

# The Minority Report



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF PHILIP K. DICK

Although his talent was acknowledged within the world of science fiction—he won the Hugo Award for *The Man in the High Castle* (1963)—Dick did not experience mainstream success during his lifetime, and made little money for his stories. To survive financially, he wrote at a rapid pace, generating 45 novels and 121 short stories over his 30-year career. Dick's stories contemplate themes such as identity, paranoia, mental illness, drug use, alternative realities, surveillance, and authoritarianism. His characters often question appearances, struggle to discern what is real and true, and seek to uncover sinister plots. Dick often incorporated his own life experiences into his stories, and in several respects the themes of his life parallel those of his fiction. In 1955, the FBI visited Dick and his second wife, who held socialist views. Throughout the 1960s, he abused amphetamines, which allowed him to write for extended periods of time without sleep. In 1972, after the end of his fourth of five marriages, he unsuccessfully attempted to commit suicide. Dick reported having a series of mystical and/or past-life visions in 1973, seeing images of geometric patterns, and of Jesus in Ancient Rome. On the basis of these visions, he claimed he was simultaneously living his life in the present, as well as the life of a Christian named Thomas in the first century CE. He incorporated these experiences into *VALIS* (1981), which, along with his other later novels, focused upon metaphysics and theology. Several of his stories have been adapted to television and film, including: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) as *Blade Runner* (1982); "We Can Remember It For Your Wholesale" (1966) as *Total Recall* (1990, 2012); and "The Minority Report" (1956) as *Minority Report* (2002).

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Dick wrote "The Minority Report" during the Cold War, a period of great tension and conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, as both nations scrambled to solidify their respective spheres of control across the planet. The 1950s was a time of widespread suspicion and distrust—within and amongst governments, as well as between governments and certain segments of their populations. With the rise of McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare during this decade, the United States government investigated suspected communists. Political radicals and members of the Beat Generation counterculture expressed concern about authoritarianism and the violation of individual liberties, both domestically and abroad. Another concerning development at this time was the

development of mind-control technologies, such as were used in the CIA's MKUltra program. Given such intrusive technologies, the individual's mind was no longer a private domain. Many of these historical elements—authority figures plotting to accumulate greater power; law enforcement agencies utilizing new technologies to invade privacy and override individual liberties; and suspicion and paranoia—appear in "The Minority Report."

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Dick's "The Minority Report" was not the first story to consider time-related themes such as precognition and multiple timelines. H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), about a man who travels to the past and thereby alters the future, influenced many subsequent science fiction and fantasy stories involving time travel. Wells' short story, "The Queer Story of Brownlow's Newspaper," published in 1932, tells of a man who receives a newspaper from 40 years in the future, giving the character a glimpse into that future. Robert Heinlein, a contemporary of Dick, wrote several stories addressing time travel and its resulting paradoxes, including "Elsewhen" (1941), "By His Bootstraps" (1941), and "All You Zombies" (1959). In addition to its time-related themes, "The Minority Report" considers government surveillance and population control via futuristic technologies. In this respect, it resonates with Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell's *1984* (1949), both of which portray various technological and psychological techniques of mass control in future societies. With its protagonist's paranoia in the face of a powerful government agency, "The Minority Report" also bears a certain resemblance to Kafka's stories about alienating bureaucracies, such as *The Trial* (1925). In the latter, a man has been charged with a crime, but does not know who has charged him, nor does he know the nature of his supposed crime.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** "The Minority Report"
- **When Written:** 1954
- **Where Written:** Berkeley, California
- **When Published:** 1956
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Science fiction
- **Setting:** A futuristic city
- **Climax:** John Anderton publicly murders Leopold Kaplan, a retired army General plotting to destroy Precrime.
- **Antagonist:** Leopold Kaplan

- **Point of View:** Third Person

## EXTRA CREDIT

**Computer Simulation.** In 1977, at the Metz science fiction conference in France, Dick gave a talk titled “If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some of the Others.” In it, he suggested that the universe is a computer simulation. Approximately 30 years later, several philosophers and theoretical physicists began advancing the same idea.

**Android.** In 2005, Roboticists at the University of Memphis made an android named “Phil” that resembled the author in its speech and facial features. However, David Hanson, who headed the project, lost the head on a plane.



## PLOT SUMMARY

“The Minority Report” tells the story of John Anderton, the creator and head of Precrime, a police agency that uses three mutants called “**precogs**” to foresee and stop future crimes before they are committed. Anderton’s own system predicts that he will murder a man within the coming week, but he thinks that he is being framed. Anderton seeks to evade capture while investigating what has happened.

The story begins as Anderton meets his new assistant, Witwer, a confident, handsome young man who immediately makes Anderton insecure and defensive. After discussing the Precrime system with Witwer, Anderton learns from reading a card with precognitive data that he will murder a man named Leopold Kaplan, whom he does not know. Anderton refuses to believe this shocking prediction, and suspects that he is being set up by the Senate, which is working with Witwer to remove him as Police Commissioner. Anderton also suspects that his wife, Lisa, an executive officer at Precrime, is involved in the plot, based in part upon her overly friendly interaction with Witwer. Deciding to flee the planet before he is detained, Anderton heads home to pack, where he is apprehended by a man who takes him to see Kaplan.

Standing before the man he is supposedly going to murder, Anderton tries to explain to Kaplan that Witwer and Lisa are trying to frame him—he has no intentions of actually killing Kaplan. Kaplan concedes that this may be so, but says that for his own safety, he must turn Anderton over to the police, and promptly loads Anderton into a car with body guards. Not long after they’ve departed, though, a bread truck crashes into the car, and a man named Fleming drags Anderton out of the car. Presenting himself as someone who wants to help Anderton, Fleming provides Anderton with money and a new identity, as well as a tip that he should look into the minority report.

Anderton checks into a hotel and calls Page, who works in the precog room at the police station, asking if he can come in to

examine the minority report. Page hesitates but agrees. Later, Anderton returns to the station and listens to the precog tapes, learning that while the majority report predicted he would murder Kaplan, the minority report indicates that he would not do so. Suddenly, Lisa enters the room, warns him that he should leave and offers him a ride in a ship on the roof.

On the ship, Lisa tells Anderton that she believes him to be innocent, and suggests that others in the detention camp may have been in a similar situation. She tries to convince Anderton that Witwer has good intentions, and that he should put the good of the Precrime system above his own fate and turn himself in. When Anderton refuses, Lisa draws a gun to force him to return to the station. Fleming, who was hiding on the ship, knocks the pistol out of Lisa’s hand and begins to strangle her. Anderton stops Fleming by knocking him unconscious, and finds out from his identification that he is an army major working with the Internal Intelligence Department of Military Information. On the basis of this information, Anderton reasons that Fleming must be working for Kaplan, that the break truck crash was a set up, and that Kaplan has been working to keep Anderton out of police custody. Anderton calls Witwer in an effort to protect the precog room, but learns that Kaplan was just there to copy the reports.

