Chapter Four

Life beyond the Nuclear Threat
The last chapter dealt with the analysis of the characters in the fiction of Dick, especially how the characters' psyches reacted to the nuclear threat. The application of the proposed framework showed how the characters, caught up in the nuclear shadow, developed different psychological mechanisms as defences against the nuclear threat. His works reveal that most of defensive psychological mechanisms of the characters result in their taking on the role of the victims or victimizers in the face of the nuclear threat. An important aspect of this phenomenon is that while certain characters take on the role of victimizers temporarily, their condition is in no way different from their victims. Though the victimizers function as instruments of the threat, which leads to making the threat a real danger from a possible one, they themselves aren't immune from the threat. In this respect, his works have a striking parallel with the work of Lifton: in the face of a nuclear threat among all those who are party to the nuclear issue, there exists a sense of victimhood and a foreboding of an impending doom. Both Dick and Lifton, through their respective works, focus on the plight of the victims and victimizers under the nuclear shadow and attempt to look for a way of moving away from the path leading to the catastrophe while most of the analyzed subjects and characters remain victims, there are a few subject whose analyses offer hope for a way from slipping into the nuclear abyss. These characters show a marked determination to take definitive action and a clear avoidance of passive spectatorship to the oncoming threat. What makes them worthy of special focus is the fact that they are 'ordinary' people who take 'extraordinary' actions. They attempt to repair the damage done by the threat while helping fellow beings overcome the horrors experienced. Having been victims themselves, they understand the sufferings of their fellow beings and establish an empathetic bond with other victims. The relationships established by these
‘survivors’ among themselves and other victims are marked by a respect for others, an acceptance of the reality, perceiving the threat for what it is and a willingness to have a life of shared peaceful coexistence. These ‘survivors’ in each of these novels deserve our close attention.

Dr. Bloodmoney is set in a world ravaged by repeated nuclear attacks, in spite of which life continues to go on in Marin County, albeit in a different form. As mentioned in the analysis in the previous chapter, there are many characters that remain victims or victimizers like Hoppy Harrington and Dr. Bluthgeld. A study of Dr. Bluthgeld’s character reveals his inability to overcome the trauma of the nuclear threat and the resultant inability to establish meaningful relations with others. Hoppy Harrington, on the other hand, becomes a victimizer in the course of his failed attempt at overcoming the nuclear threat, which had made him what he was, a mutant without limbs. The novel, according to Dick’s own Afterword to the novel,

... is an extremely hopeful novel. It does not posit the end of human civilization as a result of the next war. People are still around and they are still coping. Those who survive, anyhow, are fairly lucky in their new lives. What is interesting is the subtle change in the relative power status of the survivors... (300).

Dick’s comments on Hoppy are insightful: 

Take Hoppy Harrington, who has no arms or legs. Before the bomb hits, Hoppy is marginal in terms of power. He is fortunate if he can get any kind of job at all. But in the post-war world, this is not the case. Hoppy is elevated by stealthy increments until, at last, he is a menace to a man not even on the planet’s surface; Hoppy has become a demigod, and a complex one at that. He is not really evil, in the usual sense... but here is an instance of the abuse of power: evil emanating
from power per se. It is not so much that Hoppy is evil but that his *power* is evil.

(300).

Dick tries to portray that the capacity to perform evil is not limited to characters who become victimizers alone. Dick argues that even characters who have been victims themselves in the past, harbour the ability to afflict others lives. Harry is a definitive example of an erstwhile victim becoming a victimizer for the sake of acquiring power more than anything else.

An interesting feature of this novel is the presence of numerous characters that refuse to be reduced to victims or victimizers and attempt to cope with the threat in their own ways. The pre-catastrophic world is based on human dependence and subservience to machines that result in conflict among the people as well as between machines and humans. The post catastrophic world celebrates human skills and focuses on symbiotic coexistence. Dick’s favourite character in the novel is Stuart Mc Conchie, the TV salesman, who later becomes a handyman who is respected for his ability to fix things using his manual skills. Stuart Mc Conchie’s importance increases in the post catastrophic period due to his ability to repair things and his willingness to help others because of his empathetic nature. His ability to form meaningful relationships with others reveals his insight into the characters’ psyche, as seen in his sensing the threat Dr. Bluthgeld poses to the world. He also senses the danger Hoppy could pose for others in West Marin County. He uses his abilities to help people, irrespective of what he feels about them. His selfless action of finding Dr. Bluthgeld helps avert another nuclear attack and earns him acceptance in the county where previously he received an unfair treatment. In the novel’s *Afterword*, Dick suggests that Stuart Mc Conchie has all those essential human qualities, which make him a true survivor.
...I sensed a basic accuracy in it... an accuracy about human beings and their power to survive. Not survive as beasts, either, but as genuine humans doing genuinely human things. There are no supermen in this novel. There are no heroic deeds... the people themselves and their strengths and tenacity and vitality... I think I foresaw accurately. (303).

Another character who manages to overcome the threat is Mr. Austurias, the school teacher who is respected for his ability to look for food. His character is marked by his willingness to accept the threat and trying to find ways to overcome it. In spite of knowing how much his knowledge of gathering edible mushrooms is sought after in the post-catastrophic world, he shares its benefits with fellow residents in West Marin County. The county's success is based on the contributions from survivors like him. The county and its inhabitants' survival is partly due to the fact that the different survivors in the county work together as a community for the common good in spite of their personal differences. They are willing to give up their personal comforts and join the collective struggle for survival convinced that one cannot survive without the others. The desire to survive and the knowledge that each person's survival depends on the others makes it possible to break age-old convictions and prejudices. The knowledge and acceptance of the fact that mutual dependence is the key to survival of the group forms the basis of the respect that the survivors have for each other and the relationship they share. This is mentioned by Dr. Stockstill in the context of his discussion of Mr. Austurias with Bonny Keller.

...Although they did not like it, they all respected Mr. Austurias' retention of secret lore - it was his right to keep his mycological wisdom to himself. Each of them some sort of equivalent fund to draw from. Otherwise, he reflected, they would not now be alive: they would have joined the great majority; the silent dead
beneath their feet, the millions who could either be considered the lucky ones or the unlucky ones, depending on one’s point of view. (58).

As a survivor, Mr. Austurias' character is marked by his willingness to help those in danger in spite of knowing the victimizers' potential for harming others. Dr. Stockstill is another survivor who has an insight into people's psyche due to his medical training. He sincerely attempts to help Dr. Bluthgeld knowing fully well Dr. Bluthgeld's role as a victimizer in setting of nuclear weapons. Being a survivor, he possesses the quality of being able to accept others without holding any prejudices. His willingness to provide his healing skills towards the community of survivors gains him the acceptance of the community. Like other survivors, Dr. Stockstil has great respect for others and accepts people for what they are. This prompts him to extend his professional help to Dangerfield who is imprisoned in a satellite revolving the Earth. He shows the same sincerity in helping Dr. Bluthgeld as in helping Dangerfield. Like Dr. Stockstil, the Kellers, who are also 'survivors' like him, are neither prejudiced against the victimizers like Dr. Bluthgeld nor are they cynical of victims like Hoppy. The Kellers, Bonny and George suffer from the nuclear attacks like other victims but they emerge as survivors and begin to rebuild the destroyed county. Though the urban civilization is destroyed, the Kellers, like other survivors, try to rebuild a rural economy based on cooperation and the principles of democracy. George Keller uses his skill as a teacher to run a school for children so that the future generation would be able to learn from the mistakes of the past generations. Like other 'survivors', he does not always agree with all the ideas of his fellow beings but he is willing to put aside his differences for the common good of the community. George Keller's wife, Bonny Keller is an independent and bold character who does not hesitate to take life in whatever form it comes. The characters' search for alternative forms of social communal existence suggests that for Dick, the nuclear
threat is not an aberration of the capitalist society. On the contrary, it is the very culmination of the society, a development born out of the inherent contradictions in that social formation. Eric S. Rabkin too argues that Dick’s works go on to prove that the system of capitalistic economy is inherently flawed and is therefore bound to doom. When the nuclear bomb starts falling and the attack begins, Bonny’s first action is to rush out into the street and to make love to the first stranger she meets. While other characters like Stuart Mc Conchie and others are prejudiced against Dr. Bluthgeld, Bonny defends the nuclear scientist and his right to be treated as a normal human being. She suggests that Dr. Bluthgeld was misunderstood and that he was really a person who desperately needed help. She asks him to meet Dr. Stockstil who could help him to overcome his fear of being persecuted. Bonny’s realistic outlook towards life is revealed from her initial reaction after the nuclear attack. She tries to take stock of the situation and intervene:

Walking slowly along, she thought, I better go get help. I need medical help. And then, as she stumbled and half fell, she looked around her, up into the air, and saw once again the column of brown smoke from the south. Did San Francisco catch fire already? She asked herself. (80).

