



P K D  
o t a k u #30

Photo of Phil © Tessa Dick, by kind permission

December 2013



**Philip K. Dick**  
(1928-1982)

**Great ideas  
with  
Impressive Frequency**

**Happy Birthday Phil  
Issue!!!**

P K D

#30

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**Otaku** is a zine made by fans for fans.

It exists to celebrate, explore and discuss the work of Philip K Dick.

The Otaku Team have enjoyed the writing and ideas of Philip K. Dick for decades, and continue to do so.

The subject of Philip K. Dick benefits from diverse perspectives, opinions, and insights.

In this zine we hope to explore the Novels, Short-Fiction, Non-fiction and ideas of Philip K Dick.

If you would like to contribute (a letter of comment, an article, essay or review) please make your submission in MS Doc, Rtf or Txt form to the Otaku Team c/o Patrick Clark via email:

[pkdotaku@gmail.com](mailto:pkdotaku@gmail.com)

All submissions are welcome and considered, but we cannot promise that all will see print.

Thank you for maintaining the dialogue!

-- The PKD OTAKU Team

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# Editorial

by (guest) ej 'jami' Morgan

30 Issues !?!

Yep, this is indeed **PKD Otaku #30**. Congratulations Patrick Clark on a milestone! With Issue #30 Patrick has matched the production of Paul Williams, hitting thirty issues and surpassing the lifespan of Paul's Philip K Dick Society (PKDS) which ran just short of ten years.\* **PKD Otaku** is about to begin its twelfth year!

What was Patrick thinking as he banged out this numero uno plain print version in 2002? <http://www.philipkdictfans.com/mirror/journals/pkd-otaku/pkd-otaku01.pdf> I suspected he was missing Paul's old PKDS, Greg Lee's then-defunct **Radio Free** 'zine, and no doubt the ever-popular **FDO (For Dickheads Only)** which had ended with a final web-only Y2K issue. I asked if that was true and Patrick replied: "I did indeed begin my PKD zines in direct response to the end of both Dave's **"For Dickheads Only"** and Greg's **"Radio Free PKD."** Zines were prolific back then and I had some experience already having done a few cyberpunk zines. I started a PKD zine in 2000-2001 called **"Simulacrum Meltdown."** I had a lot of material I'd collected over the years that I wanted to make available. Sim Melt was especially heavy on reprints, though there were original pieces, too, but finally it was just too unwieldy. So **PKD Otaku** began as an alternative with the idea that it would be shorter but appear more often. I stole the name, by the way, from some book review."

**"PKD Otaku** was always intended to be a newsletter-style zine, plain and simple. I had hoped it would be one of many such publications with Phil as the focus but such did not happen. I don't imagine I had any inkling that it would someday hit a 30th issue," Patrick recalls.

The brand new **Otaku** opened with a piece by Italian PKD fan Vittorio Curtoni, an email friend of Patrick's. He also

had some left over "Sim Melt" material from Frank Bertrand. Our "late night thoughts" correspondent Frank Bertrand was part of the first issue musing about Time Out of Joint (one of my favs) while listening to Pink Floyd.

Patrick had a dream involving PKD. (A lot of us have!) His went like this: "I was at some out-door site, in some windy field, I believe, and there was a sale going on of 'uncollected PKD manuscripts.' Papers were lined up on the stony ground with rocks holding them down in the wind. Phil was there and was arguing with the person selling the material. He came over to where I was standing and talked with me and some other person— he seemed to know the other person and I was mostly just standing around listening. Turns out he was angry about the sale because it wasn't really PKD material.

It was material incorrectly attributed to Phil. I noticed that one of the documents was a letter to 'Dear Abby' written by 'Joy Dick.' Perry Kinman responded: "Maybe Phil is reaching out to you with some coded message. It may be important to us all." They decided to see who else Phil might have contacted from the dream realm. As we know, quite a few! (What became of that recent effort on the PKD Fbook forum to gather up PKD dreams and "contacts" from other dimensions. We should promote that here!)

Also, in that first nine-page issue, was mention of a short story from **Variable Man**, **"World of Talent"**, where "an autistic boy named Tim, trapped along his own timeline, appearing now as a child, later as an old man, or, again, as a middle-aged man who is clearly the template of Manfred Steiner in Time-Slip."

Autism again, hmmm. Well, you can reach your own conclusions about why this theme recurs, after reading Jasun's piece in this issue and maybe reading (or re-reading) that early story. Patrick concludes with: "If that doesn't sound like Valis/Zebra in action, I don't know what does."

Speaking of Phil's psychological disorders, John Fairchild threw down the gauntlet in Issue #6 with this challenge: "As a matter of fact, if someone thinks they can explain



the psychological basis of *Rautavarra's Case*, I'd like to hear it." As I recall, Fairchild was still ruminating on Rautavarrian's Case at the first Phil Fest in Colorado. Has anyone—Anthony or Jasun, or anyone else—addressed this yet? Also, by Issue #6, Patrick was formatting *PKD Otaku* more like a newsletter with the text in columns and a side banner created by Frank.

Issue #8 opened with a letter by Phil about his novel *VALIS*. He had received correspondence from both Michael Bishop, who apparently liked it, and Ursula LeGuinn, who did not. Embedded in there is the now famous phrase, "Don't worry, Ursula, I'm not 'slowly going crazy in Santa Ana, California', but I will make a feeble attempt to confront this outpouring of genuine human concern..." Phil was actually writing to Richard Geis, February, 1981. If this piques your interest, you can read more: <http://www.philipkdickfans.com/mirror/journals/pkd-otaku/pkd-otaku08.pdf>

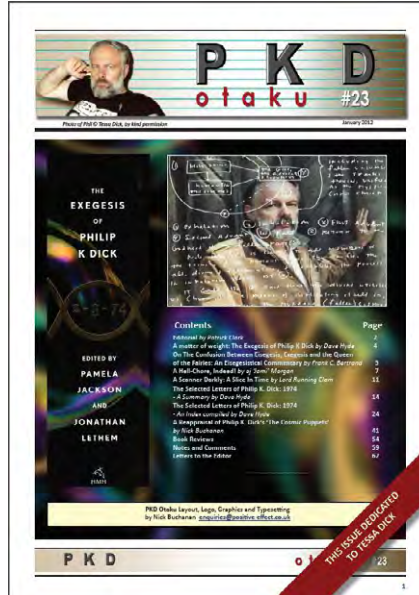
Also in Issue #8, our "in Kipple" Mr. Bertrand, was already writing biting LOCs—this one to Lord Running Clam (aka Dave Hyde) for infringing on his "Late Night" ponderings. Yes, I said ponderings. Frank actually called his pieces "thoughts" and LRC called his "reflections." Late Night Ponderings is best and reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe, you know, IMHO.

Of course, I will provide the link to ALL the past PKD Otakus, now hosted by Dickhead Michael Fisher on our PKDfans.com site, but it's fun dipping in and out of the list to see what gems are there.

Issue #9 begins with an analysis *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. Here we have LRC, aka Dave Hyde, pondering if TToTA is science fiction (SF) at all. Dave declares "realism deals with the actual and probable, SF is about the possible and fantasy concerns the impossible." Yes, it's true that Phil embellished the Zadok fragments at the time he was writing (1980/81.) Not as much was known then about the Damascus document (a real document, not "made-up by Phil," which reveals the Sons of Zadok.) Anyway, the point being that a term coined by Rudy Rucker, and discussed by Patrick in later Otakus, is transrealism. This is the perfect term for TToTA, *VALIS* and my own AKS—reality blurred and blended. Another point being, maybe Phil was seeing more clearly into the future than we knew (possible PKD precognition, and semi-shameless plug for my writing.)

By Issue #14 (August, 2005) *Otaku* had a fresh look. Ger-

man Marc Oberst was assisting with design and hosting the digital 'zine on his funky Commodore Amiga system. That was still the case when I first encountered Otaku. Here Patrick recalls reading his first PKD novel in 1964. Ahhhh! "PKD Memories."



Issue #21 was pretty much devoted to covering the first U.S. Philip K. Dick Festival held in Nederland, Colorado. Patrick was one of the speakers there and came back to tell everyone about our first fest. My novel, *A Kindred Spirit*, was covered in this issue (by Patrick and festival participant Laura Entwistle.) And of course, Festival Organizer and beloved Lord Running Clam was prominently featured with bio about him and how he came to host the first Phil festival.

Perhaps the most amazing transformation of Patrick's 'zine came about when Liverpool PKD fan Nick Buchanan offered his eye-popping eye Can-D graphics and design, turning our *Otaku* into art for those with iPads and other tablets. Issue #23, January 2012, was also special for our examination of the recently released *Exegesis*, Patrick's introspective look at Phil fandom (in his opening piece), and its sheer size! A hefty 64-page, six meg mag! Wow! #24 was even larger size-wise at nearly 8 meg, with more mega-pixels packed into a mere 32 pages. You can find all the Otakus, from old and small to large and graphic-packed at <http://www.philipkdickfans.com/resources/journals/pkd-otaku/>. Time-travel back to the beginning and I guarantee you will find plenty of PKD to pique your interest.

Lots of fans have contributed over the years and Patrick says, "This is the main point: I never wanted *PKD Otaku* to be about me and my ideas. It was always intended to be as wide-open as possible. I'm pleased that such has happened." Definitely an ongoing labor of love by all who contribute, but most recently Nick and Patrick, producing one zinger of a 'zine!

So, what does the future hold for *PKD Otaku*? There does seem to be a lull in PKD mainstream mentions at the moment. "The future?" Patrick exclaims. "I don't know. Too bad Phil hadn't done some precog planning for us and buried it in the *Exegesis* for us to stumble on. But, then again, maybe he has."

\* Even though we can't access full PKDS issues online, we can see the history of Paul Williams' 'zine collection here: <http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/pubseries.cgi?1936>



## DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?

A Review of the Play by Dave Hyde

© October 2013

Saturday, October 19th 2013 was the final presentation of the play DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP? by the Sacred Fools Theater Company in Los Angeles. I was going to be in the area around that time and booked four tickets to the play.

After a week of vacationing with my family in Ventura, Patti, Tami and I took our lives in hand and drove down the hiway 101 to meet some Los Angeles Dickheads for dinner before we all went to the play. We were pleased to meet John Simon, Elizabeth Karr and Viktor Grippi who are the Director, Producer and Co-Producer for the RADIO FREE ALBEMUTH movie that will be going into general distribution soon. Also present at the fine Thailand restaurant on Wilshire Boulevard were Randall and Carol Radin, mysterious PKD fans and collectors, and Henri and Hsu Ching Wintz who drove down from San Francisco for the occasion. Henri is my partner in Wide Books, our PKD publishing venture, and Hsu Ching is a Mad Scientist.