Back at the station, Anderton informs Witwer of Kaplan’s plot to discredit the majority report, and thereby invalidate the Precrime system. After studying the precog tapes for clues, Anderton sees out the window that the army is holding a rally, and thinks that Kaplan is going to read the minority report to the public, which would discredit Precrime and make it look flawed. Anderton then decides that he will kill Kaplan in order to save Precrime by making the majority report correct. He reasons that the army will not stop him from approaching Kaplan because they have the minority report, which states that Anderton will not murder Kaplan. At the rally, Anderton murders Kaplan, as the majority report stated.

In the final scene, Anderton prepares to flee the planet with Lisa to an off-world colony. Before leaving, he explains to Witwer that there were three different, consecutive minority reports, each of which previewed a different time-area. The first report saw a discarded time-path in which he decided to murder Kaplan after learning of his plot. The second report responded to the fact that Kaplan would read the precognitive data and decide not to murder Kaplan. The third report incorporated his final decision to murder Kaplan in order to save Precrime. Two of the reports agreed that he would murder Kaplan, giving rise to the *illusion* of a majority report. In their final exchange, Anderton warns Witwer that he must be vigilant because, as the new Police Commissioner, he could experience a similar predicament.



## CHARACTERS

## MAJOR CHARACTERS

**John Anderton** – The protagonist of the story, Anderton is the creator and head of Precrime. He is Lisa’s husband and colleague, Witwer’s boss, and Kaplan’s murderer. At the beginning of the story, Anderton is deeply insecure about his physical appearance and the security of his position at the agency, worrying that his new assistant—the handsome, young, and confident Witwer—is secretly plotting to take over Anderton’s role as Police Commissioner. He initially believes that the Senate is using Witwer to remove Anderton from his position, and he even accuses his own wife of being in on it. When Anderton learns that two of the three **precogs** have predicted that he will commit a crime—a majority rule, or majority report, that deems Anderton officially guilty even though he hasn’t actually done anything yet—Anderton immediately believes that Witwer rigged the system to get him out of the way. With police on his tail to send him to a detention camp for his would-be crime, murdering a stranger named Kaplan, Anderton is at first concerned with his own safety and resolves to not kill this mysterious Kaplan person. However, when he comes to realize that Kaplan, a retired army general trying to take down Precrime, is actually behind the plot, Anderton decides that he must focus on saving Precrime. As Anderton pieces together over the course of the story, Kaplan is trying to destabilize Precrime and make it look faulty so that the army might gain more power for itself, eradicating the careful checks and balances that exist between the two organizations. Kaplan assumes that Anderton won’t actually commit murder, which would invalidate the majority report and prove that just because two of the three precogs predict that the person will commit a crime doesn’t mean the person actually will. Such an outcome would dismantle the basis of Precrime and make the whole system look unjust and ineffectual. Thus, Anderton changes his mind and resolves to kill Kaplan—even if it means having to flee to another planet—in order to keep Precrime credible and functioning.

**Kaplan** – The antagonist of the story, Kaplan is an old, retired General of the Army of the Federated Westbloc Alliance. He is plotting to discredit Precrime so that the army may reassume the domestic policing powers it held before the end of the last war. Kaplan has other people do his dirty work for him, using Fleming to follow and surveil Anderton and, it’s implied, planting Page at Precrime in order to receive information more quickly and directly. Significantly, Kaplan does not hold animosity towards Anderton, but simply sees him as a pawn in his power play to destabilize and ultimately take down Precrime. In his speech at the army rally, Kaplan compares the majority report (which states that Anderton will murder Kaplan) to the minority report (which states that Anderton, having learned about his future crime, will resolve not to kill

Kaplan) in order to invalidate the Precrime system. He specifically suggests that “As soon as precognitive information is obtained, it cancels itself out,” and thus that “there can be no valid knowledge about the future.” By acknowledging Anderton, who is present at the rally, Kaplan hopes to demonstrate that the majority report, which predicted that Anderton would kill Kaplan, is incorrect. However, Anderton murders Kaplan, thereby making the majority report correct and saving Precrime’s reputation.

**Witwer** – Witwer is Anderton’s new assistant and future replacement. He is young, handsome, and confident, which makes Anderton incredibly insecure and puts him on the defensive from the moment they first meet, certain that Witwer is after his job. Anderton’s paranoia intensifies when Witwer briefly interacts with Lisa in a friendly manner, giving rise to Anderton’s suspicions that they are both involved in a Senate plot to remove Anderton from his position. Lisa attempts to be the voice of reason, pointing out to Anderton that Witwer believes in the value of Precrime, has good intentions, and is not involved in any sort of twisted plot to steal Anderton’s job. Playing into Anderton’s fears, though, Fleming tells Anderton that Witwer and Lisa are indeed plotting together, leaving Anderton terribly confused as to who he can trust. Over the course of the story, Witwer loses his initial overconfidence, realizing that he does not fully grasp what is transpiring because he doesn’t have Anderton’s wisdom and experience. For example, Witwer permits Kaplan to make a copy of the precognitive tapes, not realizing Kaplan’s plot until Anderson explains it to him. At the end of the story, Witwer indeed has Anderton’s job—in the wake of killing Kaplan, Anderton has to flee the planet—but Witwer is no longer so sure of himself. In their final exchange, Anderton informs Witwer that, as the new head of Precrime, he must watch out for the same predicament. Although Witwer initially makes Anderton feel paranoid and old and insecure, Witwer later functions to reinforce Anderton’s superior understanding of precognitive dynamics.

**Lisa** – A Precrime executive officer, Lisa is Anderton’s wife and former secretary. Because she is friendly to Witwer, Anderton suspects her of being involved in a plot with him and the Senate, a suspicion that Fleming, one of Kaplan’s cronies, reinforces. She does not believe that Witwer is involved in a plot, a point she tries to persuade Anderton of more than once. Lisa also believes Anderton is innocent, but she forces him at gunpoint to return to the police station because she thinks it will help to protect Precrime. This demonstrates that her loyalties ultimately lie with the greater good—Precrime and the safe society it creates—rather than her husband. However, at the end of the story, with Precrime’s reputation preserved in the wake of Kaplan’s death, she decides to flee from the planet to an off-world colony with her husband, proving that she does love him deeply after all. Even though Lisa is loyal to and

protective of Precrime, she raises questions about the effectiveness of the system by suggesting to Anderton that there are innocent people in the detention camp, and that future criminals would benefit from receiving precognitive information.

**Fleming** – One of Kaplan’s cronies, Fleming is an army major with the Internal Intelligence Department of Military Information. Fleming initially wins Anderton’s trust by playing into his paranoia and telling him that Lisa is behind the plot. Acting like the good guy, Fleming provides Anderton with money, a new identity, and a tip that Anderton should look into the minority report. Later, when Anderton flees the police station with Lisa on a ship, Fleming, who has been hiding on the ship, attempts to prevent Lisa from forcing Anderton to return to the station. He then tries to murder Lisa, but Anderton, at this point unsure who to trust, stops him by knocking him unconscious. Reading Fleming’s army identification card, Anderton thinks that he must be working for Kaplan, and that Fleming’s job is to prevent Anderton from being in police custody. Kaplan never reveals why he wants to keep Anderton out of police custody, but it seems necessary for his plan to unfold.

