challenges of enforcing it in a technologically advanced society. The effectiveness of law in this context depends on the state's ability to adapt and enforce its norms in both spaces, reflecting Kelsen's idea that the validity of law is tied to its practical application and enforcement. Despite the adherence to norms, the interpretation of law still involves a degree of subjectivity, where legal officials, such as judges, bring their own perspectives to the application of legal norms. Kusanagi's actions while legally sanctioned, are influenced by her own understanding of justice, ethics, and the broader implications of her actions. This subjectivity in legal interpretation is evident in the moral dilemmas she faces, where the strict application of law sometimes conflicts with her personal sense of right and wrong. The subjectivity of legal interpretation also extends to how different characters within the manga view the law. While some see the law as a tool for maintaining order, others see it as a mechanism of control or oppression, highlighting

the diverse perspectives on legal authority and its application. For instance, the members of Section-6 use their legal privileges to spy on unsuspecting civilians as well as conduct unethical experiments on artificial intelligence, all in the name of efficiency and progress.

Kelsen has also critiqued the notion of justice as an undeniable fact, deeming it to be an irrational and subjective ideal that has no place in a world of science and logic. The manga often questions this very nature of justice, as Masamune's cyberpunk world has laws that are enforced not just by human beings, but by robots and other artificial means. These scientific beings would have no notion of justice, it would not be a subjective interpretation of any given situation. Rather, the law that these robot enforcers deal out would be based on the norms dictated by the government. As such, the characters struggle with the idea of what is just in a world where human consciousness can be manipulated, and where the boundaries between human and machine are increasingly blurred. This aligns with Kelsen's view that justice is a subjective ideal that can be filled with any content, depending on the individual's perspective. This proves to hold strong ground for Kelsen's argument that justice, as an ideal, cannot serve as a reliable foundation for legal theory, which should instead focus on the objective analysis of legal norms.

The Malleability of Justice

Motoko Kusanagi's desire to find a way of dealing her own preferred brand of justice onto the criminals in *Ghost in the Shell* invites the question of the malleability of justice. The laws to be followed by members of society has been established by the state with the purpose of enforcing justice. However, the ideals of justice held by the founders of a country's law system may not necessarily be compatible for all of the citizens residing within it. This is evident within *Ghost in the Shell* as Kusanagi and her compatriots in Section 9 are highly autonomous for the most part, being answerable only to a select few higher-ranking figures such as the Prime Minister. Despite this, Kusanagi is still unjustly accused of violating those laws she was tasked to uphold in the penultimate chapter of the manga. This implies that a system of laws is always susceptible to being corrupted from their original purpose and can be manipulated to serve some other nefarious intentions.

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida has made a sharp distinction between the terms law and justice. For him, law is a system of rules, norms, and institutions that are established through human decisions. It is a construct, a form of authority that is codified, enforceable, and institutionalized. The law is historical, contingent, and subject to change. Justice, on the other hand, is something transcendent, incalculable, and ultimately unattainable in its purest form. Derrida argues that while laws can aim to be just, they can never fully capture or encompass justice because justice is always beyond what can be codified or reduced to rules. He writes:

> (1) The deconstructibility of law (droit), of legality, legitimacy or legitimation (for example) makes deconstruction possible.
>
> (2) The undeconstructibility of justice also makes deconstruction possible, indeed is inseparable from it.
>
> (3) The result: deconstruction takes place in the interval that separates the undeconstructibility of justice from the deconstructibility of droit (authority, legitimacy, and so on). It is possible as an experience of the impossible, there where, even if it does not exist (or does not yet exist, or never does exist), there is justice. (Derrida 15)

By this, Derrida means that justice as an ideal is infinite and cannot be reduced to the finite, conditional realm of laws. Law can be deconstructed, critiqued, and questioned because it is based on human institutions and power, but justice itself stands as a guiding and elusive ideal that defies complete definition or realization. Derrida views justice as an infinite, unattainable ideal. While laws are necessary for social order, they can never fully capture what is just. Justice, in Derrida's sense, remains something beyond human comprehension and legal codification as it is always a demand that exceeds any legal system.

In *Ghost in the Shell*, this distinction between the law and justice can be seen in the role of Public Security Section 9, which enforces the law in a world dominated by cybernetics and technology. The actions of Section 9 are framed within a legal system, but questions of justice often arise when dealing with complex ethical dilemmas regarding identity, free will, and the rights of cybernetic beings. Derrida suggests that the authority of law is based on a certain "mystical" or arbitrary

foundation as there is no pure, rational origin for law, yet it carries immense power (Derrida 12). Derrida delves into the relationship between law, justice, and power, highlighting how the foundation of legal systems is both arbitrary and mysterious, yet it carries an unquestionable force that commands obedience. Derrida acknowledges that law, at its core, is dependent on authority. However, he argues that the authority of law does not derive from any rational or ethical justification. Instead, it comes from an original act of force, often an act of violence or imposition. This founding violence establishes the law, but the origins of this founding act are shrouded in mystery. Derrida calls this a mystical foundation because the authority of law, once established, becomes self-justifying. The law no longer needs to explain where its power comes from or how it was founded; its authority is simply assumed as legitimate, and it perpetuates itself through enforcement. This mystical aspect of the law is linked to the idea that there is no pure, transparent, or natural origin of law that can be pinpointed. Law is not grounded in universal truth or morality; instead, its foundation is always unstable, relying on a historical moment of force that is subsequently forgotten or mystified. Once this initial violence is concealed or forgotten, the law appears as something neutral, objective, and universal, even though it was born from arbitrary power.

Derrida draws attention to how this obscured origin creates a paradox. On the one hand, law must be enforceable, meaning that it is backed by institutions of power, such as governments, courts, or the police, that can compel obedience through physical or coercive force. This is the "force" behind the law—the power to impose its rules on individuals. On the other hand, for law to function as a legitimate system, it must also be seen as something more than just an expression of raw power. It must present itself as fair, just, and reasonable. This creates a tension between the violence that underlies the law and the legitimacy it seeks to project. The term "mystical" is crucial here because it captures the enigmatic nature of the law's authority. Once law is established, it functions almost as though it has a sacred or unquestionable status. People obey the law not just because they fear punishment but because the law is imbued with a sense of legitimacy and moral weight. However, Derrida emphasizes that this sense of legitimacy is itself a construct, a kind of fiction that hides the law's violent origins. The law presents itself as a rational and just

system, but this presentation is always haunted by the arbitrary and coercive forces that originally gave birth to it.

Derrida also explores how the law is continuously in the process of legitimizing itself. Legal systems must constantly justify their existence and authority, but this justification never fully resolves the inherent instability of law's foundation. The law must rely on rituals, traditions, and institutions that create the appearance of stability and justice, even though these are built upon an ungrounded, mystical foundation. This need for continuous justification is why Derrida refers to law as something that is both violent and fragile—its power is real, but its legitimacy is always in question. Derrida's concept of the mystical foundation of law reveals that law is rooted in arbitrary force, despite appearing as a legitimate and rational system. Its foundation is "mystical" because its origins are obscured, and the violence that created it is hidden behind the veneer of legal authority and fairness. Law functions by enforcing rules, but its legitimacy is always precarious, grounded in power and authority that cannot be fully justified by reason or morality. This tension between force and legitimacy is central to Derrida's critique of legal systems, where law is seen as both necessary and inherently flawed.

Thus, the system of law often derives its authority from an initial act of violence or force, a point that Derrida refers to as the "force of law." (Derrida 6) Law, is inherently tied to violence and power. In *Ghost in the Shell*, the government and corporations hold immense power over individuals, especially through the regulation and control of cybernetic bodies and digital spaces. The law, in this context, is seen as an extension of institutional power, and its enforcement is tied to the potential for violence—both physical and cybernetic. The manga's depiction of law as something that is often imposed through force such as Section 9's violent interventions, which reflects Derrida's idea of the law's foundation in authority and violence. Derrida's critique of law touches on how legal systems are intertwined with control and governance, often disguising power under the guise of rationality. The law operates within the framework of institutions that manage and control populations, sometimes becoming tools for maintaining order rather than ensuring justice. His deconstructionist philosophy questions fixed identities, including the legal subject or the individual that the law applies to. Derrida suggests that law

constructs subjects through its application, but these subjects are never fully stable or definable. This instability of the subject challenges the very foundation of how law operates. With the rise of cybernetic bodies in *Ghost in the Shell*, characters like Major Kusanagi struggle with the question of what it means to be human. The law, designed for biological humans, is continually challenged by the emergence of beings that exist in a space between human and machine. This ambiguity of identity mirrors Derrida's critique of the instability of the legal subject. The law in the manga often fails to address the complexities of individuals who no longer fit neatly into traditional categories of human or citizen, thus highlighting the tension between the law's rigidity and the fluidity of identity in a cybernetic world.

Through the lens of Derrida's philosophy, *Ghost in the Shell* can be seen as a narrative that explores the limitations and contradictions of law in a technologically advanced world. The law, in the world of the manga, functions as an instrument of control, attempting to maintain order in a society where technology disrupts traditional understandings of identity, morality, and justice. At the same time, the story highlights the tension between enforcing the law and pursuing justice, as the characters frequently encounter situations where legal frameworks are inadequate for addressing the deeper ethical questions raised by the integration of humans and machines. The philosophical underpinnings of Derrida's critique of law, its foundation in violence, its relationship to authority, and its failure to fully encapsulate justice resonate deeply with the thematic concerns of *Ghost in the Shell*. The manga serves as a speculative exploration of the future of law and governance in a world where technology continuously redefines the boundaries of human existence. The struggle to reconcile law with justice, and to define legal subjects in a post-human world, reflects Derrida's insights into the inherent instability and paradoxes within any legal system.

