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The Uncertainty of Vision

John Hillman

Abstract

Through a reading of the film Minority Report, this article will examine how vision shapes perspectives and outcomes by considering the apparent illusion of free will. Against a backdrop of determination, we tend to focus on what vision reveals to us and how it shapes our view. However, my claim is that vision also signifies the limits of what we can see. In this sense, vision configures its own constitutive incompleteness.

> "Jerry's" vision was misphased. Because of the erratic nature of precognition, he was examining a time-area slightly different from that of his companions. For him, the report that Anderton would commit a murder was an event to be integrated along with everything else.
>
> –Philip K. Dick, *Minority Report*

The film *Minority Report* (Spielberg), which is based on the book of the same name by Philip K. Dick, is set in 2055 and is centred around three 'precognitives' who live in a perpetual, drug-induced dream state. Precognitives are essentially clairvoyants. They predict murders that will happen in the future, and they form a central part of the Pre-Crime Agency policing program. The visions they have of crimes yet to be committed are the basis from which the Pre-Crime Agency arrests future perpetrators. This paper thinks through and considers the links between the visions the precognitives have (of an apparently decided future) and the more general feeling that we can, in some way, determine our own futures, that we are the authors of our own thoughts and actions. The paradox at the heart of this reflection is that while we may wish to think of ourselves as subjects who can freely act and decide, once we actually *see* ourselves in this way, we then restrict all the possible, other, futures. In short, it is our self-awareness – the moment when we recognize ourselves as being free – which changes how free we really are. While this may seem contradictory, it follows Kant's observation that once we have the capacity for such an insight into our own condition, then "human beings . . . would thus be converted into a mere mechanism, where, as in a puppet show, everything would gesticulate well but there would still be no life in the figures" (186). Simply put, the freedom we seem to experience is only possible because we do not have the capacity to fully understand what it is we are experiencing. Our lack of awareness is translated into a sense of being free. Of course, at the level of biology, humans are mechanistic; we are the result of very specific chemical and cellular reactions. How, then, can we possibly feel free if our bodies are operating automatically through routines and processes over which we have very little control? The basis of the reflection that follows rests on how what we experience as our freedom to decide and choose emanates from the ambiguous symbolic surface of our existence and this has no relation to the causal processes of our biology. The point I develop is how this sense of being free is altered once we become self-reflectively aware of the variety of freedoms we enjoy. Such freedoms may be deeply personal or widely social.

Generally, there can be little doubt that having free choice, our sense of our own free will and our societal freedoms are an important part of who we are. At a socio-political level we are constantly dealing with challenges relating to the status of our various freedoms: of movement, of speech, of expression, of information, etc. We are regularly faced with arguments about how these freedoms are being eroded, adjusted, or legislated away. But if freedom shapes how we behave in society and who we are as individuals, it also acts as a "signifier of disorientation" (Ruda 1), a mechanism which can remove social protections while at the same time opening up the choices of the market. In other words, the structure of our freedom seems to be complicit with the forces of capital. The experience of being free to make choices means we are increasingly alone and shaped by personalised, singular versions of our lives. In this sense, the freedom capital affords us means we are not 'in this together,' rather we are entirely responsible for our individual choices.

Conventionally, freedom is about having and making choices, with choice itself being something advanced capitalism claims to offer us all. And like most things in capitalism, choice is something individuals possess in differing amounts, something they can make use of immediately as well as something which can be realized in the future. Beyond being instrumental in capitalism, freedom can be understood as a metaphysical aspiration that Eighteenth Century German and English poets and philosophers associated with Romanticism (Critchley 31). The thread of freedom connects this historicity of critique at one end with human emancipation at the other (Critchley 32). But what of all those decisions we seem to make while acting on the freedoms offered to us? What of the idea that we can freely choose to do the things we do? Could it be that we are not as free as we thought we were? This takes us from the broad notion of freedom to the question of free will.