**Page** – Page works in the precog room. He assists Anderton with the running of the precognitive system, including the processing of information. He allows Anderton to come back to the **precog** room to retrieve data after Precrime identifies Anderton as a criminal. Anderton believes that Page is an army plant who has been secretly feeding information to Kaplan, although it is not clear what evidence leads him to this conclusion.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Kaplan’s Men** – Two nameless men working for Kaplan who transport Anderton to and from his meeting with Kaplan.



## THEMES

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



### SECURITY VS. LIBERTY

“The Minority Report” details a world in which Precrime, a division of the police, utilizes three mutants called **precogs** who have the special ability to foresee crimes before they are committed, called precognition. Acting on these prophecies, Precrime officers, led by Commissioner John Anderton, apprehend and detain would-be-criminals. Acting in this way, the police have virtually

eliminated felonies—as well as prison sentences and other forms of punishment that were never successful deterrents—but the downside is that they have also created detention camps full of individuals who haven’t actually carried out a crime. When Anderton himself is subject to the same treatment—two of the three precogs predict that he will commit a murder, forming a “majority report,” a kind of majority rule that deems him guilty—he comes to understand that would-be criminals may avoid committing crimes if they are given access to precognitive data about themselves. In other words, once Anderton learns that he’s going to commit a murder, this very knowledge talks him out of doing so, at least initially. “The Minority Report” thus highlights the fragile tension that exists between security and liberty in any given society. Depicting the consequences of prioritizing security at the expense of liberty, the story suggests that governments must work to find a careful balance between both values.

The Precrime system eliminates nearly all major crimes, and thus eradicates suffering and makes society safer. Anderton uses the precogs’ foresight, which extends a week into the future, to know who will commit a crime. On the basis of this data, Precrime officers preemptively apprehend and detain future criminals, thus ridding society of crime. Besides enabling the police to detain would-be criminals, this system also acts as a psychological deterrent. As Anderton explains, “the culprit knows we’ll confine him in the detention camp a week before he gets a chance to commit the crime.” Consequently, Precrime has eliminated 99.8 percent of all felonies, making society a radically safer place.

However, Precrime violates citizens’ physical and cognitive liberties. As Lisa, Anderton’s wife, points out, Precrime imprisons innocent persons in a detention camp. Anderton also acknowledges this, explaining, “We’re taking in individuals who have broken no law.” “We claim they’re culpable,” he continues, “They, on the other hand, eternally claim they’re innocent. And, in a sense, they are innocent.” The police not only physically imprison persons who have committed no crime, they also deprive them of the opportunity to change their minds in response to the precognitive data that resulted in their arrest. In other words, had future criminals been informed that they were going to commit a certain crime and be sent to a detention camp for it, they may have decided not to fulfill the prophecy and carry out the crime, thus saving themselves from punishment. The Precrime system creates a profound form of informational inequality in which a select few—the Police Commissioner and certain army officials—have exclusive access to that valuable precognitive data. The police thus have a great deal of relatively unchecked power, while the detained have no opportunity to challenge their imprisonment. In the interest of creating the safest society possible, Precrime has severely trampled on values like liberty and justice.

Anderton’s own experience with being found guilty of a crime

he hasn't yet committed suggests that precognition could be used more effectively to support both security and liberty without one overriding the other. Towards the beginning of the story, Anderton learns that two of the precogs' reports state that he will murder Kaplan, a retired general who is plotting to destroy Precrime in order to seize greater power for the army. The other report (the minority report) indicates that he will *not* murder Kaplan—that, "Having been informed that he would commit a murder, Anderton would change his mind and not do so. The preview of the murder had cancelled out the murder." And, of course, this is exactly what happens, at least at first. After learning about his own unrealized plans to commit a murder, Anderton resolves to not let that happen. This moment highlights how the precogs could support both safety and liberty if only people had access to the predictions about themselves—safety, because their predictions prevent a murder, and liberty, because their predictions give Anderton a chance to change his mind.

Although Anderton affirms that the minority report is "absolutely correct"—he did resolve to not murder Kaplan after gaining access to the precognitive data—he ultimately decides "to murder Kaplan anyhow." He changes his mind because he learns that Kaplan plans to read the minority report to the public at an army rally in order to discredit the system and gain more power for the army. In order to make the majority report correct, and to thereby protect the system that he created, Anderton murders Kaplan.

At an earlier point in the story, Lisa states, "Perhaps a lot of the people in the camps are like you," adding, "We could have told them the truth." In his speech at the rally, Kaplan reinforces this idea: "As soon as precognitive information is obtained, it cancels itself out [...] The very act of possessing this data renders it spurious." If Kaplan's statement is true, then Precrime could cancel all crime without detaining anyone simply by sharing the relevant precognitive data with each would-be criminal. Even if it is incorrect—for it does not account for free will—sharing such data would put individuals in a better position to make informed decisions about their future. Interestingly, Anderton feels that sharing precognitive data with would-be criminals "would have been too great a risk." Indeed, people may still decide, as Anderton does, to commit a crime, even to murder someone. At the end of the day, liberty entails some degree of unavoidable risk. But on the other side of the equation, security can severely infringe on liberty.



### FATE AND FREE WILL

In "The Minority Report," Dick considers the ancient ideas of fate and free will within a futuristic context, presenting three **precogs** who see into the future, an ability called precognition. On the basis of precognitive data, Precrime officers apprehend and detain would-be criminals before they commit any crimes. While the

story initially appears to invalidate free will by establishing the validity of precognition, on closer inspection it actually affirms free will through the character of Anderton. Dick presents a world in which precognition and free will are mutually interactive and influential, in which both co-exist and converge upon the same events. The precogs record—but do not determine—what will happen. They report certain future possibilities and facts, while Anderton subjectively influences and experiences the events and thoughts corresponding to those predictions. Ultimately, the story argues that both fate (or precognition) and free will have a significant impact on human life.

The precogs accurately foresee the future, demonstrating the validity of precognition. They consistently provide accurate predictions, as evidenced by the virtual elimination of all major crimes. Their reports give the police an enormous advantage: knowledge of a crime approximately a week before it will be committed. Simply put, if precognition didn't work, then Precrime wouldn't be so effective at crime reduction. Even in Anderton's case, the precognitive data is correct. Despite his initial refusal to believe the prediction, he ultimately murders Kaplan, "as the majority report had asserted." While there has been but one deliberate murder in the last five years, a critic may nonetheless point to this instance as indicative of a deeper failure. However, this rare lapse was due to a failure of enforcement, not prediction. Precrime knew the victim's name, the location, and "the exact moment" of the crime, but the criminal was still able to commit murder and evade them. This doesn't invalidate the precognitive data, but begins to show that there is more at play than fate alone.

The story ultimately suggests that both fate and free will dictate the course of a human life. In the world of the novel, there are multiple time-paths—similar to alternate endings in a video game—that can have different outcomes due to either precognition or free will winning out over one another. Precrime would not work unless individuals were able to alter the future. Utilizing their free will, Precrime officers avert one time-path, in which a crime occurs, in favor of another, in which the crime never happens. This is possible because the future is not the manifestation of a singular, predetermined outcome; instead, it contains multiple time-paths. While hiding out in a hotel, Anderton listens to a radio broadcast, which explains the theory of multiple time-paths: "If only one time-path existed, precognitive information would be of no importance, since no possibility would exist, in possessing this information, of altering the future." But Precrime officers are able to alter the future by acting upon precognitive reports.