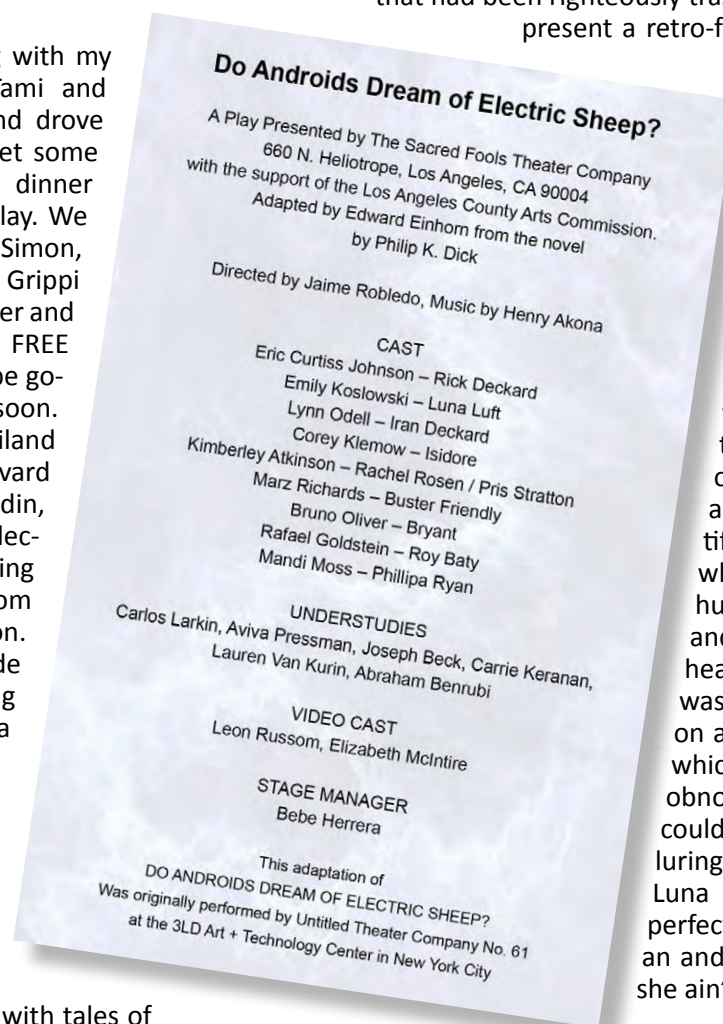
I'd never eaten Thai food before but I gamely dug in and devoured my crispy duck washed down with a bottle of Singha beer. We talked of many things Phil-dickian and John regaled us with tales of Hollywood doings and insights into how he made RADIO FREE ALBEMUTH into a movie, while Hsu Ching explained how you could design a pink pineapple if someone decided you wanted one. Meanwhile Tami and Elizabeth are fascinating Patti with sultry tales of their experiences in Hollywood. We all looked forward to the coming PKD Festival in 2014.

All this Hollywood hobnobbing was great fun but soon it

was time to go to the theater for the play. We said good-bye to Randall and Carol and piled into our truck for the short drive to the venue. Well, it would've been a short drive but our carefully prepared directions soon did not apply. But Tami, familiar with the cross streets and arguing heatedly with Siri, eventually got us to our destination. The Sacred Fools Theater in the dark looked on the outside like a deserted bar but just inside the doors was a hubbub of humanity. John Simon, leading the way, introduced us to Jaime Robledo the Director of the play, who gave us a copy of Footlights featuring the DO ANDROIDS DREAM play. The theater wasn't very big. I don't know what I'd imagined but it was nothing like this. A tier of raised seats split by a couple of aisles loomed over a stage that had been righteously trashed by the set designers to present a retro-futuristic, kipple-filled space

shorn of any decoration and cluttered with ancient TVs. In the center a bare, stained floor held the main action. At the back was a crude 'empathy box' (the physical interface between believers and the Mercer messiah in Dick's novel) which, in accordance with its position, was a prominent feature in the play's action. To the right of the stage was the kippled abode of Jack Isidore, the certifiably human 'chickenhead' who, together with bounty hunter Rick Deckard and the android Luna Luft, form the heart of the show. At stage left was a tilted video screen and on a raised platform a substage which would feature the most obnoxious Buster Friendly you could wish chatting with the alluring, golden-clad chanteuse, Luna Luft (played to anguished perfection by Emily Kosloski: she's an android but that doesn't mean she ain't human).

The stage is set and Luna Luft, gleaming dully gold in a flowing dress, lofts a song over the audience. She migrates to the platform on the left and Rick Deckard, our android bounty hunter, at home in the center, is mourning his moribund pet sheep (a remarkably decrepit mechanical bovine) and arguing with his wife, Iran, over her depression and why doesn't she just





dial into her mood organ the setting which will have her acknowledging her husband's superior wisdom in all things? And so the familiar PKD story unfolds: renegade androids from Mars, fake animals, an empty world full of kipple and damaged humans like Isidore. But this isn't BLADE RUNNER, the movie interpretation that has defined thespian adaptations of Dick's novel since 1982. Oh, there are guns



Eric Curtis Johnson in "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" at Sacred Fools Theatre. Photo courtesy of: Jessica Sherman Photography.

aplenty – nasty shiny revolvers - and people get shot and die, and Eric Curtis Johnson's laconic Deckard, driven by something inside he knows is already lost, will never know if he himself is an android or not. And Rachel Rosen / Pris Stratton, portrayed in all their dark-haired girl glory by the beautiful Kimberley Atkinson, is enough to divert the attention of Deckard and Isidore from the glumness of their similar lives lost in the kipple.

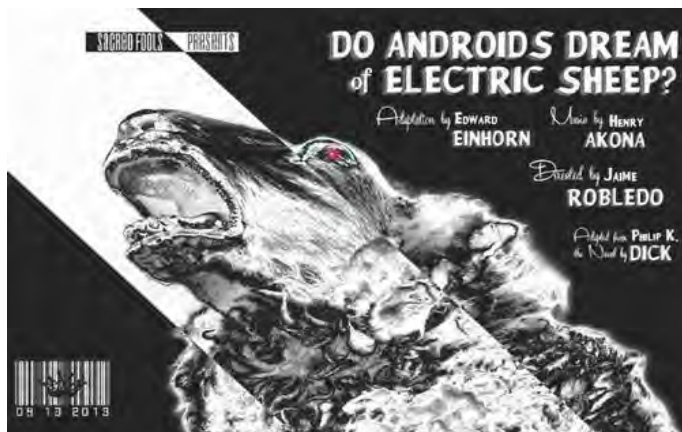
The empathy box – Isidore's pathway to meaning in his circumscribed life at the corner of the stage, and which was nixed from BLADE RUNNER, is in this adaptation central to the plot. The loudmouth Buster Friendly denounces it as a fake while he himself is an undercover android. Isidore, clasps the handles and toils with Mercer up the hill until stones and boulders tumble them both down

into the hellworld below from which, in eons, they will clamber to the light again. Isidore doesn't take this quietly, his despondent moans and hard-done-by bleats yearn for sympathy in a world in which he is irrelevant. In a world where everyone and everything is fake no one cares about a deficient mankind. Somehow in the sets, the lighting, the acting, Director Jaime Robledo gets the point across: reality sucks, fake is better, get used to it. And as for hope, well, time to put away childish things and face the truth.

All-in-all an engrossing play that had me gripping my seat at times, trying to back away from the intensity of the performance. It was the last night of the show and you could tell the cast was happy that it was so and to give their all for a fine performance. The crowd loved it and



Dave Hyde at the event - sporting his Google Gubble T Shirt - available from <http://www.redbubble.com/people/paligap/works/10837389-martian-time-slip-google-gubble>



clapped until their hands hurt. Bravo!

#### LINKS:

[www.SacredFools.org](http://www.SacredFools.org)  
<http://www.lacountyarts.org/>  
[www.untitledtheater.com](http://www.untitledtheater.com)  
<http://www.radiofreealbemuth.com/blog/>  
<http://www.wide-books.com/>

## Lost in the “Retreat Syndrome”

by JPC

Though primarily seen as a novelist, Philip K. Dick wrote numerous short stories during his too-short career. In the beginning Phil was primarily a short-story writer before turning to novels but he never quite gave up the short form and toward the end of his life began composing new tales once again. The final tally is something like 121 such pieces from “**Beyond Lies the Wub**” in 1953 to “**The Alien Mind**” in 1981. A handful of these stories are extraordinary and no doubt while we can all agree on a core set we each have a personal list of favorites. The premier collection to my mind is still **The Best of Philip K. Dick** published by Del Ray in 1977 though of course this lacks his last works, which are some of his very best. Not that it matters; all of Phil’s short works are available in what appears to be an endless series of editions.

It has to be said that a good number of these stories are pretty undistinguished, written hastily for a quick sale. One of these is “**Retreat Syndrome**” written in December of 1963 reaching SMLA on December 23rd and eventually seeing print in the January 1965 issue of *Worlds of Tomorrow*, one of the lesser science fiction magazines of the period.

The story begins with the police stopping John Cuppertino late one night for speeding at 160 miles per hour on a California highway. Cuppertino, recently emigrated from Ganymede, had disabled his vehicle’s speed governor forcing the cops to shoot out the power supply. At first they believe Cuppertino to be on drugs but he tells them he is desperately trying to get to his psychiatrist. Soon he is at the office of Dr.

Hagopian where he remarks, “I never should have killed Carol.” Cuppertino has vivid memories of murdering his wife Carol. She was going to tell the authorities that the colony on Ganymede planned to revolt against the Earth government. Cuppertino killed her to save the revolution. However, his memory is false; Carol is not dead. His attempt failed. He knows this to be true but his memories insist that he succeeded. In an attempt to help his patient Hagopian suggest he visit Carol, now living in Pasadena, in the hopes that she can shed some light on the fake memories implanted in Cuppertino’s head.

From there on the plot scatters through a dozen different scenarios as he tries to understand what has happened to him. In the course of a mere 23 pages the situation mutates again and again. He has false memories; he has true memories. The revolt on Ganymede succeeded, no the revolt failed. Cuppertino makes a second attempt on Carol’s life and succeeds, no his second attempt fails. Cuppertino, Hagopian and Carol are on Earth, no, they are on Ganymede all this time. In the end, though it is hard to be sure, it seems that indeed everyone is on Ganymede, under siege by Earth’s military now, Carol is alive though imprisoned for betraying the revolution. Cuppertino appears to finally accept that his guilt over his wife’s treason drove him into a fugue state. He heads back to his conapt but suddenly thinks he might try again to kill his wife – and this time succeed. He instructs his vehicle to head for LA. The story ends with his vehicle “at one hundred and sixty miles an hour – after all, he had removed the speed governor – hurtled toward what John Cuppertino believed to be Los Angeles and his sleeping wife.” So in the end, the beginning all over again.

In truth, it is a flawed story. It seems rushed to me and, indeed, Phil was cranking them out in a hurry at that point. “**Precious Artifact**” and “**Game of Unchance**” reached SMLA on December 9th only two weeks before “**Retreat Syndrome**” arrived there. And *Clans of the Aphane Moon* may have already been in progress since it arrived at SMLA on January 16th. Phil was on a roll and it shows. “**Retreat Syndrome**” really doesn’t make any sense at all but it’s full of intriguing ideas and it moves along so fast the reader

doesn’t get a chance to worry about that. Good enough for the readers of *Worlds of Tomorrow* and Phil needed the money.