Free will touches on almost all that we care about: our politics, our morals, our ethics, our relationships, our choices and our decisions (Harris 1). It is what we think makes our lives distinctly human (Harris 1). The idea that our lives are not determined but are the result of choices we are free to make has been the focus of attention of philosophers from the Greeks onwards. Questioning how much free will we have poses a problem for philosophy due to its relationship to determinism (Watson 2). This philosophical tension highlights the difficulty in fully reconciling our moral choices with our natural ones, such that free will makes it difficult to ever find "room in the world for ourselves" (Watson 14). The determinism argument

claimed physical events were caused by the total of prior events. For determinism, nothing could be done that was not triggered by a previous action that itself could be traced backwards to another action and so on toward the beginning of time (Dennett 1). But the Epicureans, who were credited with discovering the problem of free will (Bobzien 287), attempted to overcome this by allowing for a random swerving of atoms. This meant fate could, at times, be undone (Dennett 2). However, this effectively shaped a kind of determination by random causality. Which is to say, outcomes appear determined in a particular direction until they are randomly impacted upon after which something unexpected happens. Thought in this way, decisions seem to be a matter of chance. In contrast to notions of chance or determinism, the Stoics suggested a resigned acceptance of the inevitable. This encouraged humans to go along with events as if we were free in order not to struggle against what was being determined by fate (Dennett 2). What motivates this paper is the discussion around how free will is an illusion of consciousness. It is an illusion since our "intentions emerge from background causes of which we are unaware and over which we exert no conscious control" (5). Paradoxically, free will appears to be hardwired into how we make decisions: we tend to sense we are free to be able to choose one option over any other. Even if an external authority imposes restrictions of a more general kind upon us (such as the Brexit imposed limit to freedom of movement), we still seem to be intrinsically free to choose from a variety of other options or choices. Our inner sense of being free to decide tends to prevail. Of course, we may have to weigh up the reasons for our choice, we may have to balance a perceived sense of what are the positives against the negatives. But on an individual level we feel as though we are able to freely decide things, or we have some agency over the choices we do make. Even if such choices are ideologically false and "illusory" (Horkheimer and Adorno 97) once made, we still envision our future one we have mostly had a hand in choosing. What really helps define our sense of freedom is the feeling that we could have chosen a worse outcome over a better outcome, if indeed we had wanted to. Being able to do so gives a sense that it is actually us who make the decisions and choices throughout our own lives. But what if the choices we made could never be different? What if choosing a particular route was already in some way predetermined? How different would our lives seem if we were to face the world with the certainty that every choice we made was the only choice we could ever possibly make? Where would this then leave our sense of

responsibility? Surely, it would mean we would no longer be responsible for what we did because we could never have done anything else.

With free will comes a burden of personal responsibility, of making our own decisions. However, if we were no longer free to decide what we do, then we would no longer be responsible for what we do and, as such, we become a functionary of an invisible, external force. The moral issue here is clear: if we are not responsible for what we do, then can we be morally accountable? Compatibilism (Ayer 271) goes some way to consolidating mechanistic determinism and free will. For the compatibilist, causality is replaced with the notion of constraint in order to settle the question of being morally accountable (Ayer 282). In a similar adjustment, the moral argument rests not on whether a subject "could have done otherwise" (Franklin 838) but "because he could not have done otherwise" (Franklin 838); the emphasis being the words 'because he could not.' Nevertheless, the problem with compatibilism is that it formulates a subject who seems to be outside of reality and who must then somehow resist imprisonment in a chain of determination. What this misses is how the subject is actually part of the texture of reality. Therefore, the solution to consolidating mechanistic determinism and free will is not to find ways to resolve the tension between them but in accepting how they both configure a "conflict inherent in reality itself" (Žižek *Less Than Nothing* 158).