Bonny tries to think about the quandary of the victims in the destroyed city of San Francisco and looks for ways to alleviate the victims’ suffering.

It’s a calamity. The city got it, not just West Marin, here. Not just a few rural people up here, but all the city people; there must be thousands dead. They will have to declare a national emergency and get the Red Cross and Army; we will remember this to the day we die. Walking, she began to cry, holding her hands to her face, not seeing where she was going, not caring. She did not cry for herself or
her ruined house now; she cried for the city to the south. She cried for all the
people and things in it and what had happened to them. (80-81).

In many ways, Bonny Keller epitomizes the spirit of the character of the ‘survivors’. She
plays an active role in establishing the rural community in West Marin. As Dick’s Afterword
declares, “People are still around and they are still coping. Those who survive, anyhow, are fairly
lucky in their new lives.” This hope is sustained by the selfless actions of the ‘survivors’. The
character of Bonny stands for life and creation, while Dr. Bluthgeld represents death and
destruction. The community attempts to establish itself on values that define human existence as
different from that of machines. In it people are valued for their ability to do things using their
hands unlike the former capitalistic system before the nuclear war. Bonny and the other elders
run the community’s attempt to keep the community together by getting the future generation to
focus on the importance of knowledge and wisdom that have been acquired by the older
generation so that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated. The community asserts that since
the industrial machine-based system had been unable to solve the problems of life, the focus
must be on manual skills that raise humans above the machines, rather than degrading them. As
an active participant and functionary of the community, she is able to recover from the trauma of
nuclear catastrophe by reaching out to others in need and thus find a cure for her own suffering.

Lifton’s observations on the Japanese victims of the Bomb provide an interesting
counterpoint to our study of Dick’s fictional characters. The Japanese victims of the nuclear
holocaust were unable to establish any form of meaningful relation with the world around them
due to their losing the ability to feel.\(^2\) This inability of the real world victims to overcome the
fragmentation of the human mind in the face of trauma that assumes the proportions of a
negative sublime provides a key to our understanding of Dick's analysis of the effects of the nuclear threat as well as his artistic solution to the problem.

Bonny overcomes dissociation or the fragmentation of her mind by embracing life instead of trying to escape from it. Her character offers an alternative to the other victims of the nuclear catastrophe who undergo numbing and remain prisoners in their own psychotic worlds. The other character who manages to become a survivor from a victim is Dangerfield who is imprisoned in a satellite revolving the Earth without any human contact till his end. Like Bonny, he is able to reach out to other surviving humans and help them rebuild their lives by becoming the link between all the surviving communities on Earth; a feat that his counterparts in real world often failed emulate.

The World Jones Made narrates a similar tale of catastrophe and redemption through the evocation of the resilient spirit of humanity. The story revolves around Jones and the followers of his cult, who take over the world by creating hysteria of an alien life form that is supposedly threatening the Earth. As a victimizer Jones is responsible for causing considerable suffering to his victims through his reckless actions. However, not all the characters remain his victims. They refuse to give up and continue to fight the threat they are facing. By refusing to accept the authoritarian rule of Jones, they become targets of his dictatorship. At the beginning of the novel the actions of Jones are supported by the people as they believe that Jones will be able to break the absolutist rule of the Fedgov. But when Jones assumes control, his government is revealed as dictatorial and totalitarian as the Fedgov. When the power and influence of Jones rises, the marriage of John and Nina Cussick breaks. John is sent by the Fedgov to report on Jones' activity but Jones becomes a fugitive. As a victim John suffers several losses but he refuses to give up. Nina also undergoes much suffering and leaves her family to join the cult. The downfall
of Jones is completed by his accidental death at the hands of John. Nina returns to John after becoming disillusioned on learning the truth about Jones. After the ruin of Jones, John and Nina move to Venus to seek a safe place to escape the fury of the followers of Jones. There he meets a group of mutant human beings, who are also sent from Earth in a bit to establish a human colony on the alien planet. The seven mutants initially live in an artificial habitat on Earth called the Refuge. They are reared as a part of a genetic experiment to create a new race to solve the problem of booming population on Earth. The experiment however, fails as the mutants are unable to live outside the Refuge even for a short duration. The fiery speeches of Jones against the alien life forms called the Drifters, instigate the people against the mutants. John helps the mutants escape to Venus where they are able to lead a safe and peaceful existence without any threat. On Venus, the mutants start a new life by adapting to the local conditions. Along with the Cussicks, the mutants form a new community based on mutual acceptance and cooperation. In this community, individuals are accepted for what they are without any prejudice. Each person is valued for his or her unique individual contribution towards the community’s progress. In the community, individuals are not judged by their past actions but by what they are capable of contributing towards helping others. The community is also a place that accepts the good as well as the bad; the positive as well as the negative due to its holistic approach towards life. The inhabitants, in spite of being mutants, attempt to recreate a new world based on human values of empathy and acceptance. The community has mutants like Louis and Vivian along with humans like John and Nina Cussick. This “Civilization of nine individuals” makes their own devices and other facilities by using locally available materials.

It was like a small section of Earth severed from the original. Even the colours were exact... they had scrupulously developed an artificial blue sky and almost
convincing imitation of Earth's blue bowl. Here was a cloud. There was a flock of migratory ducks, permanently glued to the inside of the plastic bubble... the bottom surface was a solid expanse of dark lush green... It was a different world transplanted here, in miniature. A fragment. A museum – piece that gave Frank an odd nostalgic feeling... (196).

The members of the community use their skills to recreate a new world. Instead of depending completely on machines, efforts are made to develop indigenous hand-made elements so as to make the community self-reliant.

But it was a good sight. All of it: the fields, the animal sheds, the smoke-house, the silo, the main cabin, now a double-walled building with two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, and indoor bathroom. (195).

The members of the community on Venus attempt to rebuild a new home on the alien planet by avoiding the mistakes of the past. Instead of letting machines to take control over human beings, humans retain the control over machines. Products made by human hands are valued over machine-made ones, limiting the value ascribed to machines in the pre-catastrophic world. Mutual respect, empathy, acceptance of the world as it is, coexistence of different opinions coupled with other human aspects, which according to Dick constitute qualities that make a human being distinct from a machine. Conflict is avoided in favour of cooperation and mutual trust. The basic tenet of the community is that no member can survive without the other and under such circumstances, individuals realize that allowing machines (and by extension nuclear weapons), to take over the world would lead to a human genocide. It would be the end of the human race as a species. Realization of interconnectedness of individuals' destiny leads to
the development of a new consciousness based on having the determination to say 'no' to nuclearism and 'yes' to 'survival'.