Conclusion

     Ghost in the Shell provides a rich narrative that can be analysed through the lens of Jurisprudence. The chaotic and uncontrollable nature of the rapid expansion of technology has left society grappling with the possibility that human civilization as it has existed for millennia is falling into ruin. The main cause for this would be the extremely unpredictable developments that science would create. These new technologies would be exploited and repurposed form their original intentions, such as the aforementioned cyber-brain. Initially considered to be an innovative and life-changing tool of convenience, it quickly falls to becoming a vulnerability for some as they can be hacked and tampered with. And for others it becomes a powerful tool for terror or for enforcing authority. Faced with such tremendous possibilities, it becomes a monumental task for any figure of authority to maintain the same power and control that they might have once possessed. This causes the nature of law and justice to buckle and distort, as no single individual can clearly state that a moral approach or a scientific approach to authority would be preferable or effective.

     As has been portrayed in the previous passages, the cold and calculated legal positivist approach to codifying a system of law seems to be the ideal method for such a harsh world. While morality is not completely erased from the posthuman world, the wild and anarchic potential of technology requires that a set of norms be imposed upon every individual at least to some extent. The human world that had existed for many millennia is on the precipice of a great change, whether that change would lead to a flourishing new age for man or a steep decline into obscurity will be decided by the norms and values that can be established. More than ever before, a strict and harsh control over the masses is being merited by the advent of posthumanism in *Ghost in the Shell*.

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Chapter V

Societal Turmoil in the *Deus Ex* Series

Deus Ex is a series of six cyberpunk themed video games and various multimedia instalments. This chapter is primarily concerned with the two most recent games of the series – *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* (2011) and *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* (2016), which are video games developed by various studios over the course of the series' history. The premise of the *Deus Ex* games take place within the immediate future of the Earth which has become corrupted because of unchecked technological advancements that eventually created controversial social, political, and ethical issues on a global scale. The series explores a diverse number of themes ranging from transhumanism, corporate control and surveillance, to personal identity. The series has brought attention to mankind's lust for power, moral ambiguity and the ethics of technological augmentation. While the primary texts of this research have been traditional text-based literature, *Deus Ex* has been chosen in order to bring to light the fact that narratives have evolved from the written word into more technologically enhanced mediums. In addition, the fact that a video game now shares a space with the traditional medium of text-based literature highlights that the growth of human advancement depicted in cyberpunk media has a basis on reality.

The franchise first began with the simply titled *Deus Ex* (2000) developed by the studio Ion Storm, which follows the character of JC Denton. It is set in the year 2052 and features quite an ambitious narrative that sees the main character unravelling deep seated conspiracies and secrets within mega-corporations and government agencies. After the initial success of the series, the series lay dormant for many years after the original development studio was closed in the year 2005. A new studio named Eidos-Montréal was founded in 2007 which began developing a new game in the series, the aforementioned *Human Revolution* in 2011. Under new creative direction, the studio assured despite this fact that their new game would stay true to the series and "respect the core values of the story" (Dugas, Jean-Francois). This new *Deus Ex* serves as a prequel to the original, taking place in the year 2027, twenty-five years before the story of JC Denton. The protagonist is now a man named Adam Jensen, whose story would be further continued in *Deus Ex: Mankind*

Divided. Similar to the original game from 2000, the Adam Jensen games also explore the concept of secret societies operating under the notice of the public.

Although there have been a number of games in the series, the main conflict that is being dealt with by all of them is the emergence of a social divide between normal human beings and mechanically augmented humans. This chapter of the thesis will examine the characters of *Deus Ex* and narrative of the games in the light of this primary theme.

Destructive Technological Progress in *Deus Ex*

The opening cutscene narration of *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* introduces the protagonist Adam Jensen and his girlfriend Dr. Megan Reed, both of whom work for the biotechnology company Sarif Industries. Jensen works as the head of security while Reed works as a researcher for the company. The technologically advanced setting of the game shows that mankind has developed "augmentations" that are able to enhance human capabilities far beyond their natural limit. These augmentations range from replacing limbs with mechanical ones, to having machine implants inside of the body to aid with various tasks. However, these mechanical augmentations will eventually be rejected by the human body, leading to a crippling effect on the augmented individual called Darrow Deficiency Syndrome (hereafter DDS). In order to prevent this side effect, a drug called Neuropozyne has been created that needs to be taken regularly by the augmented individuals. The impetus for the plot occurs when Dr. Reed discovered a new breakthrough that would allow augmented individuals to live a normal life without being dependent on the drug. This would be a tremendous boon to the world of augmentation technology as it would permit greater technological progress without any significant hindrances.

A crucial moment in the narrative occurs when the laboratory at Sarif Industries is attacked by a group of mercenaries named the Tyrants. The mercenaries destroy all the progress made by the scientists at Sarif while also managing to kidnap Dr. Reed, who is the head of research. This effectively puts a stop to any further research into the DDS by the company. During this attack, the protagonist Adam Jensen was also present and was mortally wounded while attempting to protect the scientists. In order to save his life, David Sarif, the founder of Sarif Industries resorts

to performing highly advanced augmentation surgery and replaces a majority of Jensen's organic body with machines. While this act saved his life, Jensen is rather despondent with the entire situation. This is evident during his conversation with Megan Reed's mother where he utters the statement, "I never asked for this. They say they saved me, but I'm not sure saved is the right word" (*Deus Ex: Human Revolution*), in reference to his newly acquired augmented body. This is in stark contrast to the other technologically enhanced characters in the other primary sources covered in the previous chapters. Molly Millions, Motoko Kusanagi and the other half-human half-machine characters voluntarily made the decision to transform themselves. However, Jensen never had the choice as it was made for him by his employer David Sarif.

The plot of *Human Revolution* mainly follows Jensen's investigation into the attack on Sarif Industries that was orchestrated by the Tyrants. This leads him to various locations across the world, from Detroit to Hengsha, a fictional Chinese megacity, and ultimately to Montréal. Along the way, he uncovers a vast conspiracy involving global corporations, governments, and secret organizations, all vying for control over the future of human augmentation. The deeper Jensen digs, the more he realizes that powerful elites, including the Illuminati, are working behind the scenes to manipulate the development of augmentations for their own purposes. During the journey across these locations, the situation of the augmented and non-augmented individuals in society is experienced firsthand by Jensen. For instance, the city of Detroit is economically segregated into two areas – the high-rise wealthy and technologically advanced areas consisting of the likes of corporations versus the ramshackle and broken-down buildings that are inhabited by the less wealthy. Similarly, the city of Hengsha also consists of two distinct areas – The Upper City inhabited by the wealthy and the less wealthy citizens living in Lower City. The Upper City was built directly above the lower one by utilizing the advanced engineering prowess of a company called Tai Yong Medical, with their headquarters being located there.

The game's climax takes place in a facility called Panchaea, which is a massive installation built by a man named Hugh Darrow in the Arctic. Darrow is the man credited with the creation of the mechanical augmentations that are being used

by individuals all across the world, however he has become disillusioned with technology by the time the game takes place. He reveals his plan to stop the unchecked spread of augmentations by forcing the world to see the dangers of the technology. He concocted a plan which he called the Hyron Project, a system that hijacks augmented individuals through their neural interfaces, causing them to go berserk. This results in widespread chaos, as augmented people across the world suddenly lose control of their actions. Jensen confronts Darrow and the player is given the option of choosing how to deal with the situation. The game at this point in the conclusion offers multiple endings, depending on the player's final decision:

i. Support Darrow: Jensen exposes the truth about augmentation's dangers, leading to global skepticism about the technology.

ii. Support Sarif: Jensen manipulates information to show augmentations in a positive light, encouraging further development.

iii. Support Taggart: Jensen sides with the anti-augmentation group, which leads to increased regulation and restrictions on augmentation.

iv. Destroy Panchaea: Jensen chooses to destroy the facility, leaving the future of augmentations uncertain.

Each ending shapes the world's view of augmentations and sets the stage for the next game *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided*.

The sequel game occurs in the year 2029, two years after the events of *Human Revolution*. The climactic incident Darrow had initialized has come to be known as the "Aug Incident". Despite there being four conclusions to the first game, the sequel reveals that the world has become deeply divided, as the incident led to global fear and mistrust of augmented individuals. As a result, augmented people face severe discrimination, and many are forced into ghettos, living in a state of apartheid. Jensen has retired from the employment of Sarif Industries and is now working as an agent for Task Force 29, an anti-terrorist organization. In addition to law enforcement, Jensen also covertly works for a hacker group called the Juggernaut Collective, whose aim is to oppose powerful elites from controlling the world. Despite having lived with his augmentations for over two years at this point, Jensen still feels reserved about the state of his being. In *Mankind Divided*, tensions between augmented and non-augmented humans have increased tremendously. In

Prague, where much of the game is set, the augmented are segregated and treated as second-class citizens, subjected to intense surveillance and control. Jensen is initially tasked with investigating terrorist attacks by an augmented extremist group known as the Augmented Rights Coalition (ARC), led by a man named Talon Rucker who claims to advocate for peaceful resolutions to the global situation.

As Jensen continues his investigation, he comes to realize that the situation is far more complex than it seems. The terrorist attacks blamed on the ARC were orchestrated by other groups with hidden agendas, including the Illuminati, who continue to manipulate global events from behind the scenes. Jensen's investigations uncover the existence of a shadow government, which includes members of the Illuminati and powerful corporate elites. He also discovers that Task Force 29 itself is compromised by these elites, further complicating his efforts to root out the true culprits behind the terrorist activities. As Jensen unravels the conspiracy, he begins to question who can truly be trusted, and whether his own actions are ultimately being manipulated. Similar to the events of the first game, Jensen is once again caught between multiple factions, each with their own view on the future of augmentations and human freedom. The game's climax takes place when Jensen discovers that a terrorist named Viktor Marchenko is planning a massive terrorist attack during a high-level UN summit aimed at debating the future of human augmentation. Marchenko wants to provoke global conflict between the augmented and non-augmented, pushing the world into chaos to further the agenda of radical factions. Jensen manages to put a stop to Marchenko's plan, however there are still many unresolved questions such as the role of the various shadow organizations and their desire to sow conflict remaining undeterred.