The multiple time-paths correspond to different choices that individuals can make. Consequently, the precog's reports, which describe the various time-paths, are rarely unanimous. In Anderton's case, the precogs generate three reports because he changes his mind twice about murdering Kaplan over the

course of the story. The first report foresees his decision to murder Kaplan in a time-path that was discarded. The second report sees him changing his mind in response to reading the first report. The third report responds to Anderton's final decision that he must, in fact, murder Kaplan in order to protect Precrime's reputation and prove that the system works. The reports influence Anderton's future by providing him with information about that future in the present. At the same time, the reports incorporate their own future influence upon Anderton. More specifically, the later reports show how Anderton changes his mind as he reads and interprets the precognitive data as a whole. The precogs' forecasts thus change the informational context within which Anderton exercises his free will, but they do not eliminate his freedom to choose. Anderton acts as the third report said he would, but his decision follows from his own reasoning. His case thus casts doubt upon Kaplan's assertion that access to precognitive data cancels out the future act to which it corresponds. Anderton's foreknowledge may have initially cancelled out the act of murder, but he ultimately *chose* that act. Therefore, whether the previewed event happens or not depends upon the decisions of the relevant actors.

The Precrime system cannot perfectly predict the future because free will at least partially escapes prediction. This suggests that free will is ultimately, if marginally, the more powerful force. While the precognitive reports do accurately report Anderton's major decisions, they do not record every detail pertaining to his future. For example, they do not mention that Anderton and Lisa will leave the planet for an off-world colony, which they do at the end of the story. This suggests that at least some of the unrecorded details of the future are the product of unknown or unexpected decisions. In other words, precognition is not perfectly omniscient because the future is an evolving creation that is influenced by spontaneous decisions.



## TRUST AND PARANOIA

In "The Minority Report," Dick examines trust and paranoia through his protagonist, Anderton, a Police Commissioner who thinks he is being framed for a crime. Insecure from the start, Anderton becomes paranoid after reading on a precognitive card that he will murder a stranger named Kaplan within a week. Quick to assume the worst in others, he imagines that his new assistant, Witwer, is working with the Senate to oust him as Commissioner. He also entertains the possibility that his wife, Lisa, is involved in the plot. Throughout much of the story, Anderton is uncertain as to what is real and true. He scrutinizes other characters' statements and motives, as he struggles to understand the precognitive dynamic in which he is entangled. Although Anderton is incorrect on certain points, his paranoia is not mere subjective delusion. In fact, it is rational and

necessary, as he is the target of a complex plot involving mind-bending technology and secretive authority figures. In showing the rational basis of paranoia, Dick encourages the reader to be suspicious and investigatory like Anderton and to question bureaucratic structures with powerful technologies.

Throughout the story, Anderton reacts with suspicion to the other characters. "The Minority Report" establishes Anderton's paranoid mental state in the introductory scene through his insecure reaction to Witwer, who is more physically attractive and confident than Anderton. After reading the majority report, Anderton suspects that Witwer is working with the Senate to frame him: "This creature is out to get my job. The Senate is getting at me *through* him." Anderton even thinks Lisa may be involved in the plot. Shocked that she invites Witwer to dinner, Anderton wonders to himself, "What were the chances of his wife's friendliness being benign, accidental?" His paranoid inner dialogue continues: "Did a covert awareness pass between them? He couldn't tell. God, he was beginning to suspect everybody—not only his wife and Witwer, but a dozen members of his staff." Fleming, who appears following the car crash Kaplan staged, seems helpful at first, taking advantage of Anderton's paranoia. He provides Anderton with money and a new identity so that he may evade the police and avoid being sent to a detention camp. Fleming tells Anderton that Lisa is behind the plot, and that "Kaplan is working directly with Witwer." Although Anderton already suspects his wife, he does not necessarily believe Fleming's claim that she is "back of the whole thing." Later, when Fleming attempts to murder Lisa, Anderton stops him. However, "It seemed strange that Anderton waited so long" to do so—an instance of his pervasive uncertainty.

While Anderton's paranoia certainly leads him to suspect the wrong people, his paranoia proves helpful as it attunes him to the fact that something is terribly wrong and that he is somehow in the center of it all. His paranoia forces him to think critically about the people he comes in contact with—his own wife included—to ultimately piece together the plot against him. His paranoia, though distracting at times, acts as a kind of intuition that spurs Anderton to discover the truth and question the world around him. After his initial conversation with Kaplan, Anderton even questions his own sanity: "Perhaps he was trapped in a closed, meaningless time-circle with no motive and no beginning. In fact, he was almost ready to concede that he was the victim of a weary, neurotic fantasy, spawned by growing insecurity." Given the pressures and complexities of the situation, Anderton's response is understandable. In fact, the attentive reader will see that such a scenario is entirely possible. In the world of "The Minority Report," readers learn that they must scrutinize not only the statements and motives of every character, but also their own perceptions of what is real and true. In this way, they become like Anderton, learning that it is rational to be paranoid and to

question everything.

Dick introduces various data points—Anderton’s experiences, suspicions, and theories; other characters’ statements and actions; different interpretations of the precognitive reports—which contradict or modify each other. He does so without always providing clarifications through an all-knowing hero or authoritative explanations. For example, does precognitive information cancel out the future act to which it corresponds, as Kaplan suggests in his speech? Neither Anderton nor Dick explicitly answer this question, thus readers are left to consider it for themselves. Even when Dick does provide authoritative statements, the reader cannot trust what he says. Indeed, Dick presents, overturns, modifies, and, in certain cases, reinstates various hypotheses over the course of the story. In this way, he produces a reader who is suspicious and paranoid, and who cannot say with absolute certainty what has just transpired. Ultimately, Dick is not interested in providing tidy explanations, but in provoking the reader to question reality.



## SYMBOLS

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



## PRECOGS

In “The Minority Report,” the precogs—three mutants that can predict the future, thus helping police stop crime before it happens—symbolize the dehumanization that can occur within a highly controlled, technological society that values safety over liberty. At the beginning of the story, Anderton gives his new assistant, Witwer, a tour of the Precrime facility. Dick describes the precogs as “almost lost to view in the maze of wiring” that connects them to the computer system. Imprisoned by wiring and clamps, the three precogs lack free will and autonomy, passively relaying precognitive information without understanding it. The precogs’ enslavement highlights the dehumanized condition of citizens in Anderton’s society. Would-be-criminals are physically detained in detention camps a week before they’ve even committed a crime, without so much as a warning or a trial, while every citizen’s future is scanned for possible criminal activity. While this system has virtually eradicated crime—there’s only been one murder in the last five years—it also strips citizens of a trial by jury and other personal liberties. Even though these citizens are technically innocent, locked up before they’ve even committed a crime, they’re treated more like monsters rather than human beings.