Likewise, in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, all the characters share a sense of victimage, which is heralded with the return of the businessman Palmer Eldritch from Prox galaxy. The novel is set in the aftermath of a nuclear catastrophe which results in Earth becoming extremely hot for humans who have to carry portable cooling units when going out into the open. The extreme condition prompts the United Nations government to forcefully send people to alien planets to colonize them in a bid to find a substitute for Earth. To overcome the harsh and difficult Martian life, the colonists living in hovels resort to the use of a hallucinogenic drug Can D with miniaturized models of doll houses called Layouts. Barney Mayerson works as a Pre-cog consultant who can predict the future for Perky Pat Layouts, the company that sells the Layouts and hallucinogenic Can D legally and illegally respectively. The narcotic drug Can D makes the people living in hovels on Mars dependent on the drug by allowing them to live in a world of fantasy, forgetting the ugliness and harshness of the Martian reality. Barney uses his ability to see the future to predict future fashion trends so that Leo Bulero's greed for greater profits can be satisfied. Leo is a victimizer who preys on the Martian colonists by getting them addicted to Can D. Barney, despite knowing how his actions are responsible for others' suffering, continues to offer his services to Leo in return for material gains. When his wife Emily becomes pregnant a second time, Barney divorces her in order to retain the luxurious Conapt residence. Later he regrets his action and wishes to get her back. But being a victim, he fails to do so. On consuming the hallucinogenic Chew Z, he gets a chance to go back in time to correct his past mistakes. He asks Emily to return, but she flatly refuses. At that moment, Barney realizes that his past actions had lead to Emily's sufferings.
He thought, I cut her down, once, cut her off, lopped her, with thorough knowledge of what I was doing and this is the result; I am seeing the bread as they say which was cast on the water drifting back to choke me, water-soaked bread that will lodge in my throat, never to be swallowed or disgorged, either one. It’s precisely what I deserve, he said to himself; I made this situation. (172).

At that time he looks at Emily’s hands and feels,

Once these were my wife’s, he said to himself and I gave it up. Self-destruction; I wanted to see myself die. That’s the only possible satisfactory explanation. Or was I that stupid? No; stupidity wouldn’t encompass such an enormity, so complete a wilful-(172).

This instance serves as an epiphanic moment in Barney’s life and he realizes the folly of his actions. He realizes that in his craze for power he had lost all that he had ever really valued in his life. The realization that past cannot be changed changes his outlook towards life.3

Can’t the past be altered? he asked himself. Evidently not. Cause and effect work in only one direction, and change is real. So what’s gone is gone and I might as well get out of here. (173).

The realization that the mistakes of his life cannot be changed alerts him to the need of changing the present. He decides to stop avoiding the draft rule that required him to migrate to Mars. Until the realization, he was attempting to avoid the migration by trying to portray himself as sick so that he could be declared psychologically unfit for Martian migration. He goes to Mars and starts a new life. He meets fellow colonists and with them tries to build a new and better civilization. The difficult Martian life devoid of any physical comfort available on Earth gives him a chance to experience a calmness and satisfaction he never felt previously.
He stood in the kitchen of his compartment at Chicken Pox Prospects; he was frying himself a panful of local mushrooms... the air smelled of butter and spices and, in the living room, his portable tape recorder played a Haydn symphony. Peaceful, he thought with pleasure. Exactly what I want; a little peace and quiet. After all, I was used to that, out in intersystem space. He yawned, stretched with luxury, and said, “I did it.” (205-6).

Barney finds a new meaning in his life. He tells Leo that he has decided to face the threat of living on Mars instead of living as a victim on Earth.

Barney said, “I’ll live here. As a colonist. I’ll work on my garden up top and whatever else they do. Build irrigation systems and like that.” He felt tired and the nausea had not left him. “Sorry,” he said. “So am I,” Leo said. “And I don’t understand it.” (210).

His new life on Mars gives him hope that he might find a way out eventually, as he is no longer alone but a member of the Martian community, which works collectively as a unit towards the best interest of all its members.

The Martian community shares a belief that no one can survive without the other and that all are dependent on each other for their survival. It is this understanding among the colonists that allows them to overcome their dilemmas. When Barney is left confused by Leo’s words that Barney has no hope of escaping from Palmer Eldritch’s influence, the other colonist, namely Anne Hawthorne, comes to his rescue. The camaraderie experienced by Barney among the colonists convinces him of the possibility of redemption from the threat of Palmer Eldritch. He develops a belief that though he can not find a way out of the threat, somebody else can. He says to himself,
Maybe Anne can do something for me, he thought suddenly. Maybe there are
methods to restore one to the original condition- dimly remembered, such as it
was- before the late and more contamination set in. He tried to remember but he
knew so little about Neo-Christianity. Anyhow, it was worth a try; it suggested
there might be hope, and he was going to need that in the years ahead. (225).

This belief in the possibility of redemption in Barney is a marked contrast to his life before
coming to Mars. Earlier he believed that there was no escape from the threat and that there was
no meaning in trying to overcome the threat.

But he somehow doubted it. Because he held a terrifying insight, simple, easy to
think and utter, which perhaps applied to himself and those around him, to this
situation. There was such a thing as salvation. But- Not for everyone. (225).

Barney is not the only character who experiences hope of salvation from the all-pervasive
threat, which takes the form of Palmer Eldritch and the techno-industrial world represented by
him. Emily Hnatt, Barney’s ex-wife, is another victim who is forced to undergo evolution
therapy by Richard Hnatt. Realising its ill consequences, Richard stops the therapy but does not
stop Emily from containing the therapy. As a result, she loses her creative ability to make clay
pots that were profitably sold to Palmer Eldritch’s company. Though she loses her successful
career, she refuses to give up what she had so painstakingly built. She continues to make hand-
made pots and convinces the rival company to buy them. The determination to fight against all
odds, no matter how hard, is evident in her relationship with Barney. When Barney divorces her
for his career, she accepts it calmly. However, when he tries to convince her to return, she flatly
refuses and continues to live life on her own terms. Her decision to move on in life reflects the
change in her personality, offering a glimpse into the possibility of salvation even in carrying out
daily mundane activities. The seemingly minor actions by the characters reveal how even a single action can function as the first step towards redemption from a nuclear threat and its diverse forms.

The nuclear threat is a metaphor for the different ways in which machines control and dominate all aspects of human life in the modern industrial world. Dick’s works expose the ideological misrepresentations of the capitalist society in which the individual is the only substantial entity in the society. Through his vivid portrayal of the victims of the nuclear holocaust looking for a second chance, Dick forces the reader to confront the threat by moving it beyond the threshold of the unconscious. During these eclectic moments, the reader sees through the smokescreen of individualism and grasps collective existence both as a historical fact and as a potential solution to the disaster waiting to happen. Dick thus offers hope to these readers by suggesting a plan to cope with the nuclear catastrophe, which leaves its victims in a state of helplessness, solitude and of being in a personal hell from which there is no escape. The greatness of Dick’s work lies in its ability to portray how ordinary people from different walks of life are able to perform extraordinary actions that offer a ray of hope to a world sliding down the nuclear abyss.

Dick’s rhetoric against dehumanization is again voiced in his *The Penultimate Truth*. Here the Earth’s population, called Tankers, is sent to live in subterranean habitats under the pretext of nuclear war and its radiation that has made Earth’s surface unsuitable to live. The ruling elite, called the Y-men, led by the President, Yance Talbot urge the Tankers to continue the industrial production and to send the same to the Y-men so that the Tankers’ purported enemies are attacked and destroyed. The supposed war is carried on by machines called “Leadies” who are supposed to fight in conditions that are lethal to human beings. While most of
the Tankers continue to remain passive victims, one of them, Nicholas St. James, becomes suspicious of the happenings and decides to investigate by going to the surface. He is immediately opposed by fellow Tankers and warned of dire consequences if he were to go the surface. Moved by the plight of the Tankers, Nicholas decides to go to the surface, notwithstanding the risk to his own life. The empathy showed by Nicholas towards the Tankers' suffering offers a glimmer of hope of redemption from the nuclear threat that had forced people to give up their lives on the surface and to live in inhuman conditions. His willingness to risk his own safety for his fellow beings establishes the first step towards salvation. Nicholas’ selfless action makes him a ‘survivor’ who rises above his own plight and in the process makes the transition from the state of a helpless victim to an active participant in the struggle against the nuclear threat. From a passive state, which Dick calls being “machine-like”, Nicholas develops human qualities of empathy, an awareness of the world around him, a knowledge of human greed for power, and a belief that he can play an active role in determining the course of his life instead of being a silent spectator. His discovery that there is no war on the surface and that the entire nuclear threat was a hoax perpetuated by the Y-men leads him to the truth that there is no President called Yance Talbot. It is only a machine, which appears to be human and reads out speeches written by the Y-men. Stranton Brose, the leader of the Y-men, sees Nicholas as a threat and sends a Y-man, Joseph Adams, to eliminate Nicholas. Joseph tracks Nicholas but is convinced about the plight of the Tankers who are forced to live in underground tanks and carry out labour for a war that doesn’t exist. Enlightened by Nicholas’ revelations Joseph decides not to follow the orders of Stranton to kill Nicholas. His action reveals a change in his perception and thought. Instead of blindly following the dictates of a machine, Joseph decides to use his independent reasoning to determine his actions. This action shows the possibility of breaking
free from the clutches of the nuclear threat. Joseph's action indirectly leads Nicholas to David Lantano who believes in the right of every individual to be free and to be able to make an independent decision about his/her own life. David sees Stranton for the victimizer he is and that he wants to keep the Tankers as victims forever. David tries to kill Stranton by going into the past using a time machine. Despite his repeated futile attempts to change the past by killing Stranton, David realizes that while the past cannot be changed, the present could be changed so that it is followed a better future. With the help of others like Nicholas and Joseph, David manages to defeat Stranton and his Y-men.