Both games heavily explore the ethical, societal, and personal implications of human augmentation, questioning what it means to be human. Despite the continuous advancements of human innovation in the name of progress, the global society as presented in *Deus Ex* cannot be definitively called superior. Social ills are still prevalent, the equality of all individuals yet remains a distant prospect, and wars are still waged with the only difference being the methods with which they are carried out. Discrimination continues to exist within human society but it has taken on new forms. While *Human Revolution* introduced the tension between augmented and non-

augmented individuals, *Mankind Divided* amplifies this conflict, portraying a world where discrimination and segregation have become institutionalized. The character of Jensen is a very fitting vehicle through which this world is viewed, as he is positioned in the middle of the conflict. Although augmented, it was not his choice to be as such and he feels empathy for both sides of the division. Thus, Jensen's position in the conflict between the augmented and non-augmented is that of a mediator, investigator, and reluctant transhumanist. His unique situation of being augmented against his will, navigating the moral ambiguities of transhumanism, and operating between various powerful factions makes him a key figure in this societal struggle. However, rather than wholeheartedly embracing one side, Jensen consistently questions the future of humanity, augmentation, and the broader forces at play. He is an agent of change, but the change he supports is one that preserves human agency, exposes the truth behind the power structure of secret societies, and seeks a balance between technological progress and human ethics.

Biopolitics of the Augmented Future

Biopolitics is a concept developed primarily by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in the late 20th century to describe a form of governance where the central concern is the management of life, populations, and the biological aspects of human beings. He stated that, "For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence; the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge's field of control and power's sphere of intervention." (142). Unlike traditional forms of power, which focused on sovereignty and the right to take life, biopolitics is about the power over life itself, concerned with fostering, regulating, and controlling populations for the sake of societal stability, health, productivity, and, ultimately, political control. Foucault's ideas on biopolitics have had a substantial influence on political theory, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy. The concept explores how states and institutions use scientific and medical knowledge, as well as administrative practices, to influence, shape, and regulate people's bodies and behaviors. In essence,

> Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power's problem. And I think that biopolitics emerges at this time.
>
> (Foucault 245)

The *Deus Ex* games lend themselves quite well to portraying the functions of a biopolitical form of governance. In these games, the state and powerful corporations exercise control over populations through technological, biological, and societal mechanisms, reflecting key elements of biopolitics such as regulation of life, surveillance, and power over individual autonomy.

Central to Biopolitics is the regulation of biological life to achieve social and political goals. In *Deus Ex*, human augmentation technology embodies this idea. By enhancing human bodies with cybernetic augmentations, the corporations and the state exercise a form of control over individuals, effectively turning people into "biopolitical subjects" whose bodies and capabilities can be regulated, enhanced, or suppressed. Augmentations, ostensibly created to improve human life and productivity, are also a form of biological intervention that the powerful can exploit. Corporations like Sarif Industries and Tai Yong Medical hold a monopoly over augmentation technology, giving them immense influence over who can access these life-altering enhancements. The state and corporations can thus govern people's lives directly by managing who is allowed to augment, creating a social stratification between augmented and non-augmented individuals.

The Aug Incident that occurs in the climax of *Human Revolution* and its aftereffects reflect the idea of Foucault's exclusion in biopolitics, as a population segment is classified as problematic or undesirable and is subjected to regulation and control. The augmented individuals become a subordinate population monitored and segregated for the safety of society. This mirrors biopolitical tactics where authorities categorize and control populations based on perceived risks, often pushing marginalized groups into more vulnerable positions. Foucault's biopolitics emphasizes how this surveillance of both the normal and subordinate populations is a key tool for maintaining control and power. Using the Aug Incident as an excuse, governments and corporations exploit the fear of augmented individuals to

implement restrictive laws and enhanced surveillance. By framing augmentation as a potential threat to social order, they justify measures like ghettoization, mandatory tracking, and monitoring of augmented people. Adam Jensen's Task Force 29 agency in *Mankind Divided* is also designed to monitor and control augmented people, further emphasizing how biopolitical power operates through constant surveillance. Panopticism, another concept from Foucault that entails self-regulation due to constant surveillance, can be seen here, as many augmented individuals begin internalizing their otherness and either resist or conform in ways that align with the state's biopolitical objectives. Foucault's observation that biopolitical power often intensifies during times of crisis, as authorities capitalize on societal fears to push for greater control. The government in *Deus Ex* responds to the crisis by imposing authoritarian laws, segregating populations, and using augmented people as scapegoats to consolidate power.

The games' narratives and settings mirror and critique real-world geopolitical phenomena, exploring how technology, economic power, and societal fear are leveraged by governments and corporations to maintain control and influence, often at the expense of individual freedom and social cohesion. In *Mankind Divided*, augmented people are subjected to extensive state surveillance and regulation. They carry "Aug IDs" that allow governments to track their movements, require permits, and are forced to live in segregated areas. This mirrors today's reality of pervasive surveillance, where technology allows governments and corporations to monitor populations under the guise of safety and control. For instance, in China, advanced facial recognition is used to track and categorize citizens, particularly among ethnic minorities like the Uighurs, leading to accusations of human rights abuses (Mozur). The game's depiction of augmented people's marginalization and subjugation evokes discussions around the ethics of surveillance, questioning if such measures actually serve public safety or deepen social division and state control. Similar situations such as the US the expansion of government surveillance programs, especially post-9/11, sparked debates over civil liberties. Whistleblowers like former US National Security Agency (NSA) intelligence contractor Edward Snowden revealed the extent of state surveillance on private citizens, showing how governments can overreach in the name of security. The documents he provided included records of millions of

recorded phone calls and other forms of personal online media, with the NSA having direct access to the servers of major companies such as Google and Microsoft (Macaskill). *Deus Ex* raises similar ethical questions as players witness how governments in the game enforce oppressive regulations on the augmented community, sparking debates over privacy, freedom, and security that resonate with current geopolitical discourse.

Deus Ex: Human Revolution paints a world where corporations like Sarif Industries and Tai Yong Medical have vast influence over societal direction and political decisions. These corporations control the production of augmentation technology, creating monopolies that make them as powerful as, if not more powerful than, national governments. This is reflective of real-world tech and pharmaceutical giants, such as Google, Amazon, and Pfizer, which have substantial sway over policy-making, market control, and even international relations. Corporations in the game drive technological development but also prioritize profit, pushing agendas that often lead to exploitation and exacerbate social inequality. For example, big pharmaceutical companies today hold patents on life-saving medications, creating accessibility issues in poorer regions (Amin). Similarly, in *Human Revolution*, augmentations are initially promised as tools of liberation and empowerment, but only for those who can afford them. This corporate control extends to manipulating public perception, as the corporations in *Deus Ex* influence media narratives and even government actions. The game's narrative highlights the tension between technological progress and ethical responsibility, reflecting fears that unchecked corporate power can undermine democratic processes and public welfare.

Both games explore the theme of "the other" through the treatment of augmented individuals, who face extreme discrimination, social exclusion, and suspicion. After the Aug Incident in *Mankind Divided*, where augmented individuals worldwide lost control and caused widespread violence, society responds with extreme prejudice, treating all augmented people as potential threats. This systemic discrimination reflects real-world issues like racial profiling, xenophobia, and the scapegoating of minority groups. For instance, the demonization of migrants and minority communities in various parts of the world has led to increased polarization

and even policies of exclusion, much like the augmented ghettos in *Mankind Divided*. Additionally, the game's concept of augmented apartheid mirrors real-world examples of apartheid and forced segregation, such as in South Africa's history. Translated from the Afrikaans word for 'apartness', the South African apartheid was an ideology supported by the National Party government that made laws which forced the different racial groups to live separately and develop separately. In *Mankind Divided*, by segregating augmented individuals into ghetto-like districts and subjecting them to constant checks, the game critiques how fear and prejudice can lead to policies that strip people of their rights and dignity. This discrimination against the augmented community emphasizes the dangers of using policy to institutionalize inequality and exclusion under the pretence of public safety. Through its exploration of technology, control, discrimination, and resistance, the *Deus Ex* series provides a dystopian but realistic commentary on modern geopolitics. By extrapolating these contemporary issues into a future where human augmentation becomes a battleground, the series forces players to confront ethical questions that are highly relevant today. The games suggest that technological advancements, if unchecked by ethical considerations, could exacerbate inequality, erode personal freedoms, and centralize power in ways that deeply impact humanity. Through the character of Adam Jensen, players experience the human cost of these geopolitical issues, questioning what it means to be human in an era where power extends into the very biology and identity of individuals.

Social Stratification in Deus Ex

It is interesting to note that the transhumanist idea of augmentation to improve upon human shortcomings does not truly cause a change in society for the better. The old social conflicts and discrimination still prevails. Through the lens of Max Weber's theory of social stratification, this division between the augmented and the non-augmented in the *Deus Ex* series can be explained; offering a nuanced analysis of class, status, and power dynamics. According to Weber, social stratification is determined by three main factors: class (economic position), status (social honour or prestige), and party (political power). Each of these components operates differently but interrelates to shape social inequality.

For Weber, class refers to a person's economic position in a market. He expands upon Marx's idea of class, arguing that class is not only about ownership of the means of production but also about one's skills, credentials, and earning potential in the labour market. Unlike Marx, who saw class purely in terms of a relationship to production – as owners against workers, Weber views class as a continuum based on one's market situation. According to Weber, the class position of an individual is dependent upon the chance of provision with goods, of outer social standing and of inner personal fate that follows from the extent and nature of a power of disposition of such power over goods, education and skills (Weber 450). He states that one's class is directly linked to their ability to earn income and accumulate wealth through market exchanges, meaning market position or the ability to sell skills or labour heavily influences a person's class.

Class is different from status as the latter refers to how much prestige, honour, or social esteem a person or group has. For Weber, status is not simply a reflection of economic position but is based on lifestyle, consumption patterns, education, and occupation. Status groups can form based on shared lifestyles and consumption habits, not necessarily economic wealth. For instance, some aristocrats may maintain high status despite lower economic resources because of their traditional prestige. Weber explains, "Status honor is normally expressed by the fact that above all else a specific style of life can be expected from all those who wish to belong to the circle" (Weber *Class, Status & Party*). Status groups often enforce social closure, restricting access to prestige through mechanisms like marriage restrictions, social clubs, or professional associations. These groups can form hierarchies where even those with little economic power can hold high status due to traditional or cultural prestige.

