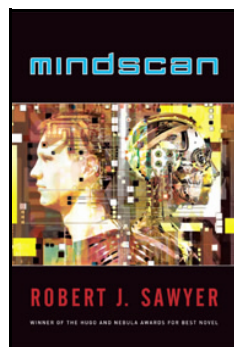


# Mindscan

Robert J. Sawyer

Jake Sullivan has cheated death by discarding his doomed biological body and copying his consciousness into an android form. The new Jake soon finds love, falling for the android version of Karen Bessarian, an elderly author who is no longer constrained by her worn-out body. But are either of them still persons in the eyes of the law?



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The following questions should stimulate an interesting group discussion. Please note that they reveal much of the novel's plot; to preserve your reading pleasure, please don't look at these questions until after you've finished the book.

1. Jake felt guilty because his father had a stroke while they were arguing — but should he blame himself? If Jake had known about his father's medical condition, could this have been avoided? Or will fathers and sons always argue?
2. What do you think of the Immortex Process? Do you think a copy of you is still you? What about an actual surgical transplant of your brain into another body — is it still you? And what about your soul?
3. In Sawyer's future, Canada has become more liberal, the USA more right-wing. Do you agree with his

political forecast? Will the United States make a constitutional amendment against same-sex marriage? Will the drift to the right continue there? Could Pat Buchanan really become president? Has Sawyer gone too far, or not far enough?

4. Part of what drove author Karen Bessarian to undergo the Immortex process was her desire to control her copyrights forever. Does she make an effective case for why this is a good thing? The current term of copyright in the U.S. and Canada is the author's life plus 70 years. Should it be more, or less? Is copyright even a meaningful concept anymore when everything (including possibly even human minds, as in the Immortex process) can be easily duplicated, with or without one's permission? (Note that Jake's own mind is bootlegged in the novel.)
5. Jake never pursued his relationship with Rebecca because of his medical condition. Was this actually a good and noble thing? Or should he have given Rebecca the option, in full knowledge of his possibly terminal condition, to start or not start a relationship?
6. Did you believe the relationship between Jake Sullivan and Karen Bessarian? Was there any reason, other than them both being uploads, that would have drawn them together? Can people from different generations ever truly understand each other?
7. Would you like to live on the moon, with its lower gravity, controlled temperatures, and lack of communicable diseases? Or is it just the luxury aspect of High Eden that's appealing — luxury that is available on Earth, for a price?
8. What do you think of the experiments that were performed by Gabriel Smythe on the illegal copies of Jake's mind? Are those copies really human? If not, what's wrong with gaining valuable knowledge about the human mind by experimenting on these copies?

9. Did the trial scenes seem real to you? Karen is represented by an African-American civil-rights lawyer; are the parallels the lawyer (and Sawyer) draws between this case and previous civil-rights movements apt? Karen has a lot of money to spend on her case; how did this help/hurt her? Did the jury reach a just verdict? Do you agree with its decision?

10. If Karen had won her case, her son never would have inherited a penny. In fact, she would have outlived all her descendants. Do parents owe their children an inheritance?
11. What did you think of the fictitious *Littler v. Carvey* U.S. Supreme Court decision banning abortions after the first two weeks of pregnancy? Is it inevitable that *Roe v. Wade* will be overturned?

12. One of the copies of Jake's mind was transmitted by SETI radio telescope to an alien planet. Is this an advantageous way for humans to explore the galaxy? What if the aliens don't know how to construct bodies for us? Are we still human without them?

13. In the end, even Canada was not liberal enough for some of the novel's characters. What did you think of the Mars colony of "misfits"? Was this just some cosmic form of segregation? Or was it reminiscent of the Pilgrims fleeing persecution?

**Robert J. Sawyer** — “the dean of Canadian science fiction,” according to *The Ottawa Citizen* — is the only writer in history to win the top SF awards in the U.S., Canada, Japan, France, and Spain. His sixteen novels include **Calculating God**, **Frameshift**, **Factoring Humanity**, **The Terminal Experiment**, which won the Science Fiction Writers of America's Nebula Award for Best Novel of 1995, and **Hominids**, which won the Hugo Award for Best Novel of 2003. Born in Ottawa in 1960, Rob lives just west of Toronto with his wife, poet Carolyn Clink.