Though David manages to defeat Stranton, he remains sceptical about the reaction of the people to the fact that the whole nuclear war had been a hoax to suppress them. His reaction is quite different from Nicholas who decides to reveal the truth to the people, which he feels might enable them to escape from the nuclear shadow that had imprisoned them for so long. Due to his fears that the Tankers might start a real war on coming to know the truth, David decides not to reveal the complete truth. David feels that though Nicholas is correct in willing to tell the truth, though the reality is very different. David's understanding of human nature and its inherent lack of willingness to have a peaceful coexistence with fellow beings makes him declare that the war is over but conceals the fact about the hoax. In course of his time travels, David realizes that while human cannot change history, they can definitely learn to cope and live with their present. The novel is a very optimistic one, which offers hope through its characters that carry out actions, which though limited in its scope of impact provides proof that though the nuclear shadow is widespread and a grave danger to human civilization. The work suggests that the nuclear scourge can still be overcome by people who give up their machine-like qualities and adopt human qualities like a desire for peaceful coexistence and a belief that all humans require
one another to survive on Earth. Dick convinces his reader that following orders blindly or letting a machine make decisions about human lives are similar to becoming machines. He claims that such a situation is like being imprisoned in a private world of eternal suffering from which there is no escape. Stranton Brose’s condition, according to this logic, can be compared to that of a machine. As a result of Stranton’s weakness in overcoming the nuclear threat, he remained a victim caught in his own private prison with no hope of redemption. The individual acts of opposing and attempting to overcome the nuclear threat by the ‘survivors’ make them a part of the popular awareness about the nature of nuclear threat. The awareness of the threat is the first step towards the acknowledgement and understanding the nature and extent of the nuclear threat. Despite the characters’ limited though undaunted efforts, the threat continues to overshadow the lives of the Tankers. However, the characters’ actions open the possibility of the nuclear scourge being understood for what it is and make plausible the idea that the threat can be overcome in the future, even though it may not happen in the immediate present. The realization and acceptance of the threat by the characters marks the first step towards the seemingly impossible task of overcoming the threat posed by nuclear weapons to human species. It suggests that the threat is not an abyss from which there is no escape but the beginning of the development of a species consciousness in place of the prevalent genocidal consciousness.

In *Vulcan’s Hammer* Dick presents the scenario where the governments of all the countries in the world have given the power of making decisions to machines after a nuclear war had destroyed much of the Earth. The destruction caused by the atomic war leads to the formation of Unity Organisation, which is given the responsibility of administrative work in accordance with the instructions of the greatest machine, Vulcan 3. It is made the ultimate authority over human race on the planet. The setting up of this machine creates an organisation
in which everyone is suspicious of everyone else. William Barris, one of Unity’s Directors vividly describes the state of people, who are under the nuclear shadow,

He thought, it’s this sort of reasoning that’s made us into the thing we are. The paranoid suspicions of one another. Unity, he thought with irony. Some unity with each of us eyeing the other, watching for any mistake, any sign... So may be my own skirts aren’t so clean, Barris thought. I can’t trust myself because I’m not disinterested—none of us are, in the whole Unity structure. (293).

William’s character’s admission of his own flaws due to the influence of the atmosphere created by the overwhelming influence of machines reveals Dick’s use of irony to highlight the condition in technological capitalistic societies, which is one of constant precariousness and incertitude. A striking example of this irony is the name of the organization, “Unity” in which its members have no sense of unity and are mutually suspicious of the other’s attempting to gain power over others. The atmosphere of constant uncertainty and paranoia about an invisible threat causes people to become mutually suspicious. The particular state of mind leads to an inability to perceive the actual threat posed by machines. The passing of the law that all matters pertaining to policies were to be taken by Vulcan 3 leads to individuals giving up their independent reasoning to follow the machines orders passively. Marion Fields, the daughter of Father Fields, the leader of the Healers raises the same issue with Jason Dill, the managing director of Unity. Jason is the only human authorised to receive orders from Vulcan 3.

The setting up of Vulcan 3 and its control over human kind is justified by Jason. He says,

Machines were free of the poisoning bias of self-interest and feeling that gnawed at man; they were capable of performing the objective calculations that for man would remain only an ideal, never a reality. If nations would be willing to give up
their sovereignty, to subordinate their power to the objective, impartial directives of the [machines] (301).

Marion Fields, who voices his creator Dick’s concern, challenges Jason’s claim: “Director Dill, don’t you feel ashamed of yourself when you let a machine tell you what to do?... Mr. Dill, do you really believe that a machine is better than a man? That man can’t manage his own world?” Jason hates the Healers for their opposition towards Vulcan 3 and their attempts to encourage people to retake the monopoly of power from machines led by Vulcan 3. Jason reasons with Marion that the Healers’ efforts are not helping people but are actually a risk to the peace and well being of society. He says,

Why? What are they after? Do they want to bring back the old days? The war and hatred and international violence? These mad men are sweeping us back into the chaos and darkness of the past! And who gains? Nobody, except these spellbinders; they gain power. Is it worth it? Is it worth killing of half of mankind, wrecking cities... (309).

In spite of Jason’s constant badgering and threatening, Marion remains calm. Though only a school going student, she displays a precocious maturity and reasoning. Jason’s annoyance towards her is due to her arguments against handing over control to machines. Through her Dick suggests the possibility of any rational individual, irrespective of who or what they are, becoming an active participant in the nuclear debate and taking effective peace initiatives.

Marion’s character shows that despite different influences and compulsions, it is possible to defy the threat posed by machines gaining control over humans. Her father, Father Fields is the leader of the Healers’ movement. He is originally a technician renowned for his manual skills but with the machines’ taking over control, he refuses to give in and accept their supremacy. He is forced
to undergo much psychological torture but manages to escape and then assume the leadership of the rebel movement. The rebels attempt to make people realise the dangers of handing over the power to make decisions to machines. They convince people that machines, despite their objective and rational reasoning, lack human qualities of empathy, compassion or kindness.

The Healers are perceived as a threat by Vulcan 3, which develops an awareness of itself as being a totalitarian entity. The Healers try to destroy Vulcan 3 that creates an army of machines to fight the Healers. They are able to overcome the danger of Vulcan 3 with the help of William, one of Unity's Directors. He understands the danger posed by Unity Organisation under Vulcan 3 but at the same time understands the Healers' intention to destroy the machines. He realises that having machines to control humans has made people paranoid and suspicious of one another and this has lead to a mutual conflict between individuals and groups. William points out that the main reason for putting machines to control is the mutual distrust among people and it was hoped that the rational machines would be able to bring about peace and cooperation among the world population. But instead of doing so, Vulcan 3 develops the same negative qualities of self-interest and craze for power, which make things worse than they were before the atomic war and the handing over of power to machines for the supposed-good of humankind. Unlike other Unity Organisation officials who display machine-like qualities for self-advancement in the official hierarchy, William attains his Director's post through hard work and sincerity.