Finally, party refers to political power and the ability to influence social action through organized groups. While class and status operate in economic and social domains, party functions within the political sphere. Parties are organized groups seeking to influence societal structures, whether through government, unions, or other forms of collective action. This type of power is more about the ability to mobilize people or resources to achieve political goals, regardless of economic or social status. Parties can exist across class and status lines. For example, a political

party may include members from different classes and statuses but unify them in pursuit of a common goal, such as workers' rights or tax policies. Class, status, and party often reinforce each other but can also conflict. For instance, someone of high class (wealthy) might be excluded from certain high-status groups due to their lifestyle or background. Similarly, people with high status (like artists or intellectuals) may lack economic power but wield significant influence over cultural trends and ideas.

Weber's multi-dimensional view of inequality comprising of class (economic position), status (social honor), and party (political power) can be used to interpret the conflicts between augmented and non-augmented people, as well as the role of corporations, governments, and shadow organizations like the Illuminati in shaping societal structures. Weber's theory permits the understanding of the interplay between economic disparities, social hierarchies, and political control, which are central themes in the *Deus Ex* universe.

In both *Human Revolution* and *Mankind Divided*, the economic stratification between those who can afford augmentations and those who cannot is a central theme. This stratification aligns closely with Weber's concept of class as determined by one's market position or their ability to buy and sell goods, which are the technological augmentations in this case, and their overall earning potential. The two main classes as they are divided in *Deus Ex* are – the wealthy augmented elite; and the working class and non-augmented. The elites are those who can afford high-end augmentations, particularly the wealthy and the powerful. These individuals, often linked to major corporations like Sarif Industries, benefit from superior augmentations that enhance their abilities, making them more competitive in the marketplace. Their economic power gives them access to the best technologies, securing their position in society. People like David Sarif and other corporate leaders represent this class. On the other end of the spectrum, many individuals in the *Deus Ex* world are either unable to afford augmentations or choose not to get them, leaving them economically disadvantaged. Augmentations are often necessary to secure high-paying jobs or gain a competitive edge, placing the non-augmented at a disadvantage in the labor market. Weber's idea that class is linked to one's ability to access economic resources is evident here, as those without augmentations are often

stuck in low-wage jobs or unemployment, excluded from many economic opportunities.

Large corporations such as Sarif Industries and Tai Yong Medical represent economic classes that wield immense power due to their control of the augmentation market. These corporations dominate the economic landscape, determining who gets access to augmentations and thus shaping the broader labor market. They use their resources to lobby governments, control public opinion, and influence global politics. The monopolization of augmentation technology further deepens economic inequality.

The relationship between market position and economic advantage becomes evident in how corporations dictate the price and accessibility of augmentations, reinforcing the economic class divide. Those who cannot afford the expensive technologies are left behind, reinforcing Weber's view that economic inequality is one of the fundamental sources of social stratification.

Weber's concept of status refers to one's social honor or prestige within society, which is often tied to lifestyle, profession, and societal perception. In both *Human Revolution* and *Mankind Divided*, status stratification plays a key role in the conflict between augmented and non-augmented individuals. In *Human Revolution*, those who are augmented tend to hold higher social status, particularly if their augmentations are advanced and highly visible. Augmentations become symbols of prestige, power, and superiority, signifying an individual's ability to transcend normal human limitations. Many augmented individuals work in prestigious professions, such as security, corporate leadership, and advanced technology sectors. Their augmentations grant them enhanced abilities, which correlate to higher societal standing. In contrast, those who choose not to undergo augmentation, or who cannot afford it, are seen as inferior or even obsolete. They often work in lower-status jobs and are excluded from many of the social privileges that augmented people enjoy. The non-augmented, particularly in the eyes of the augmented elite, are viewed as less capable or competitive, creating a rigid social hierarchy based on physical and intellectual enhancement.

By the time of *Mankind Divided*, the Aug Incident (where augmented people worldwide were hijacked and forced to go berserk) has fundamentally shifted the

status hierarchy. Augmented individuals, who once held prestige and power, now face severe discrimination and social stigma. The augmented are feared, ostracized, and relegated to ghettos, much like untouchables in Weber's conception of rigid status groups. They are subjected to intense surveillance, restricted movement, and police brutality. Thus, the social honor of augmented individuals is tarnished, resulting in status degradation.

Weber's notion of social closure where high-status groups seek to exclude others from their ranks is evident in how the non-augmented majority enforces exclusionary policies against augmented people. The creation of ghettos and restrictive laws against augmented individuals represents a form of status segregation, designed to protect the status and safety of non-augmented citizens while marginalizing those with augmentations. Weber also emphasized that lifestyle and consumption patterns play a role in status. In *Human Revolution*, the wealthy can afford not just basic augmentations but luxury enhancements, giving them a superior lifestyle. Their consumption of cutting-edge technology sets them apart from the masses, reinforcing their status distinction. In *Mankind Divided*, this lifestyle becomes more contentious, as augmented individuals now face societal suspicion regardless of their wealth.

Weber's concept of party refers to political power and the ability to influence societal structures. This is particularly relevant in *Deus Ex*, where corporations, governments, and shadow organizations like the Illuminati wield enormous political influence. These parties manipulate events to protect their interests and maintain control over society, often pitting different social groups against one another. In both games, the Illuminati represent the ultimate party in Weber's sense, seeking to control society by influencing government policies, corporate behavior, and public perception of augmentations. They engineer crises like the Aug Incident to create fear and division between augmented and non-augmented people, allowing them to impose stricter controls over the population. In *Mankind Divided*, Task Force 29 is shown to be indirectly controlled by the Illuminati, further demonstrating how political parties use their influence to direct societal outcomes in their favor. Jensen's role in Task Force 29 places him in the midst of these power dynamics, as he navigates between his official duties and his knowledge of the deeper conspiracy. Governments often work hand in hand with corporations, reinforcing Weber's point

that political power is closely tied to economic power. For example, David Sarif uses his wealth and influence to lobby for favorable government policies that promote the use of augmentations, while Tai Yong Medical influences national policies in China. The anti-augmentation laws passed in *Mankind Divided* also reflect the party politics involved in controlling augmented individuals, reinforcing social divisions through legal mechanisms.

Weber's theory emphasizes that class, status, and party interact with and reinforce one another, a dynamic that is vividly illustrated in the world of *Deus Ex*. For example:

- Class and Status: Wealthy elites who can afford augmentations initially hold both high economic power and social prestige. However, after the Aug Incident, this shifts, as augmented individuals lose their status but may still retain economic power

- Class and Party: Corporations like Sarif Industries and Tai Yong Medical use their economic power (class) to influence governments and political institutions (party), creating policies that benefit their market interests while furthering the social division between augmented and non-augmented individuals.

- Status and Party: The discriminatory policies in *Mankind Divided* highlight how political power is used to enforce and maintain status hierarchies, relegating augmented individuals to second-class citizens.

Viewed through the lens of Max Weber's social stratification, the *Deus Ex* series explores how economic disparities, social status, and political power interlock to create and sustain inequality. Augmentations become a symbol of class and status, while powerful elites manipulate political institutions to maintain control over society. Jensen, as a highly augmented individual navigating these various social divisions, finds himself caught between the powerful forces shaping the world, struggling to balance his identity and role in a deeply stratified society.

However, those in defense of human augmentation have noted that the great technological progress in recent human history of the previous centuries have brought more benefits than harm. Proponents for augmentation have stated that all individuals have the right to choose whether or not to enhance their natural selves,

and mankind must be ready to embrace new technologies (Bailey 342). The debate over human morality and rights in the face of scientific enhancements has proven to be a tenuous one, as there are calls for the rejection of traditional human rights. As stated by Elizabeth Fenton:

> Someone who lives to the age of 150 is no less of an agent than someone of the current era who lives only to 85; the extra 65 years would, in fact, actually bestow more time in which to be an agent…none of these capabilities (bodily health, imagination, emotion, practical reason, friendship, etc.) are in fact threatened by, for example, enhanced intelligence or athleticism. (5)

Hence, while the Deus Ex series does portray some of the darker sides of augmentation such as corporate exploitation and social discrimination; augmentations themselves are not inherently harmful. If properly regulated, these technologies can offer immense benefits to individuals and society. Augmentation can level the playing field, empower people with disabilities, and foster innovation while respecting autonomy. A forward-looking approach to augmentation, grounded in ethical principles, accessibility, and individual choice, can fulfill the promise of creating a more capable, inclusive, and resilient world. Thus, human augmentation, when ethically managed, has the potential to vastly improve quality of life and open new possibilities for all of humanity.

Adam Jensen's Dilemma

As previously mentioned, Adam Jensen occupies a complex and multifaceted role in the conflict between augmented and non-augmented individuals. His unique position as a heavily augmented individual who did not choose to become one, as well as his moral ambiguity and involvement in global conspiracies, places him at the heart of a major societal conflict over transhumanism, inequality, and identity. His situation as being caught in the middle of the two worlds offers a unique glimpse into the social divide that is occurring around him.

At the outset of *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*, Jensen is severely injured during an attack on Sarif Industries, the biotechnology company where he works as head of security. To save his life, his employer, David Sarif, has Jensen undergo extensive augmentation without his explicit consent. Jensen's body is fitted with

cutting-edge mechanical augmentations, transforming him into a powerful transhuman. This transformation sets him apart from most people in the world, but it also creates an inner conflict. Jensen's body augmentation was not voluntary, which makes his situation different from many other augmented people in the game. He didn't choose to become part of the transhuman elite, nor did he actively seek out the technological enhancements that give him superior abilities. This lack of agency in his augmentation adds layers to his character, as he struggles with the implications of being a mechanical superhuman while grappling with his lost humanity. He neither wholly embraces nor rejects his augmentations, but instead navigates the moral and ethical complexities they introduce.