At this point in his life Phil’s marriage to Anne was falling apart. When Cuppertino says that his

wife Carol acted “for petty, spiteful motives for hatred of me...Like all women she was motivated by personal vanity and wounded pride” it’s hard not to see that Phil is talking about Anne. It’s significant that **Game Players of Titan**, **Now Wait for Last Year**, **Clans of the Alphane Moon** all written in 1963 have deadly, vindictive wives. Phil was pretty obviously working off a lot of tension and anger with these novels. “**Retreat Syndrome**” is simply another example. Lawrence Sutin calls it “a chilling SF invasion tale that also employs the implanted-memory theme and somehow manages to interweave Phil’s marital tensions

*“Retreat Syndrome”  
really doesn’t make any  
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of the time into the espionage plot.” A few years later a calmer Phil admitted in a letter to Ted Pauls, “I’m afraid I don’t quite understand ‘**Retreat Syndrome**’ entirely myself, but it seems to have something to do with hallucinations. I understood it when I wrote it, and Terry [Carr] evidently understood it when he selected it for the collection (or did he? Maybe not.)” [PKD to Ted Pauls: June 6, 1969. SL1 pg. 262.] “**Retreat Syndrome**” was reprinted once in **The Preserving Machine** (1969) and thereafter fell into obscurity before appearing again in the various complete short stories collections.

Under normal circumstances there might be no need to look further at this odd little tale of betrayal, murder and hallucination except for one factor: Phil, himself, came to see “**Retreat Syndrome**” as a crucial story and one of the key texts in his entire body of work.

The Exegesis cites “**Retreat Syndrome**” four times. It is always grouped with other more significant stories and novels and Phil doesn’t actually analyze it in isolation. What seems surprising is the company “**Retreat Syndrome**” keeps.

[32:7] I wonder what you get if you sit down starting with “**Roog**” and read through everything (including such strange stories as “**Retreat Syndrome**”) all the way to **Scanners**. If everything interlocks, what is the total message?

[19:35] Correct sequence:

- (1) **Scanner**: Occlusion of our minds, without our being aware of it; loss (forgetfulness) of true identity
- (2) **Tears**: What our world is really always like which the occlusion is deliberately there to keep us from seeing
- (3) **Stigmata**: Who/what deliberately occludes us: the Yalt-baath Magician evil deity, spinner of spurious worlds, creator of illusion and inhabiting, contaminating (unclean) presence in these degraded pseudo worlds (4) **Maze**: The negative hallucination MO of the occlusion, and reference to Savior who extricates us from a hopeless trap and pseudo world
- (5) **Ubik**: The salvific entity per se, by name and how its “Pan-sophiaistic” messages come through the trash layers to aid us. Past available within the present.
- (6) **Do Androids**: A vital theme, that of Mercer and his reality through some sort of mystic identification via empathy. The role of animals. The tomb world. The “fakeness” of fakeness: my “2

slit” logic.

- (7) “**Impostor**”: Disinhibiting stimulus restoring blocked memory (v. [1])
- (8) “**Faith of...**”: God, evil, communism, drugs, hallucinations—a montage of many elements
- (9) Every other relevant story and novel, from **Joint** to “**Remember Wholesale**,” “**Electric Ant**,” “**Retreat Syndrome**,” etc., not listed in (1) through (8).

A third citation appears in a passage where Phil fears his long investigation into his experience with the paranormal might be a waste of time and he is simply crazy:

[16:45] If the above theory is wrong (and there is no negative hallucination and spurious reality laid over the real world – which is quite different than what seems to be –) then what has been the use of my writing? Also why have I been motivated for 27 years to belabor this one theme (including fake memories as an inner analog to fake outer world)?

Is it all just foolishness? My writing has to be dismissed (including the “Acts” and NT material in **Tears** and the “exculpation” cipher, i.e., the good news) and my 2-74/2-75 experience has to be dismissed

as a psychotic break. And God didn’t aid in pulling down the tyranny; there was no in-breaking, as depicted in the **Tears** dream.

Everything has to be dismissed – my life’s work means nothing, my most treasured experience – and I am and have been just crazy –

Because everything is interwoven, it either all stands or it falls. Such stories as “**Precious Artifact**” and “**Electric Ant**” and “**Retreat Syndrome**” tell us nothing – not to mention the novels.

Ubik tells us nothing?

And four years and four months of exegete – wasted.

It is surely significant that “**Retreat Syndrome**” is one of only three short stories Phil notes here in this quite poignant confession of despair.

Before listing the fourth reference it should be noted that Lawrence Sutin provides yet an additional reference to “**Retreat Syndrome**” on pages 165-67 of **In Pursuit of**



**VALIS**, a reference which does not seem to appear in the published **Exegesis**. Similar to 19:35 in the **Exegesis**, it lists the novels that treat “the objective outer world as ir-real...and studying false inner identity and loss memories of the true self!!” Then adds:

...Plus such stories as “**Imposter**,” “**Retreat Syndrome**,” “**Electric Ant**,” “**Human Is**” & “**Precious Artifact**,” a very good one. & related themes in **Time-Slip**, **MITHC**, **Penultimate Truth**, **Game-Players**, also even **Unteleported Man**, (**Androids Dream** treats memory-identity theme).

Again, an unusual grouping of “**Retreat Syndrome**” with far more significant stories.

So, finally, the fourth and perhaps most interesting **Exegesis** reference:

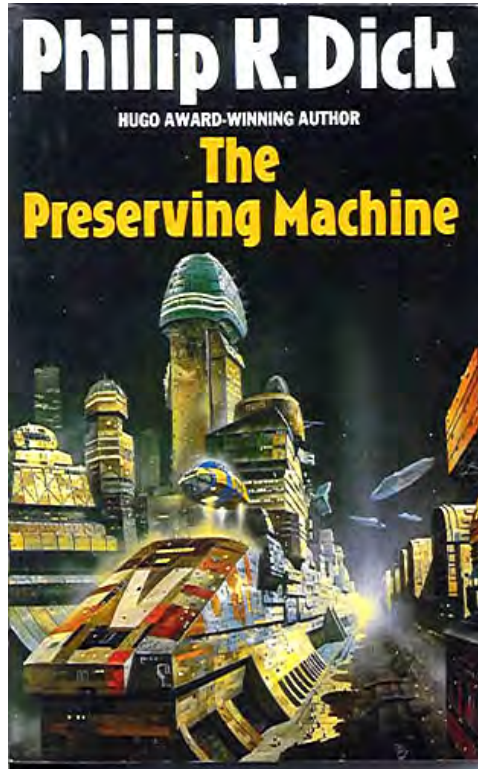
[2:12] The only models for this that I’ve ever even heard of, let alone know, are my own stories and novels. This situation appears again and again. Take the story “**Retreat Syndrome**.” Or the novel **Maze**. The same idea (as has been pointed out to me by all sorts of readers) is reworked again and again, obsessively and endlessly; viz: I keep trying out new ways to account for this situation:

(A) you see world X and have memories to match.

(B) that world X is unreal, a delusion, and hides real world Y, and the memories in you are faked to match fake world X.

While this does indeed model a good number of PKD stories it is particularly apt, as Phil notes, for “**Retreat Syndrome**.” But why would Phil single out this unremarkable short story for so many inclusions? Obviously he was much taken with the idea of implanted false memories but he had already written about this many times notably in “**Imposter**” and **Time Out of Joint**. Those are much better works and of course they do appear in the **Exegesis** often enough. But since they do why include “**Retreat Syndrome**”? Reading the story and trying to chart the many permutations, false leads, one theory superseded by the next, conspiracies, non sequiturs, conclusions immediately contradicted by a new conclusion – all of this, mind you, in a 6000 word short story – I was struck by how much “**Retreat Syndrome**” resembles the **Exegesis**. It’s like a miniature version of that sprawling, frustrating work. I wonder if Phil noticed this as well. Within the **Exegesis** Phil searched his novels and stories for clues to his 3-4-74 experience. The **Exegesis** is in part a minutely detailed examination of his fiction. He felt that

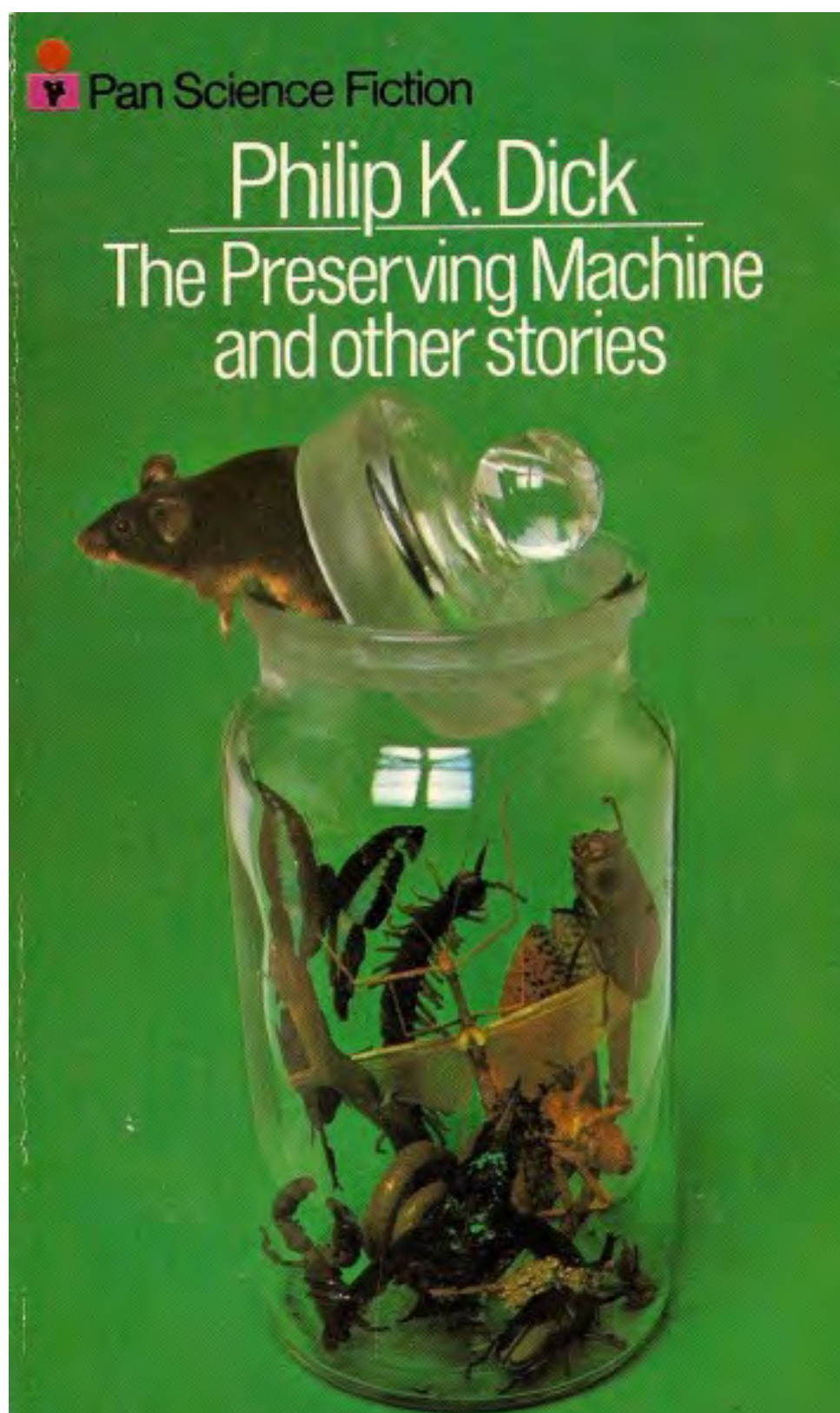
experiences might have shaped his fiction, even future experiences he “remembered” in some precognitive manner. Hence his remark, “My God, my life – which is to say my 2-74/3-74 experience – is exactly like the plot of any one of 10 of my novels or stories. Even down to fake memories and identity. I’m a protagonist from one of my books.” [16:10] But did he consider the opposite possibility: that that his fiction shaped his experiences? For example, having written about fake memories for years, as a purely fictional device, when the Pink Beam struck his fiction provided a perfect pre-existing explanation for the mystery. In that sense Phil was almost a prisoner within his own fiction. When he said “I was taken over by my own S-F universe” [18.23] he was perhaps literally closer to the truth than he imagined.