Another interesting feature of his character is that he also has the very qualities that Dick defines as what constitutes a human in contrast to a machine. A good example to highlight this is William's reaction to the news of the murder of a colleague at Unity Organisation. Hearing about the slain man's violent death at the hands of the Healers, he experiences great sorrow and feels responsible, as it is officials like him who sent people into dangerous situations while they
themselves merely stayed in their well protected offices. It is with the same emotion that he goes
to pay a personal visit to the assassinated employee’s family. In contrast to William’s reaction is
Director Taubmann’s reaction of complete indifference and nonchalant. For Taubmann the
death of a person is little more than ‘a detail in a file’. Taubmann is like the numerous characters
in the novel that lack human qualities or emotions and is relentless in his self-aggrandisement to
promote his career. Due to his qualities, Taubmann is never able to form any meaningful
relationship with anyone else. In his craze for taking Director Jason Dill’s place and the power
that came with it, he ends up being killed in the fight between humans lead by Barris and the
machines led by Vulcan 3. In contrast to Taubmann’s character is that of Barris who sets an
example of maintaining a balance between being objective and emotional. Unlike other Directors
who advanced their career through deceit, Barris attains his position through hard work and
sincerity. He also has the qualities of empathy for fellow beings whilst also being rational. These
qualities in him help him to understand the danger machines pose to human survival. When
Vulcan 3 perceives that its control is being challenged, it unleashes nuclear weapons against its
enemies, the people. The irony behind Vulcan 3’s action is the fact that the machine turns against
the very humans it is supposed to protect. The atomic war for supremacy starts between the
machines and humans, in which the Healers manage to destroy Vulcan 3 by joining hands with
former Unity Organisation officials. After the war, the Healers as well as the Unity Organisation
officials agree that they need the use of machines to rebuild and restore the world but with a firm
human control over them. Barris suggests that machines can be used,

As an instrument, Barris said. ‘Not a master. That was the agreement between us.
You have to permit a continuation of rational use of machines. None of this
emotional “scrap the machines” business. None of your Movement slogans... ‘If
you really think you can keep control in the right hands. In our hands. I have nothing against machines as such... (419).

The new order decides to change things and the new society formed begins to value articles made by humans over machines. Father Fields says,

‘You’ll put an end to the cult of the technocrat?’ Fields said. ‘For experts only-run by and for those oriented around verbal knowledge; I’m so damn sick of that. Mind stuff-as if manual skills like bricklaying and pipe-fitting weren’t worth talking about. As if all the people who work with their hands, the skill of their fingers-’ He broke off. ‘I’m tired of having those people looked down on.’ (420).

Barris and Fields decided to do away with “mutual accusations and suspicions and near-pathological system building” that had almost destroyed the human race.

Though Jason Dill was the only human being allowed to deal with Vulcan 3 for taking instructions from it, he uses his reasoning to analyse Vulcan 3’s actions on realising that Vulcan 3, despite being a machine, had developed despotic qualities, and wanted to enslave the human race. After checking his doubts with the older machine, Vulcan 2, he decides to stop Vulcan 3’s ambition to dominate humans. His decision to act leads to withholding information from Vulcan 3 and subsequently allowing the influence of the Healers to spread. Thus Jason’s minor but independent action of withholding information from the machine leads to the human victory over the machines.

Dick uses the space provided by science fiction to explore the qualities that define human beings, an advanced life-form. By making machines acquire certain values and by making them behave in ways that remind the reader of human beings in contemporary societies, Dick advances his thesis that compassion, empathy, respect for others are some of the defining
features of humanity. Without these, people merely resemble human beings. It is interesting to note the centrality that compassion enjoys in Dick's sketch of the human species, alongside rationality, which is often considered the defining feature of our species, evident from the phrase *Homo sapiens*.

In *Dr. Futurity*, Dick's readers get to look at a society that is obsessed with attaining death as a means to build the perfect race. This particular society is divided into the Shupos led by William Stenog and the rebels of the Wolf tribe led by Corrith. The Shupos attempt to create a perfect race but the rebels send Corrith into the past using a time machine to kill Francis Drake, the first European to invade America. But the death of Corrith compels his followers to bring Dr. Parsons, a medical doctor from the future to revive Corrith. Dr. Parsons is shocked to see a world where doctors' services are used to attain death, not to save lives. Through Dr. Parsons' experience, Dick tries to portray the dangers of an industrial society, which has become so machine-like that it has lost touch with most of those qualities, which make humans different from machines.

The issue that Dick raises here has been addressed by scholars like Lifton, who raises a similar question in *Genocidal Mentality*. *Genocidal Mentality* analyses societies, which adopt a reductionist and totalitarian approach. Lifton draws parallel between Nazi Germany and the modern societies, which are nuclear powers. He suggests that both cases show many similarities, the most striking one is the development of a tendency for self-annihilation or a genocidal mentality. The same tendency can be seen in William Stenog's society in *Dr. Futurity*. As a result of the widespread genocidal mentality, people are forced to be victims like Corrith or victimizers like William. The novel demonstrates the fact that in a world order where individuals
are forced to become victims or victimizers, there is also a possibility of a third option. In Lifton’s view, a solution can be found by adopting a species mentality whereby people could emerge as survivors rather than becoming victims. Dr. Parsons in *Dr. Futurity* demonstrates the possibility of ending the conflict to the victims and victimizers in the world of the Shupos and the Wolf. The entire society in Dick’s work is divided into warring sites and every individual is forced to be on one side or another. There are no provisions to remain neutral that makes all forced participants in the conflict. This is explained by Dr. Parsons when he refuses to “Fit in”. He says,

‘In other words,’ Parsons said, feeling his tension and aversion rise, ‘it’s like all primitive societies. A stranger isn’t considered human. Killed on sight, is he? Anything unfamiliar.’ His hands were shaking; getting out a cigarette, he lit it, trying to steady himself. ‘Your totem-device,’ he said, gesturing at Wade. ‘The eagle. You exalt eagle qualities? Ruthlessness and quickness?’ (161).

Dr. Parsons argues for the presence of multiplicity of voices coexisting in harmony and cooperating for the common good. This echoes Lifton’s suggestion: developing a species mentality that would ensure the survival of the species and prevent the downslide into the nuclear abyss. Lifton points out that the creation and proliferation of nuclear weapons are based on the fear of, and defence against nuclear weapons themselves. The same situation exists in the future world that Dr. Parson describes:

So, Parsons thought, their minds aren’t fixed on the present; it’s the future that’s real to them. Those to come, in a sense, are more real than those who are walking around now... Each death automatically starts a new zygote from cold-pack along its regular developmental path. For each death there is an instantaneous new life;
the two are inter-woven... So out of death comes life. In their view, death is the cause of life. (182).

**Dr. Futurity** makes a powerful social critique of a world under the nuclear shadow. The dialogue between Al Stenog and Dr. Parsons at the former's residence is one of the high points in the novel. Dr. Parsons describes his own world, which has a striking similarity with the present endangered world,

> In my own society- Nobody thought about death. The system in which he had been born, in which he had grown up, had no explanation for death. A man simply lived out his life and tried to pretend that he wouldn’t die. Which was more realistic? This integration of death into the society, or the neurotic refusal of his own society to consider death at all? Like children, he decided. Unable and unwilling to imagine their own deaths... that’s how my world operated. Until mass death caught up with us all, as apparently it did. (184).

On being challenged by Stenog, Dr.Parsons adds that in his world, though they never discussed death, it was never the focus of everyday life. Though Dr. Parsons puts forward a strong critique of Stenog’s world, the irony in his arguments is not lost on him. Though nobody in Dr.Parsons’ world spends time thinking about death, the plight of the world under danger is no different from that of Stenog’s world. Though it seems far-fetched, Stenog’s world portrays what would happen in the future of industrial societies if machines were continued to be given power over human lives. **Dr. Futurity** deals in the main with the bleak world of the future, but it also offers hope to the reader through Dr. Parsons and his future family life with Lorris and his two children, Nathan and Gracie. This family shows the others that it is possible to break free from the restricting psychological mechanisms that take place in people threatened by a danger that has the potential
to destroy the past, the present, and even the future. Due to psychological mechanisms like Psychic Numbing, Brutalization and Denial, the characters become incapable of using their own reasoning. They become incapable of taking decisions using their own freewill or developing meaningful relationships with fellow beings based on mutual trust and understanding.