The precogs also symbolize the average citizen’s mental state, as citizens are kept in the dark regarding the inner workings of the government and police. Dick describes the precogs as

“Vegetable-like,” with minds that “[are] dull, confused, lost in shadows.” In regards to the precognitive data they generate, Anderton comments, “They don’t understand any of it, but *we* do.” This also holds true for the members society, who do not fully understand the technological apparatus that has a potentially absolute power over their fate—only the higher-ups at Precrime and in the army have a keen understanding of how the precogs work. Citizens thus do not grasp the significance of the minority report—a kind of majority rule when two out of the three precogs deem someone guilty of a future crime, thus marking a person eligible to be sent to a detention camp. While Kaplan, a retired army general, seeks to exploit this widespread ignorance in order to destroy Precrime and gain more power for the army, Anderton does everything in his power to make sure that Precrime stays credible in the public consciousness. Given the ease with which the two powerful men are able to manipulate public perceptions of Precrime and the precogs, the reader is left to wonder if the public in this story has not become somewhat like the unaware precogs: playthings in the hands of unaccountable authority figures.



## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Houghton Mifflin edition of *Selected Stories of Philip K. Dick* published in 2013.

### Section 1 Quotes

“You’ve probably grasped the basic legalistic drawback to precrime methodology. We’re taking in individuals who have broken no law.”

**Related Characters:** John Anderton (speaker), Witwer

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 224

### Explanation and Analysis

After meeting Witwer, Anderton gives him a brief tour of the Precrime facility. As they walk, they discuss various practical and theoretical aspects of Precrime, including “the basic legalistic drawback” of the system: that the would-be criminals locked away in detention camps are technically innocent. Legalistically, this is a major strike against the justice of the system Anderton has created. On the one hand, Precrime has virtually eliminated major felonies, including murder, which is a remarkable feat. On the other hand, though, it has accomplished this by detaining individuals who have not (yet) committed a crime without giving them so much as a trial or the opportunity to change

the course of their futures. Even though Anderton is aware of this “drawback,” he is fairly flippant about it, seeing it as a necessary tradeoff in order to maintain such a safe society. As the story unfolds, though, Anderton will be forced to experience firsthand what it’s like being charged for a crime he hasn’t actually committed yet, forcing him—and readers—to grapple with whether the Precrime system is really fair.

## Section 2 Quotes

☝☝ “I’m being framed—deliberately and maliciously. This creature is out to get my job. The Senate is getting at me through him.”

**Related Characters:** John Anderton (speaker), Witwer, Lisa

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 229

### Explanation and Analysis

After reading the precognitive report with his name listed as a murderer, Anderton immediately believes that he is being framed, discarding the possibility that the report is true and that he is really going to commit such a crime. He suspects everyone around him of being in on the plot, including Witwer and Lisa. His initial theory, which he shares with Lisa in this passage, is that the Senate is working to oust him from his position as Police Commissioner. To Lisa, Anderton’s words sound like the ramblings of a paranoid madman, but Anderton is actually not all that far off. As Anderton—and the reader—figures out throughout the story, it is not the Senate but another government entity, the army, that is orchestrating Anderton’s fall from grace. While Anderton’s paranoia does lead him astray throughout the story by prompting him to suspect the wrong people, it does at least force him to question everyone and everything. It’s this kind of critical thinking that helps Anderton realize that something fishy is going on and piece together the plot.

## Section 5 Quotes

☝☝ “...unanimity of all three precogs is a hoped-for but seldom-achieved phenomenon, acting-Commissioner Witwer explains. It is much more common to obtain a collaborative majority report of two precogs, plus a minority report of some slight variation, usually with reference to time and place, from the third mutant. This is explained by the theory of multiple-futures. If only one time-path existed, precognitive information would be of no importance, since no possibility would exist, in possessing this information, of altering the future.”

**Related Characters:** John Anderton, Witwer

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 240

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Anderton is in hiding at a hotel and listening to a radio announcement. The announcement warns the public that Anderton is on the loose, and provides an explanation of how Precrime utilizes the precogs to prevent crime, helping to fill in the gaps for both Anderton and the reader. As part of that explanation, the broadcast explains the theory of multiple futures or time-paths. According to this theory, the future is not pre-determined. If it were, Precrime officers would not be able to utilize precognitive data and their free will to alter the future by preventing crimes. The idea of multiple time-paths points to the tension between fate (in this case, precognition) and free will in the world of the story, as there is a constant push and pull between both of them.

## Section 7 Quotes

☝☝ “Perhaps a lot of the people in the camps are like you.” “No,” Anderton insisted. But he was beginning to feel uneasy about it, too. “I was in a position to see the card, to get a look at the report. That’s what did it.” “But—” Lisa gestured significantly. “Perhaps all of them would have reacted that way. We could have told them the truth.” “It would have been too great a risk,” he answered stubbornly.

**Related Characters:** John Anderton, Lisa (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 245

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Lisa and Anderton are flying away from the police station, where Anderton has just uncovered the minority report. As they fly, Lisa suggests that every would-be criminal should have been given access to their own precognitive data, because this may have deterred them from committing the crime they're being charged with. After all, that's what happened to Anderton, at least at first: his ability to see that he was going to commit a crime strengthened his resolve to not commit that crime.

Surprisingly, Anderton dismisses this suggestion as irrelevant to the present task, as well as too great a risk. This is interesting, because it's reasonable to think that Anderton, armed with all of this firsthand experience, would recognize that some changes need to be made at Precrime. That Anderton answers Lisa "stubbornly" suggests that he's not open to criticism or suggestions, and that he's attached to the version of Precrime that he founded and now heads. However, the story seems to implicitly side with Lisa, suggesting through Anderton's example that would-be criminals may have decided to act differently if they were given access to their precognitive data. The crux of Lisa and Anderton's argument here is a conflict of values—namely, security and liberty. Proud of the safe society his agency has created, Anderton values security and safety over everything, even if that means locking away some people unjustly. While Lisa demonstrates unflinching loyalty to Precrime throughout the story, she hints here that there needs to be more of a give and take between security and liberty, maintaining a safe society while preserving people's basic liberties.

☞ “You’ve convinced me that you’re innocent. I mean, it’s obvious that you *won’t* commit a murder. But you must realize now that the original report, the majority report, was *not a fake*. Nobody falsified it. Ed Witwer didn’t create it. There’s no plot against you, and there never was. If you’re going to accept this minority report as genuine you’ll have to accept the majority one, also.”

**Related Characters:** Lisa (speaker), Witwer, John Anderton

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 245

### Explanation and Analysis

While they are flying the ship away from the police station, Lisa attempts to dissuade Anderton of some of his paranoid suspicions. From the start, Anderton has suspected Witwer of being involved in the plot against him, but Lisa presents him with two types of evidence against this idea: first, having spoken to Witwer, she is convinced that he is a good man who wants what is best for Precrime. Second, she uses logic to demonstrate that the majority report was correct and not a fake. She highlights that if Anderton believes in the validity of the minority report, and the minority report and the majority report are part of the same precognitive data set, then the majority report must also be valid. Lisa's explanation of the majority report being true means that Anderton really was going to murder Kaplan—no one manipulated the data or planted the card with Anderton's name on it.

In this passage and throughout the story, Lisa serves as the voice of reason that balances Anderton's frantic paranoia. However, even though Anderton has channeled his suspicions towards the wrong person, he is keenly aware of the fact that there is some sort of plot going on. Armed with Lisa's clearheaded and logical assessment of the situation, Anderton begins to piece together why he would possibly murder Kaplan—if the majority report is, indeed, valid—and how Kaplan might be part of the plot at hand.