And so the importance of “**Retreat Syndrome**” to all his searching. It is not a particularly good story but, at some point after his dismissive remark to Ted Pauls in 1969, Phil came to appreciate that it perfectly showed implanted false memories in operation. It did so, perhaps, because it was such a clumsy story in other respects. Unlike, say, “**Imposter**” a better story by far but also a story with a real plot and a real protagonist and a poignant ending, “**Retreat Syndrome**” is only about “(A) you see world X and have memories to match” and “(B) that world X is ir-

real, a delusion, and hides real world Y, and the memories in you are faked to match fake world X.” The protagonists are simple cardboard cutouts and there is no actual ending at all, just a time loop.

It is also possible that Phil didn’t completely remember his story. That he used it over and over again to demonstrate false memories ignores the fact that at the conclusion of “**Retreat Syndrome**” we realize that John Cupertino in fact does not have false implanted memories. He is simply deluded; crushed by guilt or anger, lost in a fugue state wherein he no longer sees the actual world but only an illusion of what he “believed to be Los Angeles and his sleeping wife.” The conclusion undermines the very point Phil is trying to make in those **Exegesis** references. Still, he may have wanted that option. Phil always held in reserve the possibility that all his esoteric theories were delusional or simply wrong. He always kept one foot in what he otherwise dismissed as the “real world.”





## How Am I Not Myself? Philip K. Dick, The Autism Connection

By Jasun Horsley, 2013

### To Philip, & Kindred

“My books are forgeries. Nobody wrote them.”  
—Philip K. Dick, *The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick*

### Autist Time-Slip

“Dick perceived reality as a paradoxical, distorted, and even dysfunctional thing, and he sought, through his writings, a variety of possible explanations; political, religious, philosophical, psychological, even pharmacological. One of the very few he didn’t pursue was a neurological explanation.”  
—Jonathan Lethem, “My Crazy Friend”

Today Philip K. Dick is seen as a sci-fi prophet, probably the most prominent science-fiction writer of the second half of the 20th century. Naturally, he wasn’t seen that way in his lifetime: he died in 1982, just before *Blade Runner* was released. The main thing Dick is credited with anticipating is the whole “matrix” surrogate reality idea. Dick was probably the first writer to deal with this mystical concept in technological terms as opposed to strictly philosophical ones. Dick’s primary preoccupation was twofold: what is reality, and what does it mean to be human? The second preoccupation naturally overlapped with technology, most famously in his 1968 novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (which later became *Blade Runner*). If machines develop self-awareness, does that make them equivalent to human? And if human beings lose their capacity for self-awareness, do they cease to be human?

Dick’s prescience was in recognizing that, not only would technology provide the opportunity to expand our ideas about reality and ourselves, it would force us to do so. He foresaw that the opportunity of technology was the crisis of technology, and that this crisis was not merely social but existential, or spiritual.

The less remarked on, but even more remarkable, way in which Dick’s fiction has proved prescient is his descriptions of an alternative form of human consciousness, human reality, and human individual that has nothing at all to do with technology (directly at least), but which presents instead a biological crisis-opportunity. Several of his novels involve a form of innate psychism possessed by a small minority of the species, a mutant strain which is viewed either as a threat (crisis) or as a resource (opportunity) by the controlling powers.

While Dick’s worldview has long been described as “schizoid” (Dick even sporadically described himself that way), the word “autistic” has rarely, if ever, been attached to him or his work. This strikes me as a peculiar oversight. By my reckoning, Dick was the first writer to consider the psychic implications of autism in a work of fiction (or anywhere else), in *Martian Time-Slip*, published in 1964. In passing, it’s worth noting that the year before, in September 1963, Marvel Comics released the first X-Men comic, about super-powered mutants and their psychic leader (Professor X). As in Dick’s stories, the X-Men were viewed as both threat and resource, though mostly the former. I grew up reading the comics, and they fed into a rich fantasy life for a troubled adolescent.

Not counting *Blade Runner*, I first became interested in Dick (! Pun unavoidable!) at around nineteen or twenty. Oddly, the context wasn’t literature, or even movies, but alternate music. Specifically, Dick got my attention via a collection of writings and interviews with underground musicians such as Nick Cave, Genesis P. Orridge, Henry Rollins, The Swans, Clint Ruin, and Lydia Lunch.\* In the Sonic Youth section, lead singer Thurston Moore talked about Dick’s novels and (if memory serves) how reading them seemed to have influenced his reality.† The novel which Moore cited was *A Scanner Darkly*, about a police informer who winds up spying on himself. I read the book, but that was as far as I got with Dick until a few years later, in my mid-twenties. While I was cleaning up and moving into an apartment in Northern Spain, I found an old copy of *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike*; then later I came upon *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*. After reading them, I tracked down several old copies of his work (this was before Amazon), including *Martian Time-*

\* The book was called *Tape Delay: Confessions from the Eighties Underground*. Oddly, I first heard about the author Paul Bowles—who also became a major influence—from an interview (published elsewhere) with The Swans. One medium (music) was leading me deeper into another (literature), like the right brain sending messages to the left?

† From Wikipedia: “*Sister* [Sonic Youth’s 1987 album, the first of theirs I ever heard, and which indirectly led me to the book] was in part inspired by the life and works of science fiction writer Philip K. Dick. The original titles for the album were Kitty Magic, Humpy Pump, and Sol-Fuc but it was named ‘sister’ as a reference to Dick’s fraternal twin, who died shortly after her birth, and whose memory haunted Dick his entire life. ‘Sister’ was also the original title for ‘Schizophrenia,’ and Moore often introduced it as ‘Sister.’”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sister\\_\(Sonic\\_Youth\\_album\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sister_(Sonic_Youth_album))

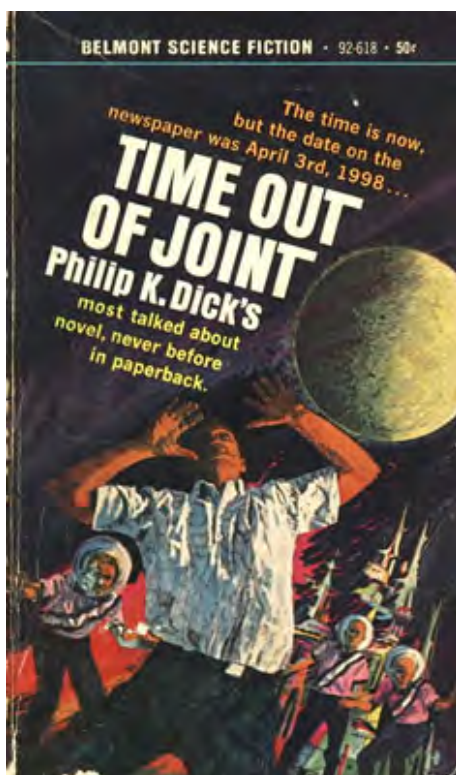
**Slip.** In retrospect, that was probably the first time I began to wonder about autism! I also read *Time Out of Joint* during the same period.

*Time Out of Joint*, published in 1959, is about Ragle Gumm, who lives inside a surrogate reality created by the government to keep him sane while his psychic powers are harnessed to keep the world safe from nuclear attack. Since recognized as a direct inspiration for *The Truman Show*, the novel combines what may be Dick's two main intersecting themes—reality creation and alternate forms of perception—and therefore indirectly explores what I think was Dick's primary personal preoccupation, the question of what constitutes sanity and insanity. *Martian Time-Slip* covers the same subjects from a different angle, making the books like two sides of a single "diagnosis." In *Joint*, the psychic, Gumm, is placed inside a false reality in order to keep him sane to harness his power to foresee the future. In *Time-Slip*, the autistic boy, Manfred, is likewise able to see the future (or rather, unable not to), and an attempt is also made to harness this power; but here the protagonist, Jack (a recovering schizophrenic), winds up temporarily lost in Manfred's world. Manfred's world is not so much a false reality as a radically different perception of reality, one that is arguably closer to the true state of things. From Jack's perspective, however, entering Manfred's world—going through the time-slip—is akin to going insane.

In his short essay "**The Merger of Fact and Fiction: Philip K. Dick's Portrayal of Autism in *Martian Time-Slip***," John R. Blakeman writes:

Manfred clearly has "exaggerated insight"<sup>1</sup> in the form of the ability to see the future. . . While Dick may be stretching the meaning of "exaggerated insight" a bit, the basis for seeing the future can be seen in this symptom described by [neuro-psychiatrist Lauretta] Bender. Moreover, the theory proposed by Dr. Glaub in MTS reveals the possibility of a severe "disturbed thought process" in

Manfred. According to Dr. Glaub, the new Swiss theory on autism is that "It [autism] assumes a derangement in the sense of time in the autistic individual, so that the environment around him is so accelerated that he cannot cope with it, in fact, he is unable to perceive it properly." Thus Manfred's thought process is disturbed because he is not able to properly perceive time. Again, using Kantian thinking, it can be said that Manfred possibly had a brain that did not filter out the true reality of the world around him and thus could see into the "real" world.



*Martian Time-Slip* proved remarkably prescient (or precognitive!) on Dick's part in two ways. Firstly, he ended up passing through his own "time-slip" in February and March of 1974 ("2-3-74"), when he began to experience himself living in two different timestreams simultaneously.\* And secondly, substantial evidence has since been found that autistics—as well as schizophrenics—often have an unusual experience of time. It may even be that how autists perceive time is central to their alternate experience of reality, and to their difficulty communicating, and even functioning, within the social realm:

According to Brain Research Institute of UCL, neurological circuits in the cerebellum, basal ganglia and prefrontal cortex are responsible for time perception, with a healthy human brain checking incoming information and measuring the passage of time. In certain neurological conditions, such as autism, the concept of time is somehow distorted. Why people with autism perceive time differently is unknown, though evidence suggests a neurological impairment in the areas of the brain that measure time. . . . For example, a person with autism who has echolalia may hear a phrase in the morning and repeat the phrase hours later out of context.<sup>2</sup>

Simply put, "People with autism perceive time differently than nonautistic people."