Dr. Parsons and Lorris set an example for other human beings that they can have the resilience of being able to overcome threats by changing one’s outlook and by cooperating on the basis on the belief that one cannot survive as a species without the other. Dr. Parsons displays many qualities, which are described by Dick as those that constitute being human in contrast to a machine that blindly follows instructions. On seeing a woman injured in an automobile accident, the Shupos send for an executioner called a ‘Euthanor’ so that the victim could be euthanized or assisted to die, according to the society’s system of favouring death over life. Dr. Parsons risks the anger of the Shupos and his life in order to save the victim of the accident. His courageous and selfless action sets an example that even under threat it is possible to practice human qualities of empathy and of having a belief that to survive as a species and to overcome the genocidal mentality, all individuals need to observe mutual trust and cooperation. When Dr. Parsons faces a choice of having to kill a person or to get killed, he believes that besides being a medical doctor who is duty-bound to save lives, he opts to give up his own life rather than harm or kill someone. However, when he faces a different situation, where he realises that for the greater good of humankind it is necessary to sacrifice his own life, he does so without hesitation. He says,

My entire life, everything that I’ve ever been and stand for, prohibits me. Even if it means my own death; even though, when this man awakens, he will name me, point me out, get his fanatic, paranoid revenge. Parson’s lowered the arrow, and
then dropped it to the floor, away from the bed. He felt utter, numbing fear. And defeat. So now this man can go on, he thought... there is nothing to stop him. A madman. He will destroy me first, and then go on to the rest of his ‘enemies’. But I still can’t do it. (273-74).

Dr. Parsons’ children in the future, Gracie and Nathan also show the same qualities as him and are not hesitant to fight for freedom. Nathan, who belongs to the Wolf tribe, decides not to follow the age-old conflict between the Shupos and his tribe. Unlike his ancestors like Corrith, who continued the conflict between the two factions, he decides to reason with the other faction and reach a mutually acceptable solution. He manages to find a peaceful resolution to the long-drawn feud that led to the atomic catastrophe. Thus, the character of Nathan who manages to change the Shupos’ outlook, death as the main objective of human life, and brings them around to believing that life is sacred and is worth protecting. This is observed by Dr. Parsons,

Parsons saw some of the family’s fanaticism, the desire to prevail at all cost. But in this boy, there was a fuller grasp on reality. He and his sister were not so far removed from the world as it actually was; the near-paranoid dreams were gone. At least he hoped they were gone. (279).

Like in his other novels, Dick looks at the shifting nature of reality in order to explore the differences between the world of humans and machines. As Eric S. Rabkin observes, in Dick’s world individuals’ thoughts or perception of reality are all replicated leaving them in an “intellectual desolation”. They lose their faith in the strength of free will. Rabkin suggests that Dick portrays what happens to individuals who lose their belief in their free will and are unable to face the threat posed by the machines. By highlighting their plight, Dick suggests that the possible solution in overcoming the nuclear catastrophe is the need for reaffirmation of
individuals’ faith in being able to bring about change at the individual level. While making this particular suggestion is also aware of the limitation of individual action against the widespread threat of nuclear obliteration. Accordingly, he suggests that though limited, each individual attempt is the first step towards the awareness, acknowledgement and overcoming of the threat. Dick’s portrayal makes it easier for the readers to identify with his characters and empathise with them. The readers are able to experience the threat without actually undergoing it and the experience offers them a hope of overcoming the seemingly-impossible threat. In Time Out of Joint the protagonist, Ragle Gumm, is placed in a make-believe world of his childhood so as to exploit his ability to predict future nuclear attacks on Earth from the Lunar colonies. Ragle is given the details of the work in the form of a newspaper contest called “Where will the little Green Man Be Next?” of which Ragle is the only winner. Ragle’s reality undergoes changes constantly till he realizes that the entire town is a hoax to keep him a prisoner to make him a participant in the nuclear war against his will. He realizes that every single aspect of individual’s and by extension, the society’s, is replicated. This replication of reality reduces individuals to a state of being automatons. Dick is critical of machines and characters who become machine-like as both are bereft of the quality of being unique. Ragle is also made to work like a machine to go through clues, check records and other kinds of research every day, day after day to help with the war efforts. In spite of the elaborate ruses employed by the Terran government to keep Ragle a victim, he goes on finding, deciphering and reasoning to discover that the reality experienced by him is a hoax that results in the death of the lunar colonists in their war with the government. On realising the truth, he shares the information of other members of his supposed family and neighbourhood. Though all of them are a part of the hoax, some like Vic Nielson and Mrs. Keitelbein start to believe in the illusory world due to their
acceptance of the artificial reality forced on them. Vic gives up his freewill and reasoning in
favour of the mechanical construct as a result, he refuses to leave the make-believe world. By
choosing the altered personal reality over the shared reality of other inhabitants, Vic becomes
machine-like and there's no hope of redemption for him. However, Sammy, his mistakenly
believed son, manages to understand the deceitful reality and is able to look for clues to find the
world of shared reality of the year 1996 over the illusory 1959. While elders like Bill Black try to
dissuade him from using the crystal radio set in his club house, he continues to attempt it.
Sammy manages to listen to the communication between the soldiers about the location of
nuclear missile attacks. Sammy's efforts enable Ragle to get the clues to see through the hoax.
Ragle attempts to leave the town but is forced to return under different pretexts. He continues his
one-man effort against the system that is developed to keep him a prisoner. Ragle's use of his
independent reasoning and the use of freewill enable him to escape from the hoax. His decision
to leave the safety and comfort of the town serves as an example of an individual's honest efforts
at breaking free from the clutches of the Terran government. Though Ragle's efforts are minor in
relation to being able to stop the atomic threat, his actions offer hope as they present an
alternative or possibility of redemption from the atomic catastrophe. When the novel opens, the
characters find themselves in a situation where they are forced to be victims or victimizers with
no other alternative. Dick as a writer of apocalyptic worlds, maintains that all his works are
based on belief, faith and trust. In the Afterword to The Man in the High Castle, he says that
there is at least one character who shows the potential of being able to become the "redeemer".
Ragle's efforts become remarkable due to the use of his freewill and reasoning. The town that
houses Ragle, though illusory, acknowledges his uniqueness in being able to predict the location
of the next nuclear attack. But he decides to give up the comfort of the illusory world for the sake
of his own principles and morals. His superior officer, Major Bill Black asks him to continue participating in the war efforts by focusing on specific aspects of the contest, like technical details without bothering about the moral aspects of his actions. A positive aspect of Ragle’s character is his ability to identify personal reality as being false and to examine the possibility of having a shared reality which is a “Social existence”, based on collective consciousness.

A remarkable aspect of Ragle’s character is his willingness to overcome Psychic Numbing and Dissociation in order to make meaningful relations with other characters like Mrs. Keitelbein and her son. Ragle’s character is a ‘survivor’ who manages to say ‘no’ to becoming a victim or victimizer. He confesses to Vic that he doesn’t want to be a part of the Terran forces getting all the attention and the fame, nor does he want to be a victim of the nuclear attack. His neutral position suggests that it is possible to have a non-aligned entity without being reduced to a victim or assuming the power of a victimizer. His character displays courage and sacrifice in rejecting the comfortable life as a centre of a hoax in favour of taking up a university course in philosophy and thus shows the qualities of empathy and willingness to make personal sacrifices for the greater good.