In *Minority Report*, the Pre-Crime Agency anticipate and prevent future crimes from happening by interpreting the three precognitives' visions. In the opening sequence of the film, we see Howard Marks arrested by the Pre-Crime Agency for the 'future murder' of his wife. The aim of the Pre-Crime Agency is to arrest offenders before they can commit their crimes. Of course, there are clear ethical issues around arresting offenders who have yet to offend because, at the point of being arrested, pre-criminals are innocent of the crime they intend to commit. But in the world of the *Minority Report*, the visions of the precognitives have the power to convict and condemn those who are yet to commit a crime. Since the precognitives' visions are understood to be an accurate prediction of what will happen, Howard Marks has no way of avoiding his fate. It has been determined that his crime will happen. Of course, his philosophical defence would be that "it is unjust to punish someone for what he is not responsible for, and unless we have free will, we are responsible for nothing" (Huemer 105). This moral issue is raised later in the film. There is an additional twist, as I will discuss in more detail subsequently, in that the

visions the precognitives are not necessarily accurate and do not necessarily reflect the same future. There is also a degree of agency offered to pre-criminals: they have some free will. But the free will they exercise is only possible once their future is already known. And it is this last point that is at the heart of my argument.

The Pre-Crime Agency prevent what is about to happen using an interpretation of the visions from the three precognitives as the basis of their intervention. The plot of *Minority Report* hinges on the inevitability or otherwise of what happens in the future. The premise of the Pre-Crime Agency is that all the events are constrained by inescapable conclusions. However, what the film stages philosophically, is how knowledge of the future removes any perceived freedom of choice. Once we foresee things, then no other future is possible or even thinkable. The disruption to this is when the protagonist in the film, John Anderton (Tom Cruise), decides not to kill Leo Crow, his future victim. To not kill Crow goes against what the precognitives predict he will do. While Anderton's decision suggests he has the freedom to choose his own future and to behave in a way he has decided, his awareness of how the future will play out, as depicted by the visions of the precognitives, also means there really is no imaginable different outcome. In effect, once the future is known Anderton is unable to make any meaningful decisions about his own future. At the very moment Anderton decides to resist his fate, his act of resistance becomes a part of the future that has already been determined. No matter what decision Anderton then makes, the decision will inexorably lead to him murdering Leo Crow. The conclusion we can draw from this is how it is only possible to be free to make choices at the point when we do not know what will happen. Given this conditional nature of freedom, the ultimate sensation of being free is to not act how one wants but to do what one does not want to do, to go against our own drives, unconscious compulsions and inclinations (Žižek *The Parallax View* 202). Paradoxically, to be free is to resist our motivation to freely make the choices we want to make. This requires a radical challenge to the vision we have of ourselves in the future (and this will undoubtedly concern career and life coaches who offer transformations based on visualising a new you). The idea that there are alternative possibilities, options we could choose that go against what might be described as the choice we would be expected to make, fits with the "principle of alternate possibilities" (Frankfurt 829). This principle asserts that we can only take moral responsibility for what we do if we could have potentially taken another course of action. In other words, when we have no choice then we are absolved from being morally responsible. Clearly this impacts

situations where we might be coerced into a choice or where there are no other choices that can be made. When Anderton knows what will happen in his future, does he then have any alternative futures he can choose from?