### Section 9 Quotes

☞ “But there can be no valid knowledge about the future. As soon as precognitive information is obtained, *it cancels itself out*. The assertion that this man will commit a future crime is paradoxical. The very act of possessing this data renders it spurious. In every case, without exception, the report of the three police precogs has invalidated their own data. If no arrests had been made, there would still have been no crimes committed.”

**Related Characters:** Kaplan (speaker), John Anderton

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 257

### Explanation and Analysis

In his speech at the army rally, Kaplan compares the

minority report to the majority report, and announces that Anderton is innocent—a calculated move to destabilize and discredit the entire Precrime system. Adding insult to injury, he further declares that every would-be criminal who has been detained is innocent. The basis of this inflammatory declaration is the idea that accessing precognitive data—that is, learning of future time-paths—automatically changes the future, such that the precognitive data is no longer relevant. If this is true, then the Precrime system is perpetuating a massive injustice by locking up all of these would-be criminals. However, the story appears to validate the precognitive dynamic of Precrime, for the third and final precog report is correct, at least in respect to the broader trajectory of the events.

Kaplan is staunchly against Precrime and depicts it as stepping on the toes of innocent citizens' liberties (though Kaplan does have an ulterior motive in making these arguments, wanting to accrue more power for the army), while Anderton is fiercely loyal to Precrime and is wholeheartedly dedicated to safety and security, even if that means technically innocent people get locked up in the process. In the end, the story seems to align itself with Lisa, advocating for more of a balance between security and liberty.

## Section 10 Quotes

“[Each report was different](#),” Anderton concluded. “Each was unique. But two of them agreed on one point. If left free, *I would kill Kaplan*. That created the illusion of a majority report. Actually, that’s all it was—an illusion. ‘Donna’ and ‘Mike’ previewed the same event—but in two totally different time-paths, occurring under totally different situations.”

**Related Characters:** John Anderton (speaker), Kaplan, Witwer

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 259-260

### Explanation and Analysis

Here, Witwer and Anderton have a final conversation in which Anderton explains to his replacement what has just transpired. Anderton’s explanation also ties up loose ends for the reader, revealing that instead of there being one minority report, there were actually three. Each report was unique and previewed a different time-path. And although two of the reports foresaw Anderton murdering Kaplan—giving the “illusion of a majority report”—they did so on two different time-paths and under different circumstances. Anderton’s explanation suggests that every report should be studied and considered on its own, but it also points to the power of free will and choice. In each instance, Anderton had the choice to change the course of his future. Though the story presents a constant push and pull between fate (precognition) and free will throughout the story, it seems to ultimately suggest that free will is the more powerful of the two forces.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

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

## SECTION 1

Anderton shakes Witwer's hand warmly, but he privately worries that he's getting "Bald and fat and old." Witwer is young and cocky, and he walks around Anderton's office like he owns the place. The two men discuss the way that Anderton's agency, Precrime, operates, and Witwer notes that the Senate is happy with how things are going. Wary of Witwer's confidence and obvious ambition, Anderton explains that Witwer is going to be his assistant until Anderton chooses to retire—which could be this year or 10 years from now. Anderton explains that he founded Precrime, and he wants to be clear that there will be a spot for him at the agency for as long as he wants it. With a "guileless" expression, Witwer affirms that Anderton is the boss and asks for a tour of the office.

As they walk through the office, Anderton and Witwer discuss the basics of how Precrime works: with the help of "precog mutants," Precrime has managed to virtually eliminate punishments such as jail time and fines—punishments, Witwer chimes in, that were historically unsuccessful at putting an end to crime. Anderton explains the "legalistic drawback" of the whole system: Precrime is detaining people who are technically innocent because they haven't actually committed a crime. "Would-be criminals" are shipped off to a detention camp before they have the opportunity to break the law, thus rendering society free of crime.

Witwer shockingly beholds the "Vegetable-like" precogs. He is somewhat taken aback by their "deformed" and enslaved bodies, which are almost lost behind the tangled mess of wires and clamps that connect them to the precognitive computer system.

*In the presence of Witwer—who is young, handsome, and confident—Anderton becomes painfully aware of his own perceived shortcomings and is immediately on the defensive. Even though Anderton seems to imply that Witwer is after the man's job, Witwer's expression is "guileless," or innocent, forcing the reading to question whether or not Anderton is just being paranoid and overreacting. Nevertheless, Witwer's clear arrogance and ambition raises the possibility that he might stop at nothing to climb to the corporate ladder, dethroning Anderton at the top.*



*Precrime has been incredibly effective at reducing crime, creating a remarkably safe society. However, Anderton is keenly aware that Precrime has a major downside: Precrime officers are imprisoning people who have not yet committed the crime they're charged with—that is, people who are technically innocent. With this explanation of Precrime, Anderton gestures to the tension between liberty and safety that runs throughout the story, suggesting that his society is willing to infringe on people's personal liberties in the interest of safety.*



*The precogs are imprisoned and manipulated, treated more like objects than people. As precogs are the basis of Precrime, this maltreatment begins to paint Precrime itself in a negative light. The precogs are also a clear symbol of the conflict between safety and liberty in Anderton's society: the precogs are essential to maintaining such a safe society, since it's their predictions (precognition) that picks out would-be criminals. However, the precogs' own liberties are clearly being trampled, and their predictions step on the toes of other citizens' liberties, too, by allowing the police to whisk would-be criminals off to a detention camp before they've even committed a crime and without so much as a trial.*



Anderton proudly informs Witwer that Precrime has reduced felonies by 99.8 percent, and that the last murder was five years ago. “Quite an impressive record,” Witwer agrees. Going through the precog cards, Anderton’s lips tighten as he sees his own name listed as a murderer.

*Although Anderton is aware of the “legalistic drawback” of the system, the clear note of pride in his voice as he rattles off statistics reveals his belief that safety is far more important and worth preserving than liberty. However, Anderton’s shocking discovery of his own culpability in a future crime begins to call into question whether or not this system is really fair. Anderton is suddenly displaced from his safe perch at the top of Precrime and thrust in the shoes of would-be criminals who haven’t even committed a crime yet and are still considered guilty.*



## SECTION 2

Anderton and Witwer walk past the Precrime outer office. Inside, Lisa—Anderton’s “slim and attractive young wife”—engages Page in an animated debate on policy. Witwer’s eyes flicker as he sees Lisa. Worrying about his impending apprehension, Anderton begins to think he is being set up: someone in Precrime may have planted the card, or perhaps the data itself was manipulated. In any event, he has 24 hours before the army receives its duplicate copy of the data.