Eye in the Sky deals with an accident at a nuclear research facility, which throws its six victims into a series of realities where at any one, instance all the characters are drawn into a particular character’s personal reality. Dick calls this personality Idios Kosmos or a personal world. The Idios Kosmos is contrasted with Koinos Kosmos, which is the shared reality of all the characters. Most of the characters of the novel see themselves as failures in the real life and attempt to make up for it in their personal worlds. After the accident, the characters are able to alter their reality and force the same onto others. Under the nuclear peril, the characters are forced to undergo psychological mechanisms that influence their personal realities. They are
forcefully drawn into each other's personal worlds and sometimes suffer from the dominant characters idiosyncrasies. Jack Hamilton, the protagonist, is forced into finding a job for himself in all these worlds. In the elderly war veteran, Arthur Silvester's world, engineers at his former firm are asked to pray for blessings that are very effective in becoming real. In Mrs. Edith Pritchett's private world, she makes anything she dislikes to disappear altogether. But Jack and his wife Marsha manage to escape from these difficult and dangerous worlds, especially that of Mc Feyffe who is a colossal being in his communist world. Jack and Marsha's experience offers hope to the readers that there might still be hope of redemption in spite of the nuclear menace. Jack is forced to quit his job due to the false charges against his wife. She is accused of being a Communist by Mc Feyffe. After experiencing different personal worlds, Jack realizes that though these worlds are dangerous, they are not so much of a threat as Mc Feyffe's world. Jack tells Mc Feyffe that why he himself is such a grave danger to the world.

"But you certainly are twisted around inside. You're more insane than Miss Reiss. You're more of a Victorian than Mrs Pritchett. You're more of a father-worshipper than Silvester. You're the worst parts of all of them rolled in together. And a lot more... And on top of everything else, you're a heel. You're a subversive, conscienceless liar, a power-hungry crook and you're a heel. (230).

Jack, like Dick, considers Mc Feyffe a symbol of the real ailment that has affected his world throwing it into the path of total destruction by creating an atmosphere of mutual distrust and suspicion. For Jack, Mc Feyffe stands for opposition towards human free will and independent thinking by standing for an authoritative, reductionist and totalitarian regime. It tries to force people to become like machines and those who resist are branded as “dangerous”. Mc Feyffe
expresses his concern about people like Marsha because of their rational and independent thinking.

“The lunatic patriots,” Mc Feyffe said, “We can understand. But not your wife. She signs Party peace petitions and she reads the Chicago Tribune. People like her—they’re more of a menace to Party discipline than any other bunch. The cult of individualism. The idealist with his own law, his own ethics. Refusing to accept authority. It undermines society. It topples the whole structure. Nothing lasting can be built on it. People like your wife just won’t take orders.” (231).

On realising the truth, Jack decides to fight the danger represented by Mc Feyffe, in spite of knowing the immense power and strength of the threat he is fighting against. His subsequent actions show the effort on an individual’s part in refusing to give in to the power of the machines.

“Because I’m going to do something fruitless and futile. Because even though I realized it’s useless, I’m going to kick the living Jesus out of you... It was too uneven; he couldn’t even begin to dent the great visage. Mc Feyffe stepped back, caught himself, and grimly responded. (231).

We come to know that Jack’s, “fitful little assault had dissipated itself uselessly” but it marks a major shift in his outlook and thinking. He begins to perceive life from a different perspective, as an empathetic and rational human being. His experience during the nuclear accident makes him realize the true value of things which have the potential to make a person a human being, in contrast to a machine. Due to Mc Feyffe’s false charges, Jack loses his highly paid job as a missile designer. His mentor, Colonel T. E. Edwards points out to him the gravity of the situation. “Very noble and stirring. But you’re going to have to earn a living; you’re going to
have to get a job and support your family. Without a security clearance you won’t be designing missiles here or anywhere else.” (238).

But Jack, who has become wiser, after coming to know about the true nature of the danger decides to act on eliminating or containing the threat.

“May be that’s a good thing, too. I’m a little tired of building bombs.”... “I like to call it awakening conscience. Some of the things that have happened to me have changed my ways of thinking. Jarred me out of my rut, as they say” ... I’ve seen a lot of aspects of reality I didn’t realize existed. I’ve come out of this with an altered perspective. May be it takes a thing like this to break down the walls of the groove. If so, it makes the whole experience worth it.” (238).

Jack joins Bill Laws to start a company that makes musical phonographs so that more people can listen to music. He gives up designing and building missiles and rockets, to take up making phonographs that produce unique sounds. They plan to build the musical instruments using human labour rather than machines as they believe that human efforts produce things that are unique and which cannot be duplicated by machines. Mrs. Edith Pritchet, though a conservative and rigid person in outlook, decides to help Jack by giving him the capital to start the company. While she initially feels that the phonographs are “catering to the whims of the Leisure class”. She is convinced by Jack that she would be doing “a firm sponsorship of cultural activities” through her help.

The other character whose actions offer hope of an escape from the nuclear danger, is Jack’s wife, Marsha. She is an independent and rational woman, who is not afraid to speak what’s on her mind or to use her own reasoning. Her independent way of thinking alarms the system represented by Mr. Mc Feyffe and he conspires to bring changes of being a communist on
her and her husband. Marsha’s defiant act of attending the meeting of the California Arts, Sciences, and Professions, signing Stockholm Peace Proposal, joining the Civil Liberties Union, signing the Save the Rosenbergs Appeal, and getting involved in the International Coexistence or Death Organization and contributing to philanthropic societies like the Society for Advancement of Coloured People – are all perceived as subversive actions against the establishment. Jack is furious on learning about the frivolous charges and questions the paranoia of the establishment which has everyone suspicious of one another. He asks, “All you’re saying is that Marsha reads left-wing journals and listens to left-wing speakers- it doesn’t prove she endorse Communism or is under Party discipline or advocates the overthrow of the government.”(7) Marsha believes in using rational thought to analyse things for what they are and to accept or reject them based on her convictions. She does not believe in being told what to do or think. She analyses the arguments put forward by different stake holders in the debate and after analyses based on human values, she acts in a way that matches her convictions. Though her husband works as a missile designer at one of the largest nuclear weapons manufacturing facility, she signs the popular movement petition seeking a bang on all forms of nuclear weapons because she believes that those weapons are a grave danger to the human race; irrespective of which group, party or country controls it. A staunch believer in the rights of individuals, she like many others in Dick’s fiction, questions the conviction of the nuclear scientist Rosenberg who had built the first nuclear weapon for the United States of America, before being prosecuted and hanged on the charges of being a Communist spy. Marsh shows how the nuclear weapons are a symbol of the reductionist, absolutist, and totalitarian industrial society and how they threaten the human race of extinction by taking advantage of mutual suspicions and differences in the world. Her character offers hope by suggesting that a possible way of averting the nuclear Armageddon would be to start
identifying the nuclear threat for what it really is and this knowledge would be the harbinger of a popular movement to say 'no' to death of human kind and to say 'yes' to international coexistence.

Martian Time-Slip presents the plight of the Martian colonists who are struggling to make the planet habitable. The protagonist is Jack Bohlen, a repairman who is employed by Arnie Kott, the leader of the Martian Plumbers’ Union to make a device to communicate with an autistic child, Manfred Steiner. Jack, a schizophrenic himself, suffers from an inability to form relationship with others in spite of his limitations, becomes the best repairman on Mars. He is sent to repair the robots that function as teachers at the local school. He feels that the lack of exposure to human teachers has made the children to withdraw into their private worlds and is responsible for making psychological problems like schizophrenia common among the Martian colonists’ children. Jack objects the use of machines to teach children as he feels that it would lead to children losing human qualities and developing machine-like qualities. Jack resents Arnie Kott because he feels that the latter has lost all human qualities and adopted many machine-like qualities. This becomes evident when a group of Martians, called the Bleekmen, are stranded in the desert and Jack and Arnie’s pilot attempt to help the stranded group. Arnie considers it a waste of time and asks the pilot to leave without bothering to help. When confronted by Jack, he says, “Five niggers. You mean I don’t call that saving five people. Do you? ... 'Go ahead, call it that,' the bald-headed man said... See where it gets you.”(24) Even the Martian beings point out Arnie’s lack of empathy, “We did not give him a water witch in return for his water because he did not want to give us water; His heart was not with him in that deed, it came from his hands only. Unlike Jack who respects the Bleekmen, the original inhabitants of Mars, Arnie tries to exploit them in many ways, one of them being the substandard wages he pays them.
Norbert Steiner, Manfred’s father who deals in illegal black marketing, feels that his own actions are responsible for the sufferings of his son. He commits suicide on being told that the totalitarian United Nations Government plan to kill autistic children like his son in order to create a pure race on Mars. Nobert’s helplessness induced suicide leads a popular resentment against the government and the plans to close the centre for autistic children is dropped. His actions, though defeatist, show the human qualities he possesses in contrast to Arnie Kott who also has an anomalous child on Mars. Though autistic, Manfred has the ability to see the future world in its degenerative state. On coming to know about it, Arnie wants to have his control over Manfred in order to ask him about the future and profit from it. However, Manfred’s lack of speech ability becomes an obstacle. To satisfy his greed for power and wealth, Arnie decides to exploit Manfred using Jack’s machine. But Manfred’s ability to see the future is restricted to seeing things in their decay and Jack speaks about it,

‘It almost seems to me that Manfred does know more than the future; in some way he controls it, he can make it come out the worst possible way because that’s what seems natural to him, that’s how he sees reality. It’s as if by being around him we’re sinking into his reality. It’s starting to seep over us and replace our own way of viewing things, and the kind of events we’re accustomed to see come about now some how don’t come about. It’s not natural for me to feel this way; I never had this feeling about the future before.’ (139).