The term "minority report" refers to the visions each of the three precognitives have reported. A variation in the overall vision from one of the three is known as a minority report. The paradox here is how one vision of the future can be different from the majority report of the other two visions of the future. Although all the precognitives are able to predict the future, their predictions are rarely the same. Despite adhering to a logic of determination, the precognitives can each have visions of different versions of the future. Therefore, there is no singular, definitive view of the future that each can see. Instead, their visions of what is determined are more uncertain and inexact. Since unanimity is seldom achieved, the Pre-Crime Agency are forced to make an assessment about the accuracy of the predicted crime by considering the visions from the two precognitives who are most closely aligned. In a world where the future is mapped out as being predictable, there is something inconsistent structuring how things will eventually turn out. The discrepancies amongst the precognitives' visions express how incoherent the narrative of what will happen is. Even when the future is ordered and determined, it is still really a distorted and disjointed mess of contradictory impulses. What is important is how the film stages determinism in an undetermined way. It is not that one or more of the visions are wrong, but in order to ascertain what a determined future is we must also incorporate some of the things that will not happen. It would be reasonable to describe this as the core of Hegel's dialectical argument. Nevertheless, what matters to the Pre-Crime Agency are the consistent elements of the visions and how these are then interpreted. They need to know who will commit the future crime in order to prevent it from happening. However, the visions do not simply emerge from the thoughts of the precognitives, they are also determined by the relations from which they are created. In other words, the visions are interlinked with one another, each is in some way reinforced by the other or its context is framed by the material of the other visions. The precognitives do not see the future directly, they are not witnesses to it as such, instead, their visions bring it incrementally into being. And in this process is a struggle between the present and the future. Any ontological certainty of the future is linked to how it is then uncertainly ordained in the present. Since the precognitives do not have identical visions, each precognitive shapes what the future is through the inconsistency of each vision with the others. Of course, there is no

indication whether the visions of the precognitives could be wrong. But they do not always completely align. They are not three different perspectives of the same event, rather they are three versions of three different events containing different parts that then appear to coincide. What we can possibly learn from *Minority Report* is how discrepancies are at the heart of what seems fixed. Far from being precise and clear in its form, discrepancies are always a part of our actual and metaphysical vision. The premise of my argument is that vision, in all its forms, is itself never certain or fixed. Vision is an interpretative process. However, I do not simply mean that we always interpret what we see. It is inconsistency, inherent in how things appear, that provokes an interpretative process.

Although the precognitives may have different visions, this does not mean all possible futures somehow coexist together within a single future that is going to happen. Rather, only once we become aware of our future does any possibility of other futures evaporate. As with the laws of quantum mechanics, our observation of a situation changes the situation we observe and renders it consistent with our presence. In terms of lived reality, this provides us with a subjective purpose, such that without our being there things would be differently different. Being a witness to an event, even one that is yet to happen, is significant not least because of how it creates a self-reflective experience. When a situation is determined, all its other possibilities disappear and out of the range of potential events comes a single, actualised experience. What *Minority Report* offers is a reflection on how a vision, when it is incorporated into reality, changes that very same reality. Once John Anderton becomes aware of the prediction that he was going to commit a murder, he decides he will not do so. But the report of the second precognitive seems to have taken this decision into account. They then adjust their vision accordingly. This meant the three reports from each pre-cognitive successively overrode each other and their visions incorporated the visions of the others (Žižek *The Parallax View* 207). The philosophical question is whether this kind of self-referential structure can assert agency over the knowledge that shapes the decisions we are about to make? Today, in the digital world of computer files, this would be as if meta-data were able to undermine the data it belongs to, for example, if hashtags were able to redefine the visible content of an image (with the advent of AI this is a very distinct possibility). In terms of our subjectivity, our awareness of a situation, especially when it is based on some kind of inevitable outcome, impacts on the determination of events because our awareness needs to be factored in. Knowing we know something changes the

coordinates of what we know. Nevertheless, the precognitives do not think the future into being, instead the future relays itself back to their minds. They are not the source or authors of their own thought but mediators of events which will take place in the future. Theirs is an experience of a future happening as if it were the past. For them the future is not a space of possibility but an already configured set of outcomes being relayed backwards.

In a world of algorithmic profiling and surveillance, targeting choices and predicting what individuals will do is less science fiction and more a practice embedded into marketing and the social sciences. What matters in this regard, is not the way we are presented with pre-selected sets of choices but our awareness that these choices have already been pre-selected for us by an algorithm that has already taken into account our habits and behaviours. Once we are aware of the limitations of what is presented to us, we can see any apparent openness of possible future choices is a fiction. At this point, it no longer matters what we choose, only that we recognise the limited extent of our own freedom to choose to do so. My claim is that accepting the inevitability of the future becomes liberating in the way that any practical notion of choice cannot. A consequence of being exposed to so much targeted advertising is that even if we understand we are being targeted we remain in denial that we are. In other words, we know we are being targeted but we continue to behave as if these are random selections that happen to coincide with our interests. This exemplifies the psychoanalytic term of fetishistic disavowal, wherein we know something is as it is but we continue to behave as if it were not so (Mannoni 68). In effect, we want to see ourselves as having agency and choice over our decisions, even when we know we have been ushered toward a very narrow selection of possible alternatives.