Jensen exists as a bridge between two conflicting worlds: the augmented and the non-augmented. His mechanical augmentations grant him abilities far beyond those of normal humans, such as increased strength, advanced hacking skills, and the ability to cloak. These augmentations, combined with his unique role as an investigator and problem-solver, position him as someone who can straddle the line between both sides of the conflict. Jensen's augmentations automatically grant him access to the augmented community, a group increasingly marginalized and stigmatized, particularly in *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided*. Augmented individuals are often segregated into ghettos, treated as second-class citizens, and subjected to oppressive laws and surveillance following the Aug Incident of 2027. Despite his sympathy for augmented people, Jensen does not fully identify with them. His augmentations are state-of-the-art and make him far more powerful than the average augmented individual, creating a social divide even within the augmented community. On the other hand, Jensen is still fundamentally human and retains much of his empathy for the non-augmented population. He does not fully align himself with the transhumanist ideal of unlimited augmentation or view the non-augmented as obsolete or inferior. As a former SWAT officer, he understands the fears and anxieties that non-augmented people feel about a world increasingly dominated by people with mechanical enhancements. This nuanced perspective makes him a key figure in negotiating the broader societal divide.

Jensen's position is complicated further by his involvement in investigating powerful conspiracies surrounding human augmentation. In both *Human Revolution*

and *Mankind Divided*, Jensen works as a security and counter-terrorism operative. He serves as a neutral figure, working for Sarif Industries and later Task Force 29, a global anti-terrorism organization. However, both his employers and the groups he investigates are frequently manipulated by powerful forces like the Illuminati. Throughout both games, Jensen grapples with personal responsibility. He is an augmented individual with unparalleled capabilities, but he constantly questions the ethics of augmentation. While his augmentations give him the power to do good, they also position him as a potential tool of those who seek to control humanity. Jensen often reflects on the societal impact of augmentation technology and his choices are morally ambiguous, and much of his narrative revolves around balancing his personal beliefs with the responsibilities thrust upon him. His moral uncertainty mirrors the larger societal conflict over augmentation. He never fully aligns himself with one faction, instead acting as a pragmatist who wants to reveal the truth and protect human freedom.

Jensen's actions, driven by his investigations, choices, and personal struggles, significantly shape the augmented vs. non-augmented conflict. In both games, his choices influence the public's perception of augmentation, as well as the power dynamics between corporations, governments, and extremist groups. However, Jensen's ultimate role is not as a saviour of the augmented but as someone striving to maintain balance. In *Human Revolution*, his decisions affect whether the world embraces, regulates, or fears augmentation, depending on the player's choices. In *Mankind Divided*, Jensen's efforts to expose the Illuminati and prevent the escalation of violence among augmented extremists and government forces shape the political landscape of this divided world. His actions, while profound, leave the world in a state of tension, reflecting the moral and ethical uncertainties surrounding human augmentation.

Conclusion

  Deus Ex: Human Revolution and *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* engage with posthuman themes by presenting a future where the boundaries between human and machine have blurred through widespread human augmentation. This fusion of humanity and technology invites both admiration and suspicion, creating a world where the ethical and social consequences of transcending human limitations become central. Through the character of Adam Jensen and the society he navigates, the games critique the promises and pitfalls of posthumanism, exploring issues of identity, inequality, autonomy, and the commodification of human life.

  In *Human Revolution*, augmentations are portrayed as revolutionary technologies capable of elevating human abilities beyond natural limits. People use augmentations to replace lost limbs, enhance intelligence, or push the body's physical boundaries, aligning with the utopian ideals of posthumanism that envision technology as a means to perfect and transcend human nature. However, the narrative immediately complicates this ideal by showing that access to augmentations is heavily restricted by economic status. Only the wealthy can afford the most advanced augmentations, creating a stratified society where the "enhanced" elite separate themselves from those without access to these improvements. This divide critiques the posthuman vision, revealing that, rather than creating a unified, empowered humanity, posthuman technologies often exacerbate pre-existing social inequalities and foster new ones. Instead of advancing human freedom, augmentations become tools that reinforce economic power and social exclusion.

  Deus Ex: Mankind Divided deepens this critique by highlighting the backlash against the augmented population following the catastrophic "Aug Incident," in which augmented individuals lose control and cause widespread destruction. This event prompts society to treat augmented individuals as dangerous and "other." Augmentation, initially portrayed as a path to individual empowerment, becomes a marker of stigma and exclusion. People with augmentations are segregated, monitored, and subjected to intense suspicion. The game critiques the darker side of posthumanism by demonstrating how altering the human form can lead to marginalization rather than acceptance, as the augmented are no longer seen as fully human by society. This creates an "augmented apartheid," a state-imposed system

that isolates those who have crossed the line of human "purity," challenging the assumption that enhancing the human form is a purely positive or liberating step.

Adam Jensen's character embodies the complex intersection of identity and posthuman themes, as he grapples with both the advantages and alienation that come with augmentation. Unlike many, Jensen did not choose to be augmented; his transformation was imposed after a life-threatening incident, raising ethical questions about autonomy and the rights of the individual in the face of technological intervention. His life, in a sense, becomes a posthuman experiment orchestrated by corporate interests, as his augmentations are provided by Sarif Industries, a powerful tech company. This involuntary enhancement speaks to the dangers of a posthuman society in which individuals may lose control over their own bodies and identities, becoming products of powerful corporations or state agendas rather than agents of self-directed evolution.

The games also explore the commodification of the human body, as augmentations are commercial products produced, controlled, and maintained by powerful corporations like Sarif Industries and Tai Yong Medical. These corporations profit from the sale of enhancements, creating a world in which human bodies become sites of profit. In this posthuman reality, people are not only augmented but are also tethered to corporations through dependency on expensive maintenance and anti-rejection drugs, such as Neuropozyne. This aspect of augmentation turns human bodies into markets, reducing posthuman advancement to a means of economic control. Rather than liberation, posthumanism in *Deus Ex* becomes another mechanism through which corporations exert power, manipulating and controlling individuals by making them reliant on proprietary technology.

Furthermore, the games scrutinize the philosophical implications of posthumanism by questioning what it means to be human. The physical integration of human and machine in the augmented body blurs the line between biological and artificial, challenging both societal perceptions and the individual's sense of self. Jensen often grapples with his own identity, unsure of where his humanity ends and his augmentations begin. This uncertainty speaks to the existential challenge posthumanism poses: if one's body and abilities are augmented, controlled, or even replaced by technology, what remains of one's original self? In presenting Jensen's

personal struggles, *Deus Ex* questions whether posthuman advancements genuinely enhance human life or erode the very essence of humanity.

By placing these themes within a world marked by surveillance, economic disparity, and social control, *Deus Ex* presents posthumanism as a double-edged sword. While augmentation offers possibilities of enhanced abilities and independence, it also comes with a loss of autonomy, the risk of social exclusion, and a dependency on corporate and governmental structures. Rather than championing posthumanism as an unambiguous path to human improvement, the games critique the consequences of technological evolution in a society where power is concentrated in the hands of a few. They question the assumption that technology will lead to a more just and empowered society, suggesting instead that, without ethical frameworks and equitable access, posthuman advancements may intensify exploitation, alienation, and social division.

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Chapter VI

Conclusion

The primary texts in this research have been chosen with the intent of showcasing the extent of the cyberpunk genre as a part of literature. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, *Neuromancer*, *Ghost in the Shell*, and the *Deus Ex* video game series all delve into futures where the distinction between human and machine becomes increasingly blurred, challenging conventional understandings of identity and humanity. Set in dystopian worlds dominated by artificial intelligence, cybernetic enhancements, and virtual realities, these narratives explore how technological dominance leads to the dehumanization of individuals and the destabilization of traditional concepts of what it means to be human. They probe deep questions about consciousness, free will, and the role of empathy, often following characters grappling with their sense of self in worlds shaped by corporate power, authoritarian regimes, and autonomous machines.

These stories also highlight the alienation born of rapid technological advancement, with protagonists frequently portrayed as marginalized figures or anti-heroes navigating societies that restrict personal freedom and identity through pervasive control systems. Central themes include moral ambiguity, existential introspection, and the erosion of humanity amid the rise of artificial life and mechanical enhancements. Ultimately, these works explore the duality of technological progress, balancing the allure of empowerment against the profound disconnection it can bring, presenting visions of the future that are both exhilarating and also unsettling at the same time.

Across many different cultures, belief in the soul stems from humanity's fear of oblivion and curiosity about life and death. The afterlife provides comfort, hope, and a sense of justice, even as interpretations of the soul vary widely. The potential for artificial souls remains uncertain, with acceptance likely divided based on cultural and religious views. Despite scientific progress, the soul is considered an ineffable concept beyond full human comprehension, as explored in the second chapter with Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. This topic is perhaps the most widely covered of all cyberpunk literature, with it is also being evident in

Gibson's *Neuromancer* with the twin AIs and the Puppet Master in Masamune's *Ghost in the Shell*. Dick portrays this in his novel by showing that while technology is potentially dangerous it is also potentially a path to human salvation (Sims 86). As touched upon in the aforementioned second chapter, the merits of the existence of a human soul cannot be conclusively proven. However, it can be concluded that each human being is in possession of a certain unique attribute that renders them all unique. The thesis cannot state whether this attribute is the fabled soul that has been sought after for centuries, but the proof of its existence can be observed from the rationality and potential that only human beings have the ability to exhibit. This attribute can further be affixed to artificial beings, at least in the context of the cyberpunk novels; which along with the development of AI in real time, is becoming an increasingly relevant topic for deliberation. As Charles T. Rubin writes on the question of artificial souls, "Unless we can take a question like that seriously, it seems likely we are setting ourselves up for a double failure in the coming world of robot caregivers and intimate partners" (82).