In spite of knowing the dangers Manfred’s ability poses to others, Jack tries to help him to abandon his personal reality and to accept the shared reality of others. Doreen cautions Jack that,

‘You’ve been around him too much... Tendencies in you that are - ... unstable tendencies, Jack. Allied to his: you were supposed to draw him into our world, the
shared reality of our society... instead, hasn’t he drawn you into his own? I don’t think there’s any precognition; I think it’s been a mistake from the start. It should be better if you got out of it, if you left that boy... (139).

However, Jack refuses to give up trying to help Manfred due to the empathy he felt for the young boy. Having been a schizophrenic in the past, Jack understands the suffering the victim undergoes because of not being able to perceive the world as others perceive it. His character offers hope that in spite of the extent of the nuclear threat, all’s not lost and there might still be a possibility of redemption. The same empathy is shared by Leo Bohlen, Jack’s father who tries to suggest Jack to take an active part in people’s shared reality despite the pervasive nature of the nuclear shadow and its influence on people. He says,

‘Jack, I always worry about you. May be I’m old fashioned and don’t understand about this- mental illness business; everybody seems to have it nowadays; it’s common, like flu and polio used to be, like when we were kids and almost everybody caught measles. Now you have this. One out of every three, I heard on TV, one time. Skizo-whatever. I mean, Jack, with so much to live for, why would anyone turn his back on life, like those skizo people do. It doesn’t make sense.

You got a whole planet to conquer, here.’(108).

Dick offers hope of redemption from the nuclear abyss through Jack’s character by showing the threat for what it really is, so as to suggest a place to begin the search for a solution. Jack poignant words about the condition of the victim under the nuclear shadow are worth quoting in full:

I can see what lies ahead of me if I continue to lose, step by step, to this completely psychotic boy. Now I can see what psychosis is: the utter alienation of
perception from the objects of the outside world, especially the objects which matter: the warmhearted people there. And what takes their place? A dreadful preoccupation with – the endless ebb and flow of one’s own self. The changes emanating from within which affect only the inside world. It is a splitting apart of the two worlds, inner and outer, so that neither registers on the other. Both still exist, but each goes its own way. It is the stopping of time. The end of experience, of anything new. Once the person becomes psychotic, nothing ever happens to him again. (145-6).

After repeated attempts by Jack and the Martian Bleekmen, Manfred is finally able to escape from his personal world that threatens to imprison him.

The last novel, *Cantata 140* is set in 2080 with the election of the first Black American President, Jim Briskin. The problem of over population has reached such an alarming level that most of the population is preserved in cryogenic warehouses run by the government to control the labour market to protect the interests of the totalitarian government. It also approves a satellite, Golden Door, orbiting Earth where sexual pleasures can be obtained commercially and various aspects of human life are reduced to their technological alternatives. Jim Briskin offers to release all the people imprisoned in government warehouses by finding new planets that can be colonised using planet-wetting technology. His ideas are opposed by the owners of Golden Door satellite and other members of the government as they prefer keeping the majority of the human population enslaved. To prevent Jim’s election as President, they conspire to get Bill Schwarz elected as the President. The discovery of an alternate world similar to Earth affects the plot. Jim sees the discovery as a solution to the problem of over population and a redemption for the large number of the imprisoned people. Jim’s enemies try to keep the discovery a secret to take
advantage of conquering a new world. In order to avert their malicious intent, Jim discloses the discovery to the public. The government under President Schwarz decides to colonise the alternate world after destroying the local population called the Peking Men. The government troops sent to the parallel world are routed and the colonists realise that the Peking Men have similar malicious intent to colonise Earth in return. The owners of the Golden Door satellite try to cheat the Peking Men into believing that they are Wind Gods so as to dominate and exploit them for self aggrandisement. The Peking Men attack the Earth and Jim tries to negotiate with them in order to send them back to their own world and to save the Earth. He offers the Peking Men what he considered the greatest wealth of humankind—the Smithsonian institute and the Library of Congress which contained the knowledge acquired by human civilisation in the course of its evolution. He also makes the Peking Men realise how they were tricked by his foes into thinking that they were gods. The Peking Men are disgusted by the humans’ deceit and greed for power. They decide to abandon their plans to conquer the Earth as they refuse to have anything to do with the human race which is so machine-like and completely lacks human qualities. The novel ends on a positive note with Jim being elected the first Black President of the United States of America and his trying to develop uninhabited planets to provide an alternate world for the people enslaved by the previous authoritarian and dictatorial government.
Philip Dick's commitment to the cause of a nuclear threat-free society is the reason for the choice of his themes and characters in many of his novels. His undivided attention to the cause allowed him to exploit the possibilities Science Fiction offered to deal with an issue whose ramifications are seldom explored in non-fictional discourse. Not only does Dick’s fiction pitchfork the reader right into the middle of a debate whose significance eluded him or her before his or her entry into Dick’s fictional world. Its polemic also compels the reader to examine the issue in all its complexity. Whether the reader agrees with Dick’s solutions or not, he or she is bound to be sufficiently sensitised to the issue to think about it and perhaps make meaningful contributions towards a lasting solution.
Notes and References


3 Barney Mayerson in The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch plots out the linear extension of capitalistic-industrial societies that are based on exploitation and repression. They constantly attempt to acquire more power until the concentration of power overwhelms it and the society is reduced to ruins. The nuclear weapons and by extension, nuclear wars are the symbols of the final outcome of social systems based on aggression and conspiracies. He realizes that his attempts to overcome the danger are in fact, "Not for myself; not to save P. P. Layouts and the Can-D trade. But for—he knew what he meant. Everyone in the system. Because Palmer Eldritch is an invader and this is how we’ll all wind up, here like this, on a plain of dead things that have become nothing more than random fragments..." Dick, Philip K. The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch. London: Gollancz, 2003. 100


5 Dick in his works examines the capitalistic-industrial society and the role played by large companies in controlling the means of production and hatching conspiracies that are aimed at retaining and developing their influence in different spheres of life. His works depict how corporate bosses in their craze to acquire greater power make use of individuals as mere pawns. Ragle Gumm realizes that he was made to live out a life in a town that was artificially created in order to create an illusion that he was leading a happy existence. The truth turns out to be more sinister with him realizing that the country was at war and was making him predict the location of the next nuclear attack through the guise of solving newspaper riddles. It is finally revealed to him that the corporate culture has led the country into fighting a civil war where there were no
victors. This is depicted through the words of the character, Mrs Keitelbein. “In her patient way, Mrs Keitelbein went on, ‘So, you recognize that they built for you- and placed you in – a safe, controlled environment in which you could do your job without doubt or distractions. Or the realization that you were on the wrong side.’ Vic said savagely, ‘The wrong side? – the side that was attacked!’ ‘In a civil war, Ragle said, ‘every side is wrong. It’s hopeless to try to untangle it... Everyone is a victim.’” Dick, Philip K. *Time Out of Joint*. London: Gollancz, 2003. 209.