How can we possibly live in a world of predetermination? The key is to reflect on how we perceive our experience. The empiricist view of our perception of experience is one of the mind receiving sensory information that it then turns into its own picture of reality (Ayer *The Central Questions of Philosophy* 89). But what we experience as perception is not the first process our brains are dealing with. In effect, at any given moment our feelings are a reaction to an already processed experience (Libet et al. 623). Experiments by neuroscientist Benjamin Libet and colleagues in 1983 demonstrated an unexpected temporal relationship between intention and brain activity, wherein our brains register movement before we physically move. Their experiments suggested the very real possibility of our unconscious initiating

movement that we only become aware of consciously after it has begun. This would mean that our sense of having chosen to do something is retroactively influenced. Perhaps, even though our decisions may appear to us in real-time, they are no different from the edits that have already been made in a movie. As we watch a narrative film unfold, we know all its events have already been filmed but we experience them as a series of decisions and a set of consequences. The director, the writers, the cameraman, and the actors have already made their decisions and committed them to the film you are watching. However, it is still possible for the audience to interpret the narrative as if there are multiple possible outcomes.

What causes us to do what we do is processed by our brains; we then go on to interpret that process as a thought (Harris 7). As Libet's experiment demonstrated, the thought comes after the process, after we have worked through the scenario we are faced with. It is not until our actions arise in our consciousness that we become aware of them, but they are already initiated before we have any awareness of them. What this means is awareness is not how we make decisions. In effect, we are reading the already fully typed up stage directions and interpreting these as the beginning of the process, but they are the output, not the input. Even when we feel we are freely choosing to do something, the feeling is only our awareness of the choice or decision that our brains have already made (Haynes 9). We are not freely choosing anything, instead we are sensing the determination of an already chosen action, but interpreting this within our own processes of decision making. Neuroscience has shown how our brains make some choices before the option to choose enters into our consciousness (Haynes 9). The brain "predicts the outcome of a decision even before the decision reaches awareness" (Haynes 15). But what of free will, if our brains have already decided what we will do before we become aware that we will do what we are about to do? I suggest these findings do not indicate we have no free will at all. Rather what they suggest is how the processual features of the brain operate in a particular order. The point where we are free to decide has already happened and our subjective experience of this decision occurs once the choice has been enacted. Awareness of our feelings is then the last thing to be parsed. This would mean our feelings manifest themselves in a comprehensible way only after they have been processed in the brain. Perhaps we should think about our thoughts as simply a by-product, as a projection of a process that has already taken place, one that is fully encoded and is subjectively experienced once everything else is settled. As strange as this may sound, when we are conscious of what we are doing we are

already doing what we are conscious of. If we could slow our thought processes down, we would see how our bodies seem to respond first and it is only later that we are able to think a thought suggesting we decided to act in a particular way. We are only able to have such a thought once all the processing has already taken place. A moment's reflection on what you have just done might reveal this strange link between thought and action.