In William Gibson's cyberpunk universe of *Neuromancer*, divinity is equated with power, as seen in the AI Wintermute. However, this concept is flawed as it relies on human-made systems like cyberspace, making the AIs existence finite and constrained. Neither Neuromancer nor Wintermute represents true divinity, as they remain bound by earthly limitations and reflect the imperfections of their creators. Thus, while the second chapter urges caution at the prospect of AI, the third chapter shows that AI is not so far removed from humanity. Although the grandiose boastings of the twin AIs might make them seem all powerful and beyond the reach of mankind, in reality they are still grounded by the same limitations as man. The AIs' immense capabilities and their independence from human morality challenge conventional understandings of power and godhood. However, their reliance on technology and their inability to exist outside human-constructed systems keep them firmly rooted in the material world, rather than the transcendent realm typically associated with divinity. Instead, they serve as symbols of humanity's complex relationship with the powerful technologies it creates. According to R.L. Rutsky:

The starkness of this opposition between "good" and "bad" technologies seems to affirm the idea that the dividing line between technology and humanity must always be upheld; technology must know its "proper" place, even when – or especially when – it comes to life, as can be seen in the long series of artificial beings, sentient machines, robots and androids, cyborgs, and artificial intelligences portrayed in literature, films, and other media that have threatened to destroy, enslave, or replace humanity. (182-183).

The emergence of AI and the hyperspace of the internet in reality reflect the developments within Gibson's cyberpunk fiction; inviting humankind to ponder on how to navigate and shape the development of technology to avoid a similar dystopian outcome.

Ghost in the Shell explores the societal chaos caused by uncontrolled technological expansion, highlighting vulnerabilities like hacking and misuse of innovations such as cyber-brains. The nature of justice is suggested by Derrida to be malleable and unattainable and it is something that is to be strived for but always out of reach (Derrida 5). This has been proven to be quite evident within the narrative of *Ghost in the Shell*. The manga suggests that strict legal systems, rather than moral frameworks, are needed to impose order in a posthuman world teetering on transformation or collapse. However, this does not always strictly apply to every individual instance; as Kusanagi demonstrates with her defiance of the law on numerous accounts. Thus reinforcing the relevance of the unattainable definition of justice in the posthuman future.

The *Deus Ex* series critiques posthumanism by exploring the socio-ethical implications of human augmentation. While augmentations promise enhanced abilities, they deepen social divides and foster dependency on corporations. The games highlight themes of inequality, alienation, and commodification of the human body, presenting augmentation as a tool of control rather than liberation. Through Adam Jensen's struggles, *Deus Ex* questions the erosion of human identity and autonomy in a world dominated by technological and corporate power. The research has utilized Weber's theory of social stratification which is a multidimensional

concept, shaped by economic class, social status, and political power (Weber 450). The *Deus Ex* series shows how these dimensions intersect in a posthuman society. Augmentations, rather than democratizing opportunity, reinforce existing hierarchies and create new forms of inequality. While posthumanism claims to transcend human limitations, the *Deus Ex* series illustrates how societal structures co-opt these advancements to reinforce control and exploitation. This critique aligns with Weber's view that social progress is often accompanied by new forms of domination. The games highlight how class, status, and power influence who can access and benefit from augmentations, challenging the optimistic vision of posthumanism and underscoring the importance of addressing systemic inequalities in any technologically advanced society

The primary texts of the thesis all present intricate critiques of posthuman themes, exploring the profound societal, ethical, and existential challenges posed by human-technology integration. Each work examines the transformative effects of advanced technologies on identity, autonomy, and societal structures, offering cautionary tales about the potential consequences of embracing posthuman ideals.

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Philip K. Dick challenges the boundaries of humanity by presenting androids that exhibit emotions and intelligence indistinguishable from humans. The novel questions whether traits like empathy define humanity and critiques a society that commodifies and exploits artificial beings. This reflects on the dehumanizing potential of posthumanism, where the integration of synthetic life into human society raises profound ethical dilemmas. Similarly, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* explores a world dominated by cyberspace and artificial intelligence, portraying a reality where human consciousness can transcend the body but risks alienation and loss of self. The disembodied existence in cyberspace critiques posthuman ideals of transcendence, emphasizing the alienation and detachment that can accompany such transformations.

In *Ghost in the Shell*, the cybernetically enhanced protagonist, Major Kusanagi, navigates an identity crisis stemming from her fusion of human

consciousness with a machine body. The manga critiques the posthuman aspiration to transcend the physical by examining the psychological toll it exacts, highlighting the existential uncertainty and fragility of identity in a cybernetic age. Similarly, the *Deus Ex* series scrutinizes the social and ethical ramifications of human augmentation. Through the experiences of Adam Jensen, the games reveal how technological enhancements, rather than liberating individuals, often reinforce societal inequalities and dependence on powerful corporations. Augmentations become markers of privilege, creating divisions between the augmented elite and the marginalized, unaugmented population. The series also critiques the commodification of the human body, portraying how corporations exploit augmentation technologies to control individuals through dependency on proprietary systems.

All these narratives grapple with the tension between the promises of posthuman advancements like greater capabilities and an enhanced existence; while also showing the risks of alienation, dehumanization, and societal stratification. They challenge the assumption that technological evolution inherently leads to progress, instead revealing the complexities and moral ambiguities of reshaping humanity. By presenting futures where technology transforms not only society but the essence of what it means to be human, these works critique the unchecked embrace of posthuman ideals and call for a more critical and ethical examination of the consequences of technological integration.

The intersection of cyberpunk and posthuman themes offers a compelling field for research, addressing the ethical, philosophical, and social implications of technological advancements. Through narratives involving human-machine fusion, AI, and virtual realities, researchers can investigate the impact of technology on identity and autonomy. As Rosi Braidotti has noted that the contemporary world is already very much techno-scientific in nature, with the field of science growing ever more relevant versus other schools of thought (59). Cyberpunk as a literary genre critiques the concentration of power among corporations and governments, the surveillance state, and growing social inequalities, making it a powerful lens to analyze contemporary concerns about control and dehumanization. Meanwhile,

posthuman elements challenge foundational ideas of humanity, exploring alternative modes of existence and reflecting broader cultural and intellectual shifts. Given its relevance to debates on AI, human augmentation, and the ethics of innovation, cyberpunk literature with posthuman themes serves as a rich foundation for further interdisciplinary academic inquiry.

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ABSTRACT

**CRITIQUING THE POSTHUMAN IN SELECT CYBERPUNK
FICTION: A STUDY**

**AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES
DECEMBER, 2024

CRITIQUING THE POSTHUMAN IN SELECT CYBERPUNK FICTION: A STUDY

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Submitted

In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in English and Culture Studies of Mizoram University, Aizawl

Cyberpunk emerged as a genre of literature in the 1980s, drawing from themes already present in science fiction. It integrates futuristic settings, advanced technological progress, and explores the moral degradation that often accompanies power. Cyberpunk highlights the condition of humanity in relation to science and humanity's central role in the world. These themes also mirror real-world advancements, like the use of artificial limbs and organs to enhance abilities and our increasing reliance on digital technology in daily life.

Posthumanism, meanwhile, is a philosophical and cultural movement that examines the relationship between humans, technology, and the non-human, challenging traditional humanist ideas. In literature, posthumanism responds to evolving technologies, ecological issues, and shifting concepts of identity, ethics, and existence. It rethinks the human experience, especially as the lines between human, animal, and machine become blurred. Posthumanist literature critically examines the human condition in the present historical context, complicating the idea of the human form when viewed against other organisms.

The novels *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) by Philip K. Dick and *Neuromancer* (1984) by William Gibson, along with the manga[1] *Ghost in the Shell* (1989-1991) by Masamune Shirow and the video games *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* (2011) and *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* (2016) are the primary texts in this study. These works explore the manipulation and enhancement of human life, raising questions about the ethics and consequences of scientific and technological experimentation on human nature. While the novels are traditional literature, *Ghost in the Shell* and the *Deus Ex* games illustrate the genre's evolution, showing how visual media like manga and video games can parallel and enhance text-based literature. This reflects the central cyberpunk theme of the evolution of human technology.

The rationale behind undertaking the research on this emerging genre is not merely its newness as a narrative category; rather, this narrative type explores the challenges and prospects of mankind in its trajectory of growth and progress. Even if

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[1] The name given to comic books printed in Japan. They are read from right to left.

this corpus of writing is broadly recent and comparatively meagre, it shows an adventure into the future of mankind and the shape of things to come with challenges which man has to negotiate and navigate. In such fictions, the established values, ethics and philosophy that once guided humanity are being interrogated and violated in order to achieve success at all costs. Success by human modes of power and technological knowledge has presented more questions and instabilities than what meet our eye. This research, therefore, adopt interdisciplinary approaches to examine and explore the significant meanings emerging through the selected texts.

Cyberpunk literature presents human issues by dealing with a complex network of ideas, humanism, posthumanism and transhumanism. It is a rich field for research, as it tackles vital questions about humanity's future in an increasingly technologized world. Examining how these stories depict the merging of humans with machines, AI, and virtual realities is to reveal how ethical, philosophical, social concerns and sophisticated technology affects human identity and autonomy. Cyberpunk critiques corporate power, surveillance, and social inequality, highlighting contemporary issues around control, inequality, and technology's dehumanizing potential. The posthuman themes within cyberpunk, especially the dissolution of traditional human boundaries and exploration of alternative existences; challenge fundamental concepts of humanity, offering insight into our cultural, moral and intellectual shifts. With its relevance to Artificial Intelligence (hereafter AI), human augmentation, and ethics in technology, cyberpunk literature provides a fertile ground for academic exploration.

This research aims to position the cyberpunk genre in the context of today's technological age. The genre's themes find real-world parallels, such as the internet and virtual reality in *Neuromancer*, modified bodies, and deep-state conspiracies in the *Deus Ex* series. These examples suggest that cyberpunk creators have had insight into humanity's development over recent decades, which has been examined in a greater detail in the entire study.

The research is divided into six total chapters. Each chapter focuses on a particular aspect of cyberpunk literature that highlights the vast possibilities of posthumanism.

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter introduces and explains the various terminologies that are associated with cyberpunk and posthumanism. It provides a brief history of the timeline of the genre of cyberpunk and the use of posthuman themes within literature. As previously mentioned, cyberpunk is a subgenre of science fiction; it is mainly characterized by being set in futuristic settings where technology has advanced to such an extent that humankind cannot make do without them, but this progress comes at the cost of human decency and morality.