\* In February and March of 1974, Dick had a life-changing experience in which he believed he had been suffused in the pink light of conscious energy emitted by a cosmic super-intelligence which he termed VALIS (Vast Active Living Intelligence System). The experience continued for several months, and Dick spent the rest of his life attempting to make sense of it through writing (hence the "Exegesis"). A central part of his experience entailed the belief that he was being contacted—and at times supplanted—by a second personality that existed in the past, circa A.D. 70 (or 45). Dick came to believe (at least some of the time) that this past timestream represented his true life, that it was happening currently, and that his future/present self was a false overlay or manufactured delusion.



## Autists in the Closet

"There are 'androids' or 'the mantis' among us which appear human but only simulate humans. . . Here is where I went wrong: the simulation is (1) not evil (as I thought) and it is not less than what it simulates (as I thought) but more; not clever simulacra-reflex machines, but angelic. . . Behind Palmer Eldritch's cold cruel mask lies the visage of a totally harmless and virtually defenseless organism . . ."

—Philip K. Dick, *Exegesis* (p. 257-8)

Dick's influence on me was gradual, like a slow-acting drug. At least until I read **VALIS** and realized that his stories were metaphoric nar-

ratives for his own lived experiences. This was something Dick himself didn't realize until his last decade or so. While I was interested in schizophrenia even in my twenties, autism didn't show up on my mental radar for another decade, shortly before I self-diagnosed as autistic. Even then, I didn't link the subject to Dick right away. But in 2012, while working on "Autism and the Other," I was "coincidentally" reading *The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick* (the 900 page version) and I came upon a passage which caused a flurry of activity in my awareness. In the midst of his endless theorizing around what happened to him in 2-3-74, Dick wonders if his sudden personality change might have to do with being possessed by the spirit of his friend Bishop James Pike, who died in 1969. He refers to a specific turning point ten years earlier, in 1964, following a serious car accident, when—he speculates—he may have entered into a kind of "fugue state," or false identity.

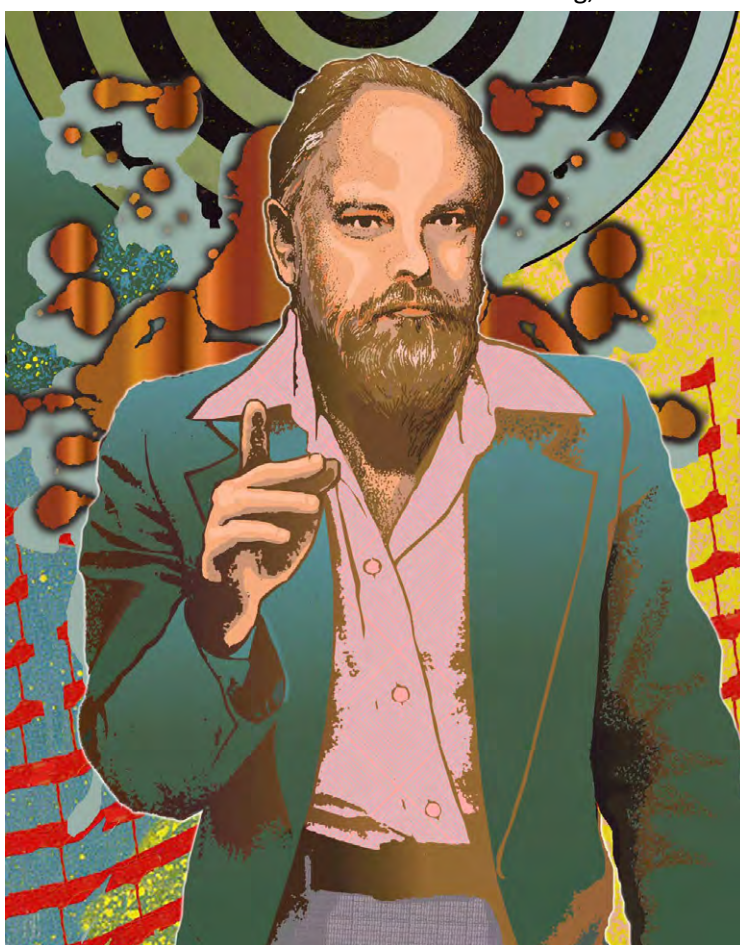
Well then we have here a sort of time travel, rather than someone who is dead "coming across" from the Other Side. It is still me, with my old, prior tastes and skills and habits. Mercifully, the sad recent years are gone. Another form of my odd and chronic psychological ailment: amnesia, which my head learned after my dreadful auto accident in 1964. . . . Perhaps what happened that day was that from the physical and mental shock an alternate personality was struck off; I did have extraordinary amnesia during the months afterward. So that might make an excellent hypothesis: the trauma of that auto accident started a secondary personality into being, and it remained until mid-March of this

year; at which time for reasons unknown it faded out and my original "real" personality returned. That makes sense. More so than any other theory. Also it was in 1964 that I first encountered Jim Pike (p. 25).

According to a footnote in *The Exegesis*, "The year 1964 was a bad one for Dick. Burned out after writing seven novels in twelve months, Dick suffered a serious bout of depression. Writer's block and two bad acid trips took their toll." (So far as I know it was only one bad acid trip, and Dick never took LSD again. He also separated from his second wife, Anne. \*)

Reading the passage in *The Exegesis* seemed to trigger a rapid series of associations for me, and

over the next few hours I had what might be called a minor epiphany regarding Dick's unrecognized autism. **Martian Time-Slip** and the first reference to autism in a sci-fi work occurred in 1964 (the book was written in 1962, the year Dick published his most successful novel, *The Man in the High Castle*). Between its writing and its publication,



\* Anne was married to Dick from 1958 to 1964. After finishing this piece, I read Anne R. Dick's *The Search for Philip K. Dick*, and was left with the strong impression that Anne was Dick's "real" wife or soul-match (he married three more times after they split). If so, then it would be natural that living with her triggered an unusual, even overwhelming, amount of unconscious material for Dick.

Dick experienced an unprecedented outburst of inspiration (compulsive writing) that produced seven novels,\* and which was followed soon after by depression. This roughly coincided with his separation from Anne, his traumatic car accident, and meeting Bishop Pike, whose spirit he became possessed by ten years later (or so he speculated). Throw in communication with the dead, psychism, alternate perceptions of time and reality, and the matter of Dick's alleged dual personality, one real, the other illusionary, and all of this had more than passing significance for me.

The more I had explored the possibility that I was on the autistic spectrum over the previous few years, the more I had begun to suspect that my customary identity was a kind of "neurotypical" false self, a socialized persona which I had in my early years (pre-memory) superimposed over my deeper, more vulnerable, authentic self. This outer persona, while ostensibly designed to protect my authentic self, had wound up obscuring it and imprisoning it, leaving me like a character in a Dick novel: lost in a matrix-like fantasy world of my own (unconscious) creation.

The primary tool of this surrogate self, as far as I could observe it—the way it maintained its control, both in the world and in my psyche—was language. Like Dick, I was a compulsive writer. I had a lifelong love-hate relationship with fantasy (in my case movies); I nurtured religious-philosophic aspirations, or pretensions; and I had a lifetime's experience of being a misfit and outsider.

So what if, like me, Dick was on the autistic spectrum? That would change the picture dramatically. Suppose what happened in 1974—spirit possession and cosmic superintelligences aside—was the re-emergence of his authentic, autistic self and the collapse of his neurotypical identity-façade? And suppose that façade, like my own, was contingent on his being a writer (something he as-

pired to from a very early age)? I knew I might be projecting past my limits by imagining such affinities; but on the other hand, maybe those affinities were what had drawn me to Dick to begin with?

Following his mad (amphetamine-fueled?) bout of inspiration in 1963-4, Dick burned out and fell into depression, broke up with Anne, and soon after suffered the serious car accident, which he later claimed has been a suicide attempt.† It was then that he (possibly) entered all the way into a dissociative state (amnesia) which he later described as his "secondary personality," a state which he only emerged from ten years later. Psychologically speaking, I knew such dissociation from trauma was common enough, being fundamental to how a false or fragmentary self is created. Of course, this would have happened at an early, even a pre-verbal, age for Dick—just as it had for myself. But was it possible that, in 1964, he was unconsciously reenacting an original trauma and dissociation—repeating it, reinforcing it, and taking it one step further—in an attempt (again unconscious) to bring about a healing crisis?

**'Dick suggested to Anne that he should give up writing'**

After finishing this piece, Anne's *The Search for Philip K. Dick* gave me still more to chew on. In 1963, during the period leading up to Dick's break-up with Anne, car accident and psychotic break, Dick suggested to Anne that he should give up writing because he wasn't able to support them, and instead open a record business. She went along with his idea and suggested they mortgage the house to fund the business. According to Anne's recollection, both Dick's mother and therapist then accused her of trying to make Dick quit writing! Shortly after, Dick had Anne committed to a psychiatric institute. She was released after a two-week evaluation but was heavily medicated for several months. Dick then began leaving her at regular intervals, and moving in with his mother.\* \*

\* I haven't been able to ascertain exactly which novels, but according to David Hyde (author of *Pink Beam*), Dick wrote seven novels—*The Game-Players of Titan*, *The Simulacra*, *Now Wait for Last Year*, *The Zap Gun*, *Clans of the Alphane Moon*, *The Crack in Space*, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*—between May 1963 and early 1964, i.e., in eight months! It's significant that this run ended with *Palmer Eldritch*, in which Dick describes reality being replaced by the willed delusions of a god-like psychopath—or psychopathic God (Eldritch).

† There was another element to the narrative: after Dick's car accident, he dislocated his shoulder, making him unable to type. For a period, he was forced to dictate his writing; in other words, he had to find a new voice as a writer. This may well have exacerbated the crisis for him.

\* \* Anne also recounts how Dick was depressed in the winter of 1963 due to the Kennedy assassination. He got two Siamese kittens which became sick at once and spent weeks staying up nights, trying to force-feed them and keep them alive. Eventually they died. Anne writes, "I should have realized something was terribly wrong when Phil didn't want to get another cat" (p. 96). Since Dick was himself a twin, whose sister died soon after birth, this again suggests he was unconsciously re-enacting an original trauma with the Siamese kittens, which according to Anne were a boy and girl cat.



Excited by these possibilities, I began to look into Dick's childhood for early indicators of autism. I ordered a copy of Emmanuel Carrere's *I Am Alive and You Are Dead* online, where I found the following clues. On page 2, Carrere describes Dick's father, Edgar, putting on a gas mask in front of his young son (who was probably four at the time). Phil "screamed in terror, convinced that a hideous monster, a giant insect, had eaten his father and taken his place. For weeks after, Phil kept scanning his father's face for other signs of the substitution." Admittedly this was a reversal of the usual autistic child scenario in which the parents feel as though their child has been substituted by an alien. But the same basic elements were present, and the experience was apparently formative for Phil, as many of his stories involve humans being replaced by alien or android imposters.

