I’m Probably A Cyborg

In the most basic of psychology classes, students learn that memories are not always what they seem. Numerous biases of the mind have been shown to morph memories into more acceptable forms; a consistency bias, for example, reveals that people will “remember” certain events differently, so that history better conforms to their current beliefs, values, and perspectives. Though I can remember learning to play the piano as a child, and can still play some of my father’s favorite songs, Blade Runner shows that this is not enough to be certain of my humanity - they may, after all, be someone else’s memories. Though we are far from creating human-like entities, the film challenges how we, as a species/society, construct the (artificial) lines between what is acceptably ‘real’ and what is not.

This is the primary question that Blade Runner asks by muddling the line between the artificial and the ‘real’ - if Replicants are mirror images of humans, the viewer can never be certain of which characters are ‘true’ human beings. The Replicants bleed, sweat, and eat like humans, so physical cues cannot be the answer. Descartes’ best known quote is flipped on its head; “I think therefore I am” was originally an argument for humanity, that our lives are not a mere Matrix-like simulation, or a demon-induced dreamworld. It is Pris who speaks the line in this film, indicating that Replicants are just as self-aware and cognizant as human beings; mental cues cannot be the answer, either. Physically and mentally the Replicants are just like we are, and the empathy test shows that they may even have *more* empathy than a typical human, unable to suppress it when provoked with emotionally-tense scenarios, even if they are hypothetical. Ridley Scott’s form mirrors his content, in that he presents this thought through a fictitious film, a medium that is itself twice removed from reality. In this sense, Blade Runner does not challenge the line between simulation and reality, but questions whether or not the line exists at all.