Even though we seem unable to escape our own thoughts, we are also unable to ascertain exactly where those same thoughts have come from. Of course, our thoughts usually inform the things we decide upon and the choices we go on to make. And if the choices we make are based on the specific experiences we have had to date and the outcomes of our lived life, then perhaps we cannot hope to ever choose differently. In effect, the life we have lived has already configured the outcome of the choices we go on to make. This means we are only free to choose what we have already pre-configured throughout the course of living our lives. But why we might make one decision over another is illusive and difficult, if not impossible, to pin down. It would seem we do not freely decide anything. Or as Sam Harris simply puts it, "you no more decide the next thought you think than the next thought I write" (3). Harris explains that it is difficult, if not impossible, to locate the point of origin of our thoughts. It is as if they arrive in our minds from nowhere. However, this is not as surprising as it seems. Many of our bodily functions happen without our full awareness of them (Harris 4). We are also never conscious of the volume of information our brains are processing, moment to moment (Harris 4). Humans are almost always entirely functioning on autopilot. Of course, our responses to what our brains do is evident from lived experience when we feel happy, sad or anxious but what is going on to cause these feelings is far from obvious. At some conscious level our feelings simply appear or at least they appear to appear. But we do not seem to have a role in consciously activating them. Instead, they become apparent as our feelings and only then are we forced to behave in accordance with them or to repress them and behave against our feelings. If we reflect on the inconsequential decisions we make it can be quite difficult to understand why we made them at all. Although we may think we would logically only act in our self-interest we occasionally make decisions knowing that the outcomes may not serve us well. Why we would do this is never entirely clear. What neuroscience seems to indicate is how we appear to be witnesses to our thoughts rather than the instigators of them. If this is the case then we have little or no

influence over them, we are merely the bodies our thoughts and decisions appear within. What we go on to do has already been decided by our brains before we become consciously aware of it (Harris).

The precognitives are assumed to tell the truth, given their sole purpose is to envision a future truth. However, once the Pre-Crime Agency has intervened with the arrest of the future perpetrator, their visions are no longer truthful. What they become is a believed falsehood. Even though the context in which their visions are produced is one of truth, the aim of the Pre-Crime Agency is to alter the outcome and change the future and alter the truth. The visions have an illocutionary force, they are understood as having authority and certainty about a future that then immediately becomes malleable. Not responding to the visions is to allow the future to play out as the precognitives predict it will be. Sharing some of the principles of the Pre-Crime unit, section 26 of the United Kingdom's 2015 *Counter-Terrorism and Security Act* "places a duty on certain bodies to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'". This forms the basis of the Prevent duty, a strategy to intervene in order to stop individuals from committing future acts of terror. What underpins this strategy is recognizing the signs of terrorism before they manifest themselves. The guidance provides a comprehensive list of symbolic pre-terrorist behaviours which potentially signal the need for external intervention (H.M. Government 107). The behaviours specifically shape the vision the government has of a terrorist. The Prevent strategy is underpinned by the potential to change a future outcome determined by pre-terrorist acts. However, it is distinctive from the visions of the precognitives because it relies on signs that indicate a crime may happen rather than a foresight of the crime itself. It relies on what can be described as the semiotics of terrorism rather than visions of its explicit acts. The aim is to prevent a possible crime on the basis of laws that turn a behaviour commensurate with thinking about committing a crime a crime in itself. The outcome is an intervention in order to prevent the future from happening as the government predict it will.

What separates determination and the free will to author our future that resides within us? Over time, we fabricate a template of our future, yet we also experience the illusion of the freedom to choose how the next moment will be shaped. The dialectical struggle between an inevitability of what will happen and our sense that we can also decide what it will be, resides within us all. This is the struggle Anderton experiences in *Minority Report*. It is expressed in us all as we become self-aware of

the limits of our own agency. If it were not this way things would seem as though they can be easily shaped and refined by our actions. However, the contradiction of limits and agency does not prevent us from experiencing life. I would argue it is the experience of life itself. In being neither free nor able to choose we are, in fact, confronted with the structure of choice itself. This exposes the hard and direct impact of experience, its consequences, demands and effects that ripple and ricochet through lives lived. We should not judge the outcomes of the bad choices we have made, nor should we be resigned to the formal inevitability of things, instead we should accept the symmetry of these two positions as the texture of experience itself. And within this context we become subjects who are able to succumb to the inevitability of what will happen. Our subjectivity is not contingent upon our freedom to choose nor upon our acceptance of an entirely determined future. Instead, subjectivity is based on our inaction at the point where these two positions are unable to be reconciled, in other words, the point of our lived experience.