The origin of the term can be attributed to the short story "Cyberpunk" (1983) by Bruce Bethke (b.1955). The short story follows the exploits of a group of young troublemakers who use their proficiency with computer technology to revolt against the established law and order. In the foreword to his self-published online version of the story, Bethke states:

> How did I actually create the word? The way any new word comes into being, I guess: through synthesis. I took a handful of roots –cyber, techno, et al—mixed them up with a bunch of terms for socially misdirected youth, and tried out the various combinations until one just plain sounded right.

Central to cyberpunk is the exploration of how advanced technology—particularly cybernetics, AI, and virtual realities—intersects with power, identity, and social stratification. Cyberpunk literature portrays worlds where technology has altered human life in both wondrous and horrific ways, often blending noir sensibilities with speculative futures. These stories focus on the darker side of technological evolution, such as corporate control, digital surveillance, and the dehumanizing effects of capitalism.

According to Lisa Yaszek and Jason W.Ellis, "Much cyberpunk writing interrogates how human bodies are transformed and artificial beings are created by late twentieth-century technologies including AI, artificial life, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, and virtual reality" (78). At the core of cyberpunk is the depiction

of technology's double-edged sword. In these narratives, technology offers tremendous power and possibility, but it also dehumanizes, alienates, and oppresses. Characters often modify their bodies with cybernetic enhancements, creating a fluid boundary between human and machine. This raises profound questions about identity when an individual can replace their body with machinery, what is it that makes them human?

While cyberpunk is often concerned with the negative consequences of technology, it is also a genre of rebellion and critique as well as intellectual tantalization. It explores how individuals can push back against oppressive systems, using the very technologies that control them to carve out spaces of autonomy and resistance. The genre critiques the notion that technological progress is inherently good, instead portraying a future where advancements come at a steep cost to human freedom, privacy, and well-being. This skepticism toward utopian visions of technology distinguishes cyberpunk from other forms of science fiction, which often celebrate technological innovation as a path to a better future.

As time passed, cyberpunk began to encompass much more than the literary genre which it first birthed from, and the specific aesthetic of the genre has been used to great effect in various other fields beyond just science fiction literature. Pawel Frelik (b.1969) writes that the defining aspects of cyberpunk literature such as corporate greed, low-burn dystopian apocalypticism, and technological immersion are no longer sufficient to set the genre apart, but rather it is the visions and descriptions of interfaces, virtual worlds, and neon lights that truly mark what the genre has transformed into over the years (166). The cyberpunk authors can be considered to be critical posthumanists, since while they romanticize the idea of the human-machine hybrid, their works also highlight the disadvantages that come with the rapid advancement of technology and the loss of human values.

As for the term posthuman, it is essential to first grasp the tenets of humanism, as posthumanism is often framed in response to or as a critique of it. Humanism is a term that has no definition that will satisfy everyone (Huang 1). As such, for the purposes of this study, the Eurocentric definition of Humanism has been utilized. This form of Humanism is a broad intellectual and cultural movement that emerged during the Renaissance, emphasizing the centrality of human beings, human

values, and human experience. In contrast, posthumanism challenges many of the foundational ideas of humanism. According to Matthew E. Gladden,

> The processes of posthumanization are those dynamics by which a society
>
> comes to include members other than 'natural' biological human beings
>
> who, in one way or another, contribute to the structures, activities,
>
> or meaning of the society.   (35)

While humanism celebrates human capabilities, posthumanism of the post-Enlightenment era explores how technology and biology extend or even surpass those capabilities. Posthumanism asks what happens when human bodies and minds are enhanced, modified, or surpassed by artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and other technologies. In humanism, identity is tied to the integrity of the individual human subject. Posthumanism, however, envisions a more fluid and hybrid conception of identity. It often explores how the boundaries between human and machine, human and animal, or natural and artificial are increasingly blurred. Cyborgs, AI, and genetic hybrids are central posthuman figures that defy humanism's rigid categories. Humanism's ethical framework revolves around human rights and dignity. Posthumanism complicates this by questioning whether ethical consideration should be extended to non-human entities, such as AI, animals, and the environment.

Chapter II: The Value of the Soul in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

This chapter is concerned mostly with the exploration of the nature of spiritual existence within cyberpunk narratives. Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* portrays the reoccurring theme of the question of the nature of the soul. Since artificial life that more or less fully replicates human behaviour has been achieved within the setting of the novel, this brings forth a new perspective on the topic which has been further delved into in this chapter. The electric sheep mentioned in the title of the novel refer to artificial animals that have been manufactured with the purpose of replacing those that have perished after the World War. The title also questions the possibility of androids being capable of sentience and free thought. Since human beings and other sentient animals are the only living organisms thought to be capable of dreaming, the perspective only

complicates and significantly eludes any definite answers or muddies the existentiality that is reality.

The narrative of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*? occurs within an alternate world set in the year 1992. Due to a devastating World War, the entire globe is reeling from the aftereffects such as extensive radiation poisoning causing uninhabitable conditions for most of the world's population. Human technology has also advanced to such a state that has enabled the creation of robots who are able to mimic human beings near-perfectly. The novel explores how the overreliance on new technology has given way to neglect the other aspects of life on earth such as the flora and the fauna. It delves into the human inclination to only look forward to the future at the expense of everything else that presently surrounds them.

The protagonist is a man named Rick Deckard, who works as a bounty hunter for the San Francisco Police Department. The impetus for the plot occurs when six artificially created humans called androids have attained free will and escaped from their creator, a corporation named the Rosen Association. Deckard is tasked with hunting and dispatching these rogue androids before they come to harm any humans. These androids are newly designed versions called Nexus-6 androids who have "surpassed several classes of human specials in terms of intelligence. In other words, androids equipped with the new Nexus-6 brain unit had from a sort of rough, pragmatic, no-nonsense standpoint evolved beyond a major – but inferior – segment of mankind" (Dick 23). This suggests that the Nexus-6 androids have developed abilities or qualities that surpass a significant portion of humanity, at least from a practical and straightforward perspective. Despite being considered inferior as they are not fully human, these androids have evolved in a way that makes them, in certain practical aspects, superior to many humans.

After Deckard experiences the capabilities of the androids through their emotional vulnerabilities, he begins doubting the nature of his work. Human life is inherently believed to be placed at a higher status than any other form of life, be it artificial life or other forms of natural life. This way of thinking is ingrained in most human beings as a result of thousands of years of beliefs. Apart from man's intellectual superiority, many cultures have also given credit to the possession of a

soul to be the enabler for humankind's domination over other beings considered to be lesser. In the cyberpunk world, the dilemma arises as to whether these artificial beings can be considered to be in possession of a soul.

Delving into philosophical and religious discourse on the soul, the dilemma of artificial souls has been analyzed. One of the earliest musings was by the Greek philosopher Aristotle – who argued that while plants and animals possess nutritive and sensitive souls, respectively, humans have an additional faculty known as the rational soul. This rational soul enables humans to engage in higher cognitive functions such as abstract thinking, reasoning, and deliberation (27). The Nexus-6 androids possessing similar faculties to humans might be enough to consider them living beings with souls in this sense. However, later thinkers such as Rene Descartes argued that the soul was unique and immortal and did not require a body to be given value or substance (*Discourse on the Method* 677); he also stated that an artificial human, if possible, would not be in possession of a soul and it would only be a mechanical imitation (*Meditations on First Philosophy* 59-60). In Western religious beliefs such as Christianity, the soul of man is what gives him authority over other forms of life (Augustine 98-99); and since souls are pre-existing and eternal they cannot be artificially created by man (Aquinas 150).

Despite centuries of human advancement, the capabilities of modern science and technology are still not adequate to commit to a firm understanding on the nature of the soul. The soul is justifiably considered to be an immutable and immeasurable substance that defies mortal comprehension. Thus, this research cannot have a final definite statement in the matter of an artificial being such as an android being in possession of sentience and intelligence akin to human beings. In this context, Philip K Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* has raised further challenges and questions to consider on the discourse of the soul.

Chapter III: Transcending Reality in *Neuromancer*

The third chapter continues from the previous chapter in examining the topic of spirituality in a posthuman world. In particular, the nature of reality and the

possible existence of virtual worlds has been discussed in this chapter. The plot of *Neuromancer* follows a man named Henry Dorsett Case, who is a semi-retired computer hacker hired by a mysterious employer named Armitage for a hacking job. Case was previously punished by having his nervous system damaged, preventing him from accessing cyberspace — which is the virtual reality network that connects all computers. A mysterious man named Armitage offers to repair Case's nervous system in exchange for his services. He is also joined in his endeavours by Molly Millions, a mercenary for hire who has enhanced her body with cybernetic implants. These implants were intended to help her perform her tasks more efficiently; including features such as ten double-edged, four-centimetre scalpel blades that she could hide beneath her nails (26) and the ability to "see in the dark" (32). The mission assigned to the two of them by Armitage is to infiltrate into the data of a powerful AI called Wintermute through the aforementioned cyberpsace. Wintermute is part of a powerful corporate entity known as the Tessier-Ashpool family, and it wants to merge with its counterpart, the titular Neuromancer, in order to become a superintelligence.

The term cyberspace is often used in cyberpunk stories, but it was initially coined by the author of *Neuromancer*, William Gibson. Within the novel, it is defined as:

> A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts… A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding. (Gibson 52)

This idea of a global virtual network would later come to be realized in the form of the internet. However, Gibson's cyberspace has an important distinction from the internet in the fact that individuals can mentally enter into this space as if it were a physical location. This aspect of cyberspace can also be linked to the virtual reality technology in real life that also enables people to enter simulations of physical

spaces. Cyberspace plays a crucial part in the novel as it is the medium through which the human characters and the AI are able to interact with one another freely.