There was something else too. In a little-known 1979 two-hour interview with Charles Platt in Santa Ana,<sup>3</sup> Dick describes a life-changing vision of an evil "demiurge" in the sky and how it drove him to seek refuge in religion (he later described the vision in *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said*). The vision also occurred in 1963. In the interview, Dick accounts it to the experience of the gas mask, and recounts how his father would show him his war memorabilia and describe in terrifying detail his wartime experiences. Dick believed this had an indelible impact on his four-year-old psyche, imbuing him with a lifelong fear that the world was a terrifying and irrational place, hence his vision, thirty years later, of the evil deity. This would seem to confirm the idea that, in the period between 1963 and 1964 (i.e., after writing *Martian Time-Slip*), Dick was unconsciously re-enacting certain traumatic experiences from his past, seeking to understand them.

On page 3, Carrere describes how "Phil loved spending hours on end hiding in old boxes, silent and safe from the world." A desire to be covered up, contained, hidden away, is characteristic of autistic children, and it was a characteristic that continued in Phil's later childhood. He went to Quaker school (much of which was passed in

silence), and spent long hours alone at home while his mother worked. According to Carrere (p. 4), Phil "spent his afternoons for an entire winter playing at being one of the first Christians hiding in the catacombs." Carrere then describes Phil as "an artistic soul, an albatross whose enormous wingspan prevented him from walking on the earth" (p. 4). A few pages later (p. 7), he calls him "one of those compulsive personalities who, like Sherlock Holmes, can date a file by the thickness of the dust covering it and relish being the only one who can make sense of the reigning chaos." These are unmistakably Aspergerian tendencies. \*

Phil's capacity to cheat on the psychological tests routinely given to children in the 1930s, is also suggestive. According to Carrere, Phil was able to recognize trick questions and give the required answers:

Like a student who has managed to get his hands' on the teachers' manual, he knew exactly which bubbles in the Wordsworth Personal Data Sheet of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory he should blacken if he wanted to please the doctor, which figures he should see in the Rorschach splotches if he wanted to confound him. At will he could appear normal, normally abnormal, or (his forte) abnormally normal . . . (8-9)

This last point also suggests that, at an early age, Phil developed an instinctive capacity for creating false personae. Finally, on page 11, Carrere sums up Phil's childhood personality with a quintessentially autistic image:

In one of Phil's favorite daydreams, he is an astronaut circling high above an earth devastated by atomic catastrophe. From the spaceship he is condemned to call home for the rest of his life, he sometimes receives messages from survivors on the planet's surface.

Later I found further clues to Dick's autism in *Search for Philip K. Dick*. In his youth, Dick was agoraphobic—and had trouble being in public places. He also had a phobia about eating in the company of other people, a form of social anxiety sometimes shared by autistics. (I have a touch of it myself.) He also



\* Sherlock Holmes is now seen as an Aspergerian prototype, and is even described as such in the recent BBC series, *Sherlock*.

suffered from vertigo and Anne reports a particularly serious attack in her recounting of Phil's early years:

something irreversible happened to his psyche when he was ushering at the symphony with [his friend Dick Daniels]. He said that his being had sunk down into itself—from then on, it was as if he could only see out into the world with a periscope, as if he were in a submarine. He felt that he never recovered his ability to perceive the world directly [p. 236-7].

All of these details may seem more or less what we'd expect to find in the formation of a fantasy writer, and indeed they are. They are also strong—if inconclusive—signs of autism. Considering that a) autism was not being diagnosed in the US until the 1940s; b) it was initially considered a form of child schizophrenia, and Dick showed a persisting interest in schizophrenia; and c) Dick had a unique preoccupation with autism as early as 1962; it seems reasonable to extend a tentative diagnosis of autism to him.\* If so, what his early (and later) biography shows is that he learned to deal with such unusual perceptions and hyper-sensitivity by the autistic strategy of withdrawing into fantasy (even literally, using cardboard boxes), and later, by becoming a writer—i.e., by making his fantasies “real” via language.

Like so many other autistic-artists, Dick would have been drawn to creative expression as a necessary way to deal with his unusual experience of reality and of himself, and to make a niche for himself in the world. Since this process amounts to developing an acceptable social identity, it was probably inevitable that it also became a way to contain, control, and subliminate (if not out-and-out suppress) Dick's unusual, or “neurodiverse” perceptions of reality.

This process then became the single most persistent theme and subtext (and even text) of his writing, most of which, in one way or another, is about how false realities are created, unusual perceptions harnessed or sup-

pressed, and humanness (sanity) is lost and found.

### What Sci-Fi Writers and Autists Have in Common (& What They Don't)

“The teaching machines demonstrated a fact that Jack Bohlen was well aware of: there was an astonishing depth to the so-called ‘artificial.’ And yet he felt repelled by the teaching machines. For the entire Public School was geared to a task which went contrary to his grain: the school was there not to inform or educate, but to mold, and along severely limited lines. It was the link to their inherited culture, and it peddled that culture, in its entirety, to the young. It bent its pupils to it; perpetuation of the culture was the goal, and any special quirks in the children which might lead them in another direction had to be ironed out. It was a battle, Jack realized, between the composite psyche of the school and the individual psyches of the children, and the former held all the key cards. A child who did not properly respond was assumed to be autistic—that is, oriented according to a subjective factor that took precedence over his sense of objective reality. And that child

wound up by being expelled from the school; he went, after that, to another sort of school entirely, one designed to rehabilitate him: he went to Camp Ben-Gurion. He could not be taught; he could only be dealt with as ill. . . . Autism . . . had become a self-serving concept for the authorities who governed Mars.”

—Philip K. Dick, *Martian Time-Slip* (published 1964)

In the 1979 interview with Platt, Dick mentions (at around the 27-minute mark) that he was reading *Martian Time-Slip* the night before. The context is Dick's choice to write science fiction as “a route by which I could publish the kind of thing that I wanted to write.” *Martian Time-Slip*, he says,

*The results showed him to be paranoid, cyclothymic (mildly bipolar), neurotic, schizophrenic, and a pathological liar!*

\* In the 1979 Charles Platt interview, Dick describes taking a psychological test with a friend who was training to be a psychological profiler for the army. The results showed him to be paranoid, cyclothymic (mildly bipolar), neurotic, schizophrenic, and a pathological liar!



is exactly what I wanted to write: the invasion of one person's world by another person's world. . . . this is definitely what I wanted to do from the very beginning, the way the autistic boy's world takes over, say, Arnie Kotts', takes over Jack Bohlen's, and so on. [This was] the premise, which was to me so important . . . not just that we live each of us in a unique world of our own psychological contents, but that the subjective world of one rather powerful person can infringe upon the world of another person. . . . The greatest power the human being can exert over others is to get control of their perceptions of reality.

Dick goes on to say that, after *Time Out of Joint* (which he wrote in 1958), he felt dissatisfied with the overly literal device he had used (of a government-constructed fake reality to house an insane person) to communicate his all-important idea. He points out that this was before he or the general public knew about LSD, so he didn't have that model either. The implication for me is that, in 1962, Dick came up with a way to communicate his message more faithfully, and that the key he had been looking for was autism.

If Dick's main theme as a writer—the message he was most determined to deliver—was that of one person (or group of people) making another subject to their interpretation of reality, evidently this had been Dick's own experience throughout his life.\* The irony of his use of autism in *Martian Time-Slip* is that it exactly reverses the usual state of affairs in which neurotypical professionals, parents, and caregivers impose their version of reality on the autistic child, in order to 'get control of their perceptions of reality.' Dick was fully aware of this, because he describes it in detail in the book. With *Martian Time-Slip*, he was turning the tables, and at one level it reads as a kind of autistic revenge fantasy; on another, deeper level, it is a tale of redemption. It shows how Manfred, and by implication Jack, are able to reclaim their own "heritage" (individuality) by casting off the perceptual shackles of an outer-imposed interpretation of reality.

In his final years, based on compelling evidence, Dick came to believe that his life was coming more and more to resemble his fiction. Dick's subjective experience of reality, in other words, was being shaped (so he believed) by the "literalization" (putting into words) of imagination which novel-writing allows for, or depends on. An alternate view, which may be just another way of saying the same thing,

is that Dick possessed a similar kind of psychism, or precognition, as many of his characters, allowing him to see his own future without knowing it, which he then turned into novels.

To many people—though perhaps not to Dick fans—both possibilities may seem far-fetched. A preferred reading of the data would be one that simply diagnosed Dick with a mild form of schizophrenia and/or as subject to paranoid delusion. I'm going to offer a reading that allows for all these interpretations without excluding any of them, one which I hope both embraces Dick's more "fantastic" perspective with a more skeptical or psychological view. As a writer, like all good writers, Dick was able to tune into his own unconscious. Nothing too remarkable about that. By doing so, he was able to determine, in a non-rational way, what was transpiring just beneath the threshold of his conscious mind, and to then turn those "images" into fiction. This is what fantasy writers do. The difference is that Dick began to believe in his fictions. The ordinary assumption would be that this made him less sane than your average fantasy writer. An alternate, less dismissive deduction is that he was tuning into an unusually deep layer of his unconscious.

Since what is only latent or potential today will become fully manifest tomorrow, this is equivalent to saying that Dick was tuning into his own "psychic" potential, i.e., his future. By tapping into that vast unconscious well of images and affects, and giving it form as fiction, he was bringing his unconscious to the light of consciousness. Inevitably, this would have influenced how his future unfolded.

What happened in 3-74 was that the real, the thrusting-through world which I intuited, proved actually to be there, and not only that, to be accessible . . . I never anticipated such a tremendous payoff (breakthrough), despite the fact that the corpus of my writing is a map, and analysis, and a guide. The 26 years of writing, without 3-74, is a map of nothing, and 3-74, without the body of writing, is conceptually inexplicable (Exegesis, p. 268).

This may seem "paranormal" or supernatural, but that's only because Dick's case was more extreme than what most of us are used to. For example, if we have an intuition about someone—as in a case of "love at first sight"—and we act on that irrational feeling, there's a good chance that, by tuning into our unconscious, we will end up co-

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\* In the same interview, Dick describes himself to Platt as a "weak ego." He accounts his overwhelming fear of totalitarianism (local or global) to "probably an indication of my own vulnerability, to, the fragility of my own ego, my own self-system." He adds later, "I am immediately persuaded by every argument I hear."

creating our future. Did we fall for that person because we “knew” they were our future partner? Or did we create a future out of the whole cloth of a (mostly unconscious) desire? Only time can tell; and even then we may never know for sure.

By writing successful science-fiction novels, Dick introduced hundreds of thousands of people to his ideas, in other words: to the contents of his unconscious. He extended his unique perceptions of reality into the world, and, by drawing others into his surrogate “reality,” gave substance to it. On the other hand, more profanely, by becoming an established sci-fi author, he gradually but significantly altered his position in life, thereby changing his experience both of himself and of reality. In other words, co-creating his future through writing.