*Just as Witwer’s confidence and youth immediately put Anderton on his guard at the beginning of the story, Lisa’s physical attractiveness seems to fuel Anderton’s insecurity in this passage. Anderton is quick to assume there’s some sort of plot to frame him, immediately dismissing the idea that he actually is going to commit a crime—in other words, when the crime has to do with him, rather than any old citizen, Anderton is quick to assume that the system must be flawed. This is actually one of the benefits of Anderton’s mounting paranoia, as it leads him to immediately sniff out trouble, even if it’s unclear who is behind it and why.*



Noticing Witwer’s “admiring scrutiny,” Lisa introduces herself, asking him where he is from. Observing their friendly interaction, Anderton wonders, “Did a covert awareness pass between them?” When Lisa casually invites Witwer to their house for dinner, Anderton leaves the room in a panic. “What on earth has come over you?” she asks as she catches up to him. “I’m getting out,” Anderton tells her, explaining that he is being framed, and that the Senate and Witwer are behind it. Admitting he is now suspicious of her as well, Anderton informs his wife that he will flee the planet for an off-world colony.

*On the mere basis of a look, Anderton imagines that Lisa and Witwer secretly acknowledge they know each other, illustrating his growing paranoia. Though he doesn’t even have a shred of concrete evidence, Anderton is quick to concoct a complex plot involving Witwer, Lisa, and the Senate to remove him as Police Commissioner. Just as Anderton was quick to believe that there must be a wrench in the Precrime system, he’s also quick to suspect his wife of major betrayal. In other words, Anderton’s paranoia makes him question everyone and everything—which, the story will go on to show, isn’t such a bad thing after all.*



Frustrated that his wife does not believe him, Anderton thrusts the card at Lisa. Reading it over, she says, “You didn’t look at it closely enough, darling.” Having assumed the card indicated he would murder Witwer, Anderton is surprised to see a name he does not know: Leopold Kaplan.

*Anderton’s paranoia often clouds his judgment throughout the story—and in this passage, even clouds his eyesight, as he fails to notice the key detail of the name of the person he’s supposedly going to murder. Meanwhile, Lisa serves as a voice of reason to his paranoia, which begins to paint her in a more favorable and credible light. For much of the story, readers will be pulled along in the ebb and flow of Anderton’s constantly shifting trust as he uncovers who is against him and who is on his side.*



## SECTION 3

Anderton returns to his house and frantically begins to pack, worrying that it was a mistake to show the precog card to Lisa. Hearing a floor board creak behind him, he turns to find a man pointing a pistol at him. “Didn’t she even hesitate?” Anderton asks, assuming the man is a police offer that Witwer and Lisa have sent. But, much to Anderton’s surprise, the man takes Anderton to see Kaplan.

Kaplan—an old man with thinning hair and “bright, bird-like eyes”—greeted Anderton with curiosity and perplexity, asking him, “what’s the matter with you? Are you hopelessly insane? How could you kill a man you’ve never met?” Thinking of how to respond, Anderton suddenly realizes that the army must immediately process their duplicate cards, which is why Kaplan knows already. Pleading his innocence, Anderton tells Kaplan that Witwer and Lisa are “acting in concert, apparently.” Kaplan admits that this is a possibility, but explains that he simply cannot risk having Anderton run free. He directs his men to take Anderton to the police.

*Again, even though Anderton has no concrete evidence justifying his suspicions, he immediately—and almost calmly—attributes the intruder’s presence to Lisa and Witwer. This, of course, is where Anderton’s paranoia veers into unhelpful and unproductive territory, as it leads him to jump to conclusions without evidence.*



*As readers will eventually discover, Kaplan is not as innocent as he seems and is actually pulling strings from the shadows like a puppeteer. Still, though, he appears to be genuinely curious and uncertain about Anderton, which suggests that Kaplan didn’t manipulate the data to say that Anderton was going to commit a murder. In other words, Kaplan’s fear and uncertainty in this passage see, to suggest that the precognitive data is correct, and Anderton is going to commit a crime—even if he’s certain that he won’t.*



## SECTION 4

On the drive back to town, Anderton mulls over his increasingly complicated situation. One of Kaplan’s men interrupts his thoughts, asking, “For the first time in history, Precrime goes wrong? [...] Maybe there’ve been other innocent people—right?” Beginning to feel overwhelmed, Anderton admits the possibility and returns to his thoughts. He wonders if “he was trapped in a closed, meaningless time-circle with no motive and no beginning.” Contemplating his own sanity, he further considers the possibility that he is “the victim of a weary, neurotic fantasy, spawned by growing insecurity.”

Anderton is jolted from his thoughts by squealing tires. The car crashes head-on into a bread truck, which has suddenly materialized before them. Suffering acute pain from a blow to the head, Anderton vaguely realizes that a man is dragging him from the car. The heavyset man introduces himself as Fleming. With sirens wailing in the distance, Fleming hurriedly gives Anderton a package with money and new identification. “This whole business was worked out carefully [...] The card was set to pop the day Witwer appeared,” Fleming explains. “Who’s behind it?” asks Anderton. “Your wife,” Fleming responds.

*Here, the story returns to the question of if there are innocent people in the detention camps, convicted of a crime they have no intention of committing, just like Anderton. Meanwhile, Anderton’s inner dialogue is becoming increasingly frantic and paranoid, as he no longer trusts his own perception of reality. He also raises the possibility of a “time-circle.” Though this idea is never again explicitly explained or addressed, it reminds readers of the complex relationship between fate (precognition) and free will in the story—it’s not always clear which force is at play and which will win out.*



*Fleming complicates Anderton’s understanding of who he can trust—someone close to him, like his wife, might be conspiring against him, while someone supposedly against him, like one of Kaplan’s men, might actually be on his side. What makes Fleming’s assertion about Lisa’s culpability so impactful is that Anderton already harbored his own suspicions about Lisa prior to this moment, forcing readers to seriously consider that Lisa may, in fact, be the villain.*



## SECTION 5

Anderton flees the scene and catches a bus to a hotel in a rough part of town. Going through the packet, he finds a card that reads: “The existence of a majority logically implies a corresponding minority.” Later, turning on the radio inside his room, he hears a Precrime radio announcement. The announcer warns the public of Anderton’s criminal status and explains how Precrime functions, including the multiple-futures theory: “If only one time-path existed, precognitive information would be of no importance, since no possibility would exist, in possessing this information, of altering the future.” Suddenly realizing that only two of the **precogs** foresaw him killing Kaplan, Anderton resolves to examine the minority report.

*The card that Fleming gives to Anderton is a significant clue, as it prompts him to think about the minority report. The radio announcement, which provides a theoretical explanation for the story’s precognitive dynamics, establishes why Precrime works at all: if the future was predetermined, then the police could not alter it. This further suggests that if the police can use their free will to alter the future, then so can anyone else, provided they access the relevant data. Just like the tension between liberty and safety that runs throughout the story, the Precrime system hinges on a constant push and pull between free will and fate (precognition).*



## SECTION 6

Anderton calls Page, who agrees to let him into the **precog** room. “You’re out of your mind. Why in hell did you come back?” Page asks as Anderton enters the room. Anderton quickly turns to the task at hand, retrieving the two half-hour tapes that constitute the minority report. “The preview of the murder had canceled out the murder,” he realizes. Trembling in anticipation, Anderton copies the report, but then thinks to himself that Witwer has surely already seen the report, so showing it to him will not prove Anderton’s innocence. As Anderton knocks himself for his stupidity, Lisa enters, declaring, “You damn fool!” Dismayed by his lack of caution, she offers to give him a ride away from the station before Witwer sees him.