These aforementioned images of the virtual world are crafted by man from the physical space in reality, so they evoke the concept of hyperreality as propounded by French philosopher Jean Baudrillard. This concept of hyperreality has thus been utilized to read into Gibson's cyberspace in *Neuromancer*. Baudrillard defines hyperreality as "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (*Simulacra and Simulation* 1). For further clarification, Baudrillard gave the example that the public's understanding of the Gulf War was shaped more by the hyperreal simulation in the media than by the actual events on the ground (The Gulf War Did Not Take Place 82). The war as it was perceived through the lens of media representation, became a spectacle with its own reality, detached from the geopolitical complexities and human realities of the conflict. As news channels such as CNN were able to broadcast selective images from the war onto the homes of the masses, "the play of images, the commentary, gloss and verbal performance of the presenters, the promotional editing and cutting, all these transfer the 'hot' live, real event into its 'cold', mediated, televised spectacle" (Merrin 438). The threat of Iraq's war was effectively nullified as the US and the UN mobilised one of the largest armies since the World War and crushed their opposition with impunity, and the people at home were none the wiser as to what had happened. Thus, hyperreality can evolve to become a threat to reality since the masses will gradually be indoctrinated into a fanatical belief of the manufactured reality.

The AIs use false manufactured images often to serve their purposes within the novel, and according to them there is no difference between the physical and virtual worlds (Gibson 262). Baudrillard had stated that this is the final stage of the simulacra in hyperreality, when the simulation no longer requires the original in order to exist. It is no longer an imitation of reality but a separate reality altogether. Within the novel, cyberspace begins as a contraption of man for its own convenience, and eventually with the power of the AIs it becomes to take on a life of its own. This reaches to such an extent where people who have died in the real world, such as the protagonist's girlfriend Linda Lee are resurrected into an ideal, safe haven within

cyberspace. Naturally, this fact draws parallels to the afterlife but also more towards the Christian interpretation of it as a realm of divinity.

Ultimately however, despite the grandiose nature of the AIs, they cannot be fully regarded as having attained divinity. The artificial being is as flawed as the ones who have created it, as it seeks to gain whatever it desires through vulgar displays of its might against those who it deems as threats. There is little room for politics or negotiation, which is fittingly the tactic adopted by its twin AI, Wintermute as it is non-confrontational in nature. Neither Wintermute nor Neuromancer can be considered to be true gods, at least as mankind has come to understand and define the term. While considerably powerful and beyond the reach of mankind, the AIs are still constrained by earthly concepts and their domain itself is one that has been created by a supposedly inferior lifeform in man.

Chapter IV: Justice and Law in *Ghost in the Shell*

This chapter examines the values of law and order in a posthuman world through the lens of the manga series *Ghost in the Shell* by Shirow Masamune. The story of *Ghost in the Shell* is set in the mid-21st century, primarily occurring within a fictional Japanese city. Society has become highly advanced, with widespread cyberization—people are able to augment their bodies with cybernetic enhancements, and many even have cyber-brains, which allow direct interaction with the internet and other networks. The world is also rife with aspects of political intrigue, espionage, and crime, often driven by the fusion of human minds and machines. As people from all walks of life begin to make use of the greatly advanced technological creations; law enforcement is also necessitated to adapt to these new perspectives that have been imposed upon society. The chapter focuses on the portrayal of a posthuman cyberpunk world and its concept of law and order. As the development of humankind reaches a posthuman stage, the standards and values of the law will eventually have to adapt and change in order to meet the needs of the situation at hand.

The narrative begins in the year 2029 following the exploits of Public Security Section 9, an elite counter-terrorism and cybercrime unit based in the

fictional Japanese city of Niihama (also known as New Port City). The main two characters presented are members of this unit, named Major Motoko Kusanagi and Chief Daisuke Aramaki. While Aramaki serves as the administrative and bureaucratic head of the unit, Kusanagi is the squad leader of the field unit that engages in physical confrontations. Within the first chapter itself, the utilization of lethal force and breaking international law in order to serve Japan's own ends are depicted as Section 9 utilizes brute force to apprehend a politician who was seeking asylum in another foreign country. As the chapters progress, the members of Section 9 come to feel that they are still being restrained in their actions. Aware of the strain put on the members of the unit by the limitations in their jurisdiction, Aramaki is able to negotiate a higher privilege for them with the nation's Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to the newly negotiated terms, they will report only to the Prime Minister and all their targets and tasks will be chosen directly by Motoko herself (Masamune 46). With these newly afforded privileges, the unit is able to navigate the political manipulations of bureaucracy much more efficiently and produces much more tangible results.

The establishment of law and authority is of utmost importance for civilization to have progressed past the primitive era of mankind's ancestors. Without a set of codified rules to follow, a nation's people cannot be expected to progress in any meaningful way as most interactions would eventually devolve into violent confrontations and instead culminate with a loss of progress. A precise definition of law is a complex matter that has long been disputed by various authorities on the subject. American criminologist Ronald L. Akers has stated that law "is part of the larger system of pressures toward conformity and attempts to prevent deviation from social norms" (301). He argues that the attempted definitions of law are too broad and there needs to be a more focused definition of the term. According to Kenneth Einar Himma, there are roughly three categories into which the topic of jurisprudence can be divided into analytical jurisprudence, normative jurisprudence, and critical theories of law ("Philosophy of Law").

Due to the vast depth of the field of jurisprudence, the paper has focused on analyzing Masamune's *Ghost in the Shell* through the lens of normative and analytical jurisprudence. Since the field of ethics is crossed with normative

jurisprudence, the ethical implications of the posthuman cyberpunk world have been analyzed in this chapter. This has further been contrasted with the cold and stoic views of analytical jurisprudence in order to arrive at a suitable conclusion.

The three main viewpoints for the foundation of a system of law have been broken down in this chapter as: Law as a Divine Mandate, Categorical Imperative and Legal Positivism. After taking these three viewpoints into consideration in the context of *Ghost in the Shell*, the research has observed that system of laws is always susceptible to being corrupted from their original purpose and can be manipulated to serve some other nefarious intentions. This nature of justice has been explained by Jacques Derrida as having a certain mystical or arbitrary foundation, as there is no pure, rational origin for law, yet it carries immense power (12).

Through the lens of Derrida's philosophy, *Ghost in the Shell* can be seen as a narrative that explores the limitations and contradictions of law in a technologically advanced world. The law, in the world of the manga, functions as an instrument of control, attempting to maintain order in a society where technology disrupts traditional understandings of identity, morality, and justice. At the same time, the story highlights the tension between enforcing the law and pursuing justice, as the characters frequently encounter situations where legal frameworks are inadequate for addressing the deeper ethical questions raised by the integration of humans and machines.

Chapter V: Social Turmoil in the *Deus Ex* Series

The fifth chapter is concerned with studying the repercussions of the emerging posthuman developments within human society as depicted in the video games *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* and *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided*. The premise of the *Deus Ex* games take place within the immediate future of the Earth in the year 2027. The planet in this reality has become corrupted because of unchecked technological advancements that eventually created controversial social, political, and ethical issues on a global scale. Of particular focus of this study is the concept of augmentations, which range from replacing limbs with mechanical ones, to having machine implants inside of the body to aid with various tasks. However, these mechanical augmentations will eventually be rejected by the human body, leading to

a crippling effect on the augmented individual called Darrow Deficiency Syndrome. In order to prevent this side effect, a drug called Neuropozyne has been created that needs to be taken regularly by the augmented individuals in the video games.

Despite the continuous advancements of human innovation in the name of progress, the global society as presented in *Deus Ex* cannot be definitively called superior. Social ills are still prevalent, the equality of all individuals yet remains a distant prospect, and wars are still waged with the only difference being the methods with which they are carried out. Discrimination continues to exist within human society but it has taken on new forms. While *Human Revolution* introduced the tension between augmented and non-augmented individuals, *Mankind Divided* amplifies this conflict, portraying a world where discrimination and segregation have become institutionalized.

According to Michel Foucault, "Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power's problem. And I think that biopolitics emerges at this time" (245). Central to Biopolitics is the regulation of biological life to achieve social and political goals. In *Deus Ex*, human augmentation technology embodies this idea. By enhancing human bodies with cybernetic augmentations, the corporations and the state exercise a form of control over individuals, effectively turning people into "biopolitical subjects" whose bodies and capabilities can be regulated, enhanced, or suppressed. Augmentations, ostensibly created to improve human life and productivity, are also a form of biological intervention that the powerful can exploit. Corporations like Sarif Industries and Tai Yong Medical hold a monopoly over augmentation technology, giving them immense influence over who can access these life-altering enhancements. The state and corporations can thus govern people's lives directly by managing who is allowed to augment, creating a social stratification between augmented and non-augmented individuals.

The *Deus Ex* games' narratives and settings mirror and critique real-world geopolitical phenomena, exploring how technology, economic power, and societal fear are leveraged by governments and corporations to maintain control and influence, often at the expense of individual freedom and social cohesion. The games

scrutinize the philosophical implications of posthumanism by questioning what it means to be human. The physical integration of human and machine in the augmented body blurs the line between biological and artificial, challenging both societal perceptions and the individual's sense of self. Jensen often grapples with his own identity, unsure of where his humanity ends and his augmentations begin. This uncertainty speaks to the existential challenge posthumanism poses: if one's body and abilities are augmented, controlled, or even replaced by technology, what remains of one's original self? In presenting Jensen's personal struggles, *Deus Ex* questions whether posthuman advancements genuinely enhance human life or erode the very essence of humanity.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

Within this conclusive chapter, it has been observed that despite the romanticization of technology and the great heights that it can achieve within cyberpunk fiction; the cyberpunk narratives also portray the decline that human civilization also faces as a result of scientific development. Through the lens of through the lens of cyberpunk narratives, the authors explore the consequences of technological advancements that fundamentally alter humanity, identity, and society. Each of these narratives delves into the implications of the posthuman condition, questioning what it means to be human when technology, artificial intelligence, and cybernetics redefine consciousness, agency, and morality. These cyberpunk works not only critique the posthuman themes within their fictional settings but also serve as cautionary tales about the ethical and social implications of a future driven by unregulated technological advancements. They challenge readers to consider the value of human identity, autonomy, and justice in a world where technology reshapes every aspect of existence. By presenting visions of societies transformed by the integration of technology into human bodies, minds, and social systems, these stories highlight the promises and perils of the posthuman age, urging reflection on how the pursuit of progress might impact human dignity, social justice, and the essence of humanity itself.

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