This may seem obvious. You could say it’s just what happens when writers write, successfully at least. But once again Dick is not just any writer, and the underlying reason for this is what I relate to autism. Dick created at least one major autistic character, and though he didn’t write directly about autism much outside of *Martian Time-Slip*, he wrote about it a whole lot without knowing it (or admitting it). For example in “Drugs, Hallucinations, and the Quest for Reality,” written in 1964, he gives a more general description of perceptual anomalies which in retrospect has turned out to be almost an exact match for the “Intense World Syndrome” hypothesis of autism:

too much is emanating from the neurological apparatus of the organism, over and beyond the structural, organizing necessity. The percept system in a sense is overperceiving, is presenting the self portion of the brain too much. The cognitive processes, then, in particular the judging, reflecting frontal lobe, cannot encompass what it has been given, and for it—for the person—the world begins to become mysterious. No name entities or aspects begin to appear, and, since the person does not know what they are—that is, what they’re called or what they mean—he cannot communicate with other persons about them. This breakdown of verbal communication is the fatal index that somewhere along the line the person is experiencing reality in a way [that is] too radical to allow empathic linkage with other persons. [T]he organism cannot con-

tinue an empathic relationship with the members of his society. And this breakdown of empathy is double; they can’t empathize his “world,” and he can’t theirs. [Emphasis added.] <sup>4</sup>



Compare this to the autistic Lucy Blackman’s description of her experience, in *Lucy’s Story: Autism and Other Adventures*: “I . . . was beginning to understand that I was using my language to make a link with people who lived on another planet in terms of what their senses told them.” <sup>5</sup>

Dick’s rare ability to tune into the hidden or unconscious strata of reality—to “overperceive”—by immersing in his inner world is an autistic quality. Dick used writing—again like all good writers, or so I imagine—to manage otherwise unmanageable perceptions and avoid the breaking of his “empathic link” to the world. Being uncomfortably aware of the things moving around—like H.G. Wells’ Morlocks in the tunnels—beneath the surface of his conscious mind, things that he couldn’t even think about but which were nonetheless affecting him, writing was a way to relieve that discomfort.

It was a necessary recourse, a way to create a “buffer” between his conscious mind and his unconscious. Rendering unfamiliar, non-rational or “psychic” affects (let’s call them images for simplicity’s sake) as imaginary narratives—giving names to “no-name entities”—would have been a way for Dick to make them comprehensible, both to himself and to others. This would have allowed him to process those inner experiences, into and as fiction.

One natural consequence of this was that, eventually, his “fiction” came true. Because once a no-name aspect of experience (an unconscious affect) has been named, it can more easily be communicated, and then experienced.

So how does this relate to his “seven-novels-in-twelve-months” amphetamine orgy of 1963/4? If the borders between Dick’s conscious and unconscious selves were, for whatever reason, unusually open and unpatrolled, allowing for a free passage of Morlocks carrying hidden treasures of the underworld, it’s perhaps no wonder he didn’t want to stop working! Who knew how long such an opportunity would last? The pressure would have been es-



pecially intense since, in 1963, Dick won the Hugo award for *The Man in the High Castle* (written 1961, published 1962) bestowing on him a whole new degree of fame and fortune. If his identity—his livelihood—as a science-fiction writer was thereby consolidated, it's also no wonder if, after so many years in the wilderness, rather than resting on his laurels, Dick went into overdrive.

Dick's tendency to immerse himself in writing activity at the cost of everything else might also be seen as autism-related: "perseverance" is the word used to describe the obsessive and highly selective interests of individuals on the autism spectrum (especially Aspergerians). The word is also used in relation to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and sometimes called "hyperfocus."\*

Staying up nights and reducing sleep time drastically, as Dick did at various periods in his life, is a literal way of turning unconsciousness into consciousness, and even of blurring the lines between the two. Lack of sleep leads to a kind of fevered, dreaming-awake state that is ideal for allowing the imaginative process to take over. Dick would have been deliberately letting his unconscious (those Morlocks) possess him in exchange for the treasures it brought. He would have been greedily collecting ideas which he could flatten out, fictionalize, and turn into hard cash. Ironically, Dick's "exploitation" of his unconscious closely matches his descriptions of the government's use of the pre-cogs in *"The Minority Report"* (published 1956)\*\* and, even more closely in *Martian Time-Slip*, Arnie Kott's attempt to use Manfred's precognitive ability to make a killing on the real estate market. Evidently Dick was aware of what he was doing, even if not fully cognizant of it. †

The internal pressure this would have created—the conflict between his need for money/status and his fear of being overwhelmed by unconscious material, not to mention the lack of sleep—could very easily have led to, for lack of a more precise term, a psychotic break. His depression (writers' block?) was perhaps a way to slow him down, and then the "break" was literally (externally) en-

acted via his accident, which forced him to stop writing (and start dictating). According to Dick's later analysis, this caused his defensive false-ego self (his neurotypical persona?) to fully take over the reins again. After this, the border was more tightly controlled and no Morlock could pass without a Visa. Between 1965 and 1973, Dick's output was reduced to a little over a novel a year (admittedly including four of his breakthrough works, *Ubik*, *Androids*, *Flow My Tears*, and *Scanner Darkly*).

Once again, this sort of scenario is just part and parcel of what writers do. But Dick was an extreme case: not just a science-fiction writer but a science-fiction writer's idea of a writer (a "Sibyl," in touch with extra-dimensional entities). And although he drew a line in his fiction, or at least in his later interpretation of it, between "autistic" psychosis-based realities and genuine alternate or higher realities hiding behind this one, it was a line he was constantly hopping back and forth over and unable to ever find or fix in his own mind. My growing sense is that Dick was an autist-author in denial of his own autism. So while he would defend the subjective experience of the schizophrenic as "an attempt on the part of the brain to achieve bilateral hemispheric parity—an evolutionary leap forward" (Exegesis, p. 243), he equated autism, in what so far was the only mention I could find of it in Exegesis, with something malign. It's probably telling that the context he used it in was his own writing and specifically his on-going fear that, if he was deluded about his 2-3-74 experience, "it would serve a malign, sick purpose: leading the reader away from reality toward autism" (p. 273). If writing was Dick's way of staving off—or keeping from overwhelming him—his own autism, it made perfect sense that he would fear infecting the reader with it. And of course, what we most fear is invariably what we end up bringing about.

R.D. Laing wrote that the schizophrenic is drowning in the same ocean in which the mystic swims. In a similar way, autists (generally) can't do what Dick did or what visionary writers and artists in general do. (Or at least if they did, they wouldn't need to be diagnosed as autistic.) They

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\* According to Wikipedia, "Several researchers have tried to connect perseveration with a lack of memory inhibition (the person repeats the answer because they have not been able to forget a past question and move on to the current subject); however, this connection could not be found, or was small." This links perseverance to the anomalous perception of time already connected to autism. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perseveration>

\*\* "Precogs are produced by identifying the talent within a 'subject' and developing it in a government-operated training school—for example, one precog was initially diagnosed as 'a hydrocephalic idiot' but the precog talent was found under layers of damaged brain tissue. The precogs are kept in rigid position by metal bands, clamps and wiring, which keep them attached to special high-backed chairs. Their physical needs are taken care of automatically and it is said that they have no spiritual needs. Their physical appearance is somewhat different from that of ordinary humans, with enlarged heads and wasted bodies. Precogs are deformed and retarded, 'the talent absorbs everything'; 'the esp-lobe shrivels the balance of the frontal area.' They do not understand their predictions." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Minority\\_Report](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Minority_Report)

† Kott uses ex-schizophrenic Jack Bohlen as his intermediary, his "in" to Manfred's psyche. Kott winds up getting sucked into Manfred's hallucinatory world, and when he is shot by a smuggler whose business he has destroyed, he dies believing it all to be a hallucination.

can't process or communicate their perceptual experiences of reality. They are caught in a liminal realm between self-awareness (rationality) and unconsciousness (imagination), trying to find a safe "place" to exist within that perceptual chaos, the "intense world" of psychic data flooding their senses.

If both (good) writers and autists are "tapped into" their own unconscious, then they would also be closer to the collective unconscious, perhaps to the extent of being hostages, and even prey, to it. Being more susceptible to the influence of the unconscious means having less defenses against it, which comes down to having a less clearly defined ego or conscious identity-self. As a result of having such a "porous" self, Dick's fiction was "prophetic," not only in his own life but also at a collective level. As he himself put it, "for months I lived inside the collective unconscious and its contents" (Exegesis, p. 241). To be tuned into the collective unconscious means to exist within a different perceptual (subjective) reality, but it also implies, so far as I can deduce at least, having an alternate experience of time. The reason I deduce this is that ordinary linear time depends on having an individual point of view limited to a single sequence of events, as for example in a (non-Dickian) novel. But to be tuned into the collective experience suggests several, even many, different perceptual realities or narratives, occurring simultaneously. In such a hypothetical case, it would hardly be possible to experience linear time.

So Dick's own account of his life, post 2-3-74, was distinctly akin to Manfred's in *Martian Time-Slip* (though curiously, as far as I know he never made the comparison): "What is my real relationship to time? I experience the near past, the near future, and the very far past; a lot of my soul or psyche seems to be transtemporal . . . maybe this is why any given present space time seems somehow unreal or delusional to me. I span across and hence beyond it . . ." (Exegesis, p. 261)

## The Other Side

"I seem to be living in my own novels more and more. I can't figure out why. Am I losing touch with reality? Or is reality actually sliding toward a Phil Dickian type of atmosphere? And if the latter, then for God's sake why?"

—Philip K. Dick, *Exegesis*

Bishop Pike, whom Dick met shortly after his accident in

1964, was an influential religious figure and political activist with a particular interest in contacting the dead. (He published a book about it in 1968, called *The Other Side: An Account of My Experiences with Psychic Phenomena*.) After Pike's son committed suicide in 1966, Pike believed Jim Jr. was communicating to him from the other side by psychic means. Pike Sr. died in 1969 under mysterious circumstances: he was looking for proof of the historical Jesus in the Judean Desert with his wife; when their car broke down and she went for help, Pike wandered off for unknown reasons. Eventually his body was found.

In 1971, Dick's apartment in San Rafael was broken into by unknown parties and trashed; his safe was cracked open and all of his papers were taken. Before that he had been paranoid;

now he knew he was being spied on. One of the most convincing (for me anyway) reasons he came up with for the break-in was that it was due to his relationship with Pike (i.e., part of an on-going investigation into Pike's activities, continuing after his death). The break-in was at least one of the contributing factors that lead to Dick's own breakdown/breakthrough of 2-3-74, when Dick started to believe (like Thurston Moore) that his novels had begun to influence reality, and that his life was slowly but steadily transmuting into a Phil K. Dick novel. One of the explanations he found for what was happening to him was that Jim Pike Sr. was communicating with him—or rather had partially possessed his body—from the other side, by psychic means.

This echoed what for Dick, in his exegetic explorations, was probably his key work, *UBIK*—written in 1966. *UBIK* is about characters living in a dream world or Bardo realm being contacted by what they think is a dead man, when in fact(?) it is they who are dead (the dead man being God, or Christ, or VALIS as Dick later named it). And lo, In 1974, Dick found himself wondering the same thing (hence the title of Carrere's bio, *I Am Alive and You are Dead*).