*Here, Anderton thinks critically about the dynamics of free will and fate (precognition) that rule his world. He highlights how his ability to “preview” his own crime by having access to the precognitive data thanks to his position as the head of Precrime actually “canceled out the murder”—in other words, once he knew he was going to commit a crime, he resolved to not let that happen. In the thick of anxiety and chaos, Anderton doesn’t consider in this moment the implications of this statement: that other people may have also resolved to not commit their predicted crimes had they been given access to the precognitive data about themselves. This reasonable possibility means, then, that there are people in the detention camps who should have been given the chance to change before being locked away.*



## SECTION 7

As they fly over war-ravaged countryside, Anderton and Lisa discuss the minority report. Anderton admits that it has happened “A great many times.” “Perhaps a lot of the people in the camps are like you,” Lisa suggests, adding, “We could have told them the truth.” Anderton stubbornly counters that doing so would have been far too risky. He decides to take the report to Kaplan, who may help him.

*It is significant that Anderton’s situation is not the first case of a minority report. This shows that, as Lisa suggests, there are individuals in the camp who could have changed their minds in response to receiving precognitive data—meaning that their imprisonment is unwarranted and unjust. Anderton insists that his “is a unique case,” but it is only unique because he has the privilege of accessing the data, unlike the rest of the would-be criminals.*



Her anxiety growing, Lisa lights a cigarette and attempts to counter Anderton's paranoia: "If you're going to accept this minority report as genuine you'll have to accept the majority one, also." She continues, explaining that Witwer is a good man who wants Precrime to succeed. If he were involved in a plot, he would have destroyed the minority report, but he does not know about the report. "You have to be taken in—if Precrime is to survive," she pleads. When Anderton refuses to sacrifice his liberty, Lisa pulls a gun, forcing him to return to the station.

*In this passage, Lisa explains that the majority report and the minority report are part of the same data set, which means that if one is corrupted, so is the other. Since Anderton believes the minority report is correct, he must also accept the validity of the majority report. Furthermore, if the majority report is valid, then Witwer could not have created it as part of a plot. By forcing her husband to return to the station at gunpoint—and thus sacrificing his liberty—Lisa demonstrates her devotion to Precrime and the greater societal good (near-total safety) it ensures.*



Fleming, who has been hiding on the ship, suddenly leaps forward and knocks away Lisa's gun as she screams. Asking Anderton for the precognitive tape reel, he proceeds to lay out the plot: "Kaplan is working directly with Witwer," and "[Lisa] was back of the whole thing." As Lisa protests the charge, Fleming crouches behind her and wraps his hands around her neck, beginning to suffocate her. After a pause, Anderton finally knocks out Fleming.

*The identification card represents a turning-point discovery for Anderton. On its basis, Anderton concludes that Fleming is working for Kaplan, and that Kaplan planned the bread truck incident so that Anderton would not be arrested—for whatever reason, Kaplan seems to want Anderton accessible and not locked away, or at least not yet.*



Searching Fleming's unconscious body, Anderton finds identification, which states that Fleming is an Army Major in the Internal Intelligence Department of Military Information. Inferring Fleming's connection to Kaplan, Anderton realizes that Lisa is innocent after all. Calling back to the station, Anderton speaks to a surprised Witwer, insisting he close down the **precog** room. But Witwer explains that Kaplan was just there to copy the reports.

*Earlier, the story mentioned a system of checks and balances between Precrime and the army—of which Kaplan is apparently at the head. Kaplan's involvement in this plot, then, suggests that he may be trying to take down Precrime to gain more power for the army.*



## SECTION 8

Back at the station, Anderton informs Witwer that Page is a spy who has been passing information to Kaplan. Kaplan—who just left the station in an army truck—now has the minority report. "He has the information that proves the majority report obsolete. He can break the Precrime system," Anderton explains. After studying the data tapes for clues, Anderton hears the sound of an army rally outside.

*Kaplan is now in possession of the minority report, which he can use to reassume greater policing powers for the army. He can use it to strike a deal with Precrime in private, or to discredit Precrime in public. Seeing the rally, Anderton correctly anticipates the latter option.*



Viewing the spectacle through the window, Anderton surmises that Kaplan will read the minority report at the rally to discredit Precrime in the eyes of the public. "I'm going to have to fulfill the publicized report. I'm going to have to kill Kaplan. That's the only way we can keep them from discrediting us," Anderton announces.

*Significantly, Kaplan and Anderton have both assumed, up to this point, that Anderton will not actually murder Kaplan. However, Anderton now changes his mind, sacrificing his own safety—and Kaplan's—for the sake of the greater good. Since the public knows of the majority report, Anderton must make it true by killing Kaplan. Doing so will prove Precrime's methodology correct and allow the system to survive.*



## SECTION 9

At the rally, Kaplan is surprised and somewhat nervous to see Anderton, but in good spirits. Having informed Anderton of his intentions to expose Precrime, he invites Anderton to sit on stage with other army officers. To the crowd, Kaplan declares Anderton's innocence, as well as that of everyone ever detained by Precrime, explaining, "As soon as precognitive information is obtained, it *cancels itself out*." After Kaplan finishes his speech, Anderton suddenly raises his gun, aims at Kaplan, and fires. In murdering Kaplan, Anderton has made the majority report correct.

*Kaplan introduces a significant theoretical possibility, suggesting that every crime could be cancelled by obtaining precognitive information. Although Kaplan is really only saying this in order to discredit Precrime and accrue more power for the army, he still raises an interesting possibility, which Anderton never explicitly addresses.*



## SECTION 10

As Anderton and Lisa pack up to leave for Centaurus X, Anderton ties up a few loose threads for Witwer: there were three minority reports, each of which covered a different time-path. In the first, Anderton murders Kaplan after learning of his plot. In the second, Anderton, motivated to keep his job, decides not to murder Kaplan. In the third and correct report, Anderton murders Kaplan in order to save Precrime. Two of the reports agreed he would murder Kaplan, which "created the illusion of a majority report." Anderton warns Witwer that he could experience a similar predicament, for as the new Police Commissioner, he has access to precognitive data.

*As the narrative comes to a close, readers learn that the majority report is an illusion, for each report is unique, and each covered a different time-path. Even the two reports that see Anderton murdering Kaplan—the "majority report"—are quite different, for they see the murders occurring on different time-paths and under different circumstances. Kaplan sought to maintain the second time-path, on which he was not murdered. However, Anderton utilized his intelligence and free will to manifest the third time-path, which corresponds to the story's events. The dizzying dynamics of free will and fate (precognition) in the story suggest that life is a constant push and pull between the two forces, but Anderton's ability to change his mind repeatedly as the story unfolded leaves readers with the sense that free will is ultimately—if marginally—the more powerful of the two forces.*





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To cite this LitChart:

### MLA

Robbins, Nicholas. "The Minority Report." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 18 Nov 2019. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

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Robbins, Nicholas. "The Minority Report." LitCharts LLC, November 18, 2019. Retrieved April 21, 2020. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-minority-report>.

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Dick, Philip K.. *The Minority Report*. Houghton Mifflin. 2013.

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Dick, Philip K.. *The Minority Report*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. 2013.