Freedom appears to be responsible for so much social disorientation and is a signifier of all that is confusing and uncertain (Ruda 1). Today, freedom replaces certainty with an array of options and choices from which we can customise and tailor our existence. For example, precarious working contracts from companies like Uber are reframed as providing employees with opportunities to seek other work alongside what they are doing. In this way, our freedoms have become controls and stresses that hang over our lives. Allowing us to be free to choose from so many choices that we appear to be locked into a state of constant oscillation of choosing nothing that is really in our best interests. Despite providing less job security, flexible working contracts are framed as allowing more control over our working lives. Similarly, we can, in theory at least, choose our healthcare provider, our school, our university, and our neighbourhood. We can choose when we work, who we work for, and how we work. We are no longer constrained, instead we can freely choose to define large aspects of how we live. Freedom is about our ability to do things, or the "capacity" (Ruda 3) we have to do the things we do. This is how freedom is formulated as something we have. Such that we have the power to do something only when we also have the freedom to do it, and if we are free to do things, then those things are in some way possible. Freedom is therefore about what is possible, it is always an option even when we do not explicitly exercise it. Choices are made on the basis that we are able to make one choice or another. In other words, there are options that are both open to us and that we may choose. We remain free only when

choosing to be unable to choose (Ruda 5). Anderton was never free to not murder Crow. His actions were always predicted by the visions of the precognitives, even when he appears to contradict their predictions. What Anderton needed to do in order to be free would have been to decide not to decide to murder Crow. He should have remained ambivalent to all future possibilities. But inevitably, he was trapped by what was seen by the precognitives and who that would configure what he would do. The difference with Anderton was how his awareness of what two of the precognitives had seen was "integrated" (Dick 20) into the vision of the third, the minority report. Individually, each vision was incomplete. Alone they presented an uncertain picture of the future. It was only once Anderton was aware of what he saw and when he knew his future was determined, that he was able to undermine what was about to happen. The point where it seemed he had no freedom to choose – when he knew his future – was the moment he resisted its pull and tried to change it. This new version of the future was then a part of the minority report, the precognitive Jerry's "misphased" (Dick 20) vision. I claim, Anderton's philosophical move was to sustain having a choice over choosing itself. While working in the Pre-Crime Agency, he had not doubted the veracity of the visions of the precognitives. But once he understood their visions as uncertain fragments of the future, he was able to choose from either murdering or not murdering Crow. The agency he found he had was grounded in what was not reliable about the visions. It was contingent on him having choice but not ever really choosing. However, ultimately it was his belief in his own free will that mattered most. If Anderton was to alter the future, then the visions of the precognitives had to be understood as contestable and changeable. They were intercessionary scenes, signalling a version of his future back into his present, however, since they were incomplete, his free will could be exercised in the emptiness they left. It was the what the visions did not show that created a space into which he could choose another future. Crucially, this choice was continuously suspended. I claim, the suspension of choice is the essence of freedom and the point where free will becomes most apparent. For Anderton, he was free to choose a different outcome only because he could see what would happen and he resisted what he saw. Had he not seen his future, then, in a metaphorical sense, his future would have been entirely determined. What makes *Minority Report* intriguing is how it was seeing himself in a version of his own future that enabled Anderton to alter it. This self-reflective moment provided him the opportunity to knowingly observe his future self, and to change the outcome. Vision is always an incomplete

experience; it is always only part of the story. It partially reveals things to us. And rarely does it afford us any sense of our self; we are universally absent from what we see. Given there is always something we do not see when we look, perhaps we should accept there is an uncertainty, rather than certainty, to vision. It is only when confronting the limit of things that we can reflect back on its totality. The paradoxical nature of seeing but not actually seeing everything and of choosing not to choose in order to be free to make a choice is succinctly summed up by philosopher Simon Critchley when he suggests, if Philip K. Dick "had known more, he might have produced less interesting chains of ideas" (Bald 211).

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