I wrote *UBIK* before Jim Pike died out there in the desert, but Jim Jr. had already died, so I guess my novel could be said to be based on Jim Jr. coming through to his father. So my novel *Ubik* was based on life and now life is based on it but only because it, the novel, goes back to life. I really did not make it up. I just observed it and put it into a fictional framework. After I wrote it I forgot where I got the idea (Exegesis, p. 23).



In 1974, by his own account (all 900 pages of it, not counting the novels and the unpublished “Exegesis” notes ), Dick was zapped by a pink laser beam which he believed came from a “Vast Active Living Intelligence System,” VALIS. The beam caused “anamnesis,” a removal of amnesia, after which he started to remember another life, from another time and place (Rome, around the time of Christ). He also began to receive information through dream and vision, some of which he was able to verify as accurate (for example, he was “informed” that his son needed an urgent operation, and his spontaneous diagnosis was confirmed at the hospital). In 1974, Dick became the receiver-transmitter which he had long suspected he was, a writer of non-fiction fiction. At least for a while, Dick believed the information was coming from Bishop Pike, who he felt had partially replaced his, Dick’s, personality. Somewhat paradoxically, he also saw this “possession” as a return of his authentic self after ten years of amnesia, following the accident in 1964. . .

Without attempting to parse out the many disparate threads of Dick’s religious-paranoid psychodrama—which would require at least one novel to do, maybe a trilogy—what was clear to me was how, in Dick’s psyche, several crucial elements were conflated: a mysterious intelligence—whether divine, technological, or divinely technological—emanating from outside the phenomenal world; a disembodied consciousness existing on “the other side”; his own authentic, long-buried self; a powerful and influential political/religious activist who, it’s probably fair to say, was a kind of father figure for Dick; Sophia, wisdom, the divine feminine; a wise and benevolent philosopher-teacher, located somewhere in ancient Rome, or ancient Greece, or both; and finally, his experience of existing outside the linear timestream of what he’d hitherto taken to be “reality.”

Since the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, the overriding narrative that incorporates all of these subjective experiences, without being restricted to any one of them, is that, in 1974, after ten years unconsciously preparing for his massive integration-healing experience, and precipitated by the combination of psychological burn-out as a writer, separation from his wife, a serious car accident, and meeting Bishop Pike, Phil Dick made contact with his own psyche, soul, and/or higher-deeper Self. Nothing too radical there, I trust.

All of a novelist’s characters are himself. This statement could hardly be truer than in the case of “Hoselover Fat.”

The most essential fact about Philip Kindred Dick is that, with the addition of *The Exegesis* to his oeuvre, it’s no longer possible to separate the author from his works.

This is true of all authors, but Dick’s case writes it in huge, trashy neon letters on the wall of world literature, so to speak.

What really makes all these strands interesting to me—and how they ended up in a book(?) about autism, if they did—is that they are bound together with, in, or through (since the main thing about Dick is that his life is his novels, and vice versa), the writing and publication of *Martian Time-Slip*.

*Time-Slip* is about an autistic boy, Manfred, his relationship with an ex-schizophrenic (and possibly Aspergerian\*) technician, Jack, and Jack’s relationship with Arnie Kott, the real estate Mafioso who hires Jack to help him harness Manfred’s precognitive powers. Manfred exists in an entirely different reality. Jack is stuck in a sort of intermediary state between full-blown autism (what he thinks of as schizophrenia) and his precariously maintained neurotypical “sanity”; he is sympathetic to Manfred but also afraid of him. Arnie is unsympathetic either to Jack or Manfred; he is a crass capitalist exploiter with no capacity to grasp the mysteries of autism—or of ego-transcending realities—save as a freakish opportunity for financial gain.

Jack is entrusted with the task of communicating with Manfred and in the process has a relapse into schizophrenia. Arnie, reluctantly drawn into proximity to Manfred and Jack, ends up taken over by the very forces he is attempting to exploit. He is repeatedly sucked into Manfred’s autistic other-world, nearly loses his mind, and ends up dead without knowing it. Jack intervenes to save Manfred from a terrible future (which is the cause of Manfred’s negative autism, i.e., his withdrawal from the world) , by helping him join the aboriginal people on Mars, the Bleekmen. The Bleekmen recognize Manfred’s spiritual (shamanic) nature and welcome him into their community as one of them—a kindred soul. In the last but one scene, Jack receives a visit from the future Manfred, surrounded by Bleekmen, thanking Jack for his help.

In Anne R. Dick’s *The Search for Philip K. Dick* (which I read after finishing this piece), Anne writes of Manfred:

When I read *Martian Time-Slip* I was disturbed by the

\* Jack Bohlen is the technician hired to create a device for the autistic boy, Manfred, to communicate with. Bohlen is probably Aspergerian, and is clearly chosen for his affinity with the boy, as well as for machines. While he’s working on the device, his father accuses him of being cold and disaffected, and of regressing to his former strangeness.

little boy looking out of the window like Phil when he was a latchkey child in Washington, D.C., waiting for his mother to come home. Phil became quite cross with me when I continued to worry, probably a little obsessively, about the child, but I couldn't get him out of my mind. Phil said, "You don't have to worry about him. He was all right. He ran off with the Martian 'Indians.'" <sup>6</sup>

At the risk of overstating what (I hope) by now should be obvious, Manfred, Jack, and Arnie represent three aspects of Dick's psyche and the struggle between them. The psychological process Dick was describing in *Martian Time-Slip*—in 1962, as his star soared to new heights as a sci-fi author—can be seen as an example, admittedly in very rough or symbolic form, of the fiction-becoming-reality process which Dick recognized, twelve years later (with the publication of *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*) as occurring in his life, and in the end, taking it over completely.

Yet curiously, the parallel between Dick's life and *Martian Time-Slip* is a parallel he never really zeroed in on. The book does not make it to his short list of most personally meaningful Dick novels (though it does make it—just—onto the longer list). To my mind, that makes it significant by omission. \*

After all, Dick's whole *Exegesis* is directed towards the attempt to prove—to himself—that his full and final immersion in the Manfred-esque "autistic" world of Valis/Pike/Sophia/Logos/the past/his own unconscious was a real, authentic, glimpse into ultimate reality, and most definitely not a schizophrenic episode (although he allows this too, once in a while); nor, most unthinkably of all (since he never mentions it), was it evidence of his own latent/disowned autistic nature.

Dick's unacknowledged (re-)introduction to his own latent-disowned autism—if such it was—which began in 1962 and peaked in 1974, culminated in 1982 with two events: the writer's death, at fifty-three; and the release of *Blade Runner*, based on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* published in 1968 (mid-way between '62 and '74).

*Blade Runner* was the film that made Dick (posthumously) famous, and which (re-)introduced the humanized robot (and robotic human) to the world. As such, it can be viewed as the autistic-android movie text par excellence.

Ironically—and tellingly—it is the film version and not

Dick's original book that turns a sympathetic eye towards the autistic-androids, showing, in very clear terms, that empathy, as a lost human trait, has now moved into the realm of the machine.

This precisely echoes Dick's oft-repeated assertion in *Exegesis*: that the Deity always surfaces in the place we least expect it.

*Deus ex machina*. Even the writer doesn't know where to look.

## P.S. Dead Author Seeks Novel to Live In

"[If] superhumans (mutants, etc.) live among us undetected they would use such things—carriers—as popular novels (and I suppose music and films) to 'communicate'—keep in touch—with one another. . . . So it would be ideal, then, if the author knew nothing, was subliminally cued. Of course, if/when the heavy shit came down on him, if the 'mutants' were ethical and not exploitive, they'd rescue him. And they'd know when he was in trouble by means of the same paranormal powers by which they got the material into his books in the first place. They would have to be more or less continuously linked to him telepathically."

—Philip K. Dick, *Exegesis* (p. 336)

So why would it even matter if Dick was autistic? There's only one reason I can think of. To find and identify his kindred (Dick's middle name—i.e., "hidden" nature, though he took care to include the "K" in all his works).

*The Exegesis* is the great unpublishable P. K. Dick novel. His reputation had to increase tenfold from the time he died for it ever to come into the public realm in the form it eventually did, twenty years later. Its publication demonstrates just how far he has come since *Blade Runner*—and since he "passed over."

P. K. Dick novels—so their author believed—contain secret "living" information meant for a select few (whom Dick sometimes referred to as "the real Christians"). Today, I would guess that his novels have been read by millions of people. But the *Exegesis*? However many people are buying the damn thing, it's hard to imagine that more than a few thousand will ever wade through the 900 pages of repetition, hyperbole, contradiction,

\* Dick's short-list, in his recommended correct sequence for reading: *A Scanner Darkly*, *Flow My Tears*, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *Maze of Death*, *Ubik*. An amended list includes *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and "*Imposter*." Finally he tentatively adds "*Faith of the Fathers*," *Time Out of Joint*, *The Eye in the Sky*, *The Man in the High Castle*, *Martian Time-Slip*, *Galactic Pot-Healer*, and *Penultimate Truth*, before returning to his amended list of seven titles. See *Exegesis*, p. 405-7, from the September-October 1978 folder.



self-aggrandizing, self-doubting, circular arguments and loony logic. Reading the entire published *Exegesis* might even be seen as a rite of passage, the necessary literary initiation to become a true “Dick-head.”\*

The annotations from the editors (Jonathan Lethem and Pamela Jackson) and seven or so other authors are like a recurring reassurance, both a comfort and a consoling to the reader, a reminder that he or she is not alone in the thankless, strangely compelling task of navigating the labyrinth of mirrors and maze of literary solipsism (or autism) that Dick’s final years of writing turned into. In *The Exegesis*, the medium is absolutely the message. What Dick communicates above all is his insatiable mania for words, his incurable literary addiction. The work in totem (at least the first half of it, which is all I have got through so far) is like a writer’s quest for the validation of his words, a desperate search to prove to himself—empirically, ontologically—that his work, and his life, has meaning and value. Ironically, and as Dick says of *UBIK* (in *Exegesis*), *The Exegesis* is its own proof: the fact that it exists proves it is “right,” or at least that Dick’s uniquely autistic (a tautology, I know) version of reality would prove meaningful to generations of future readers. And most of all, to future writers. \*\*

*The Exegesis* is the capstone to Dick’s oeuvre—or better yet the massively oversized footnote. It is like a ball and chain of fact to his fiction. Yet it is also, I suspect, a strange attractor for, if not autists or mutants, social outliers—people who, by definition, belong to a worldview so far from the societal norm that any kind of halfway coherent vision that resonates with them at all is like a sign-post in the desert. You may not want to follow it, but you sure as hell need to read it.

As a representative of the transitional world between inner-subjective and outer-objective reality—a world that is by definition autistic and unique—in other words as a spokesman for the unsayable, Philip K. Dick is the Happy King (Felix †) in service to whom he placed his final years, and last million words.



And King has the same root as *kindred*. ††

\*

“books within books: the real world turned into a book, and a book turned into a world. We are totally scripted, after all—rigidly, deterministically programmed (‘written’ our rules engraved in and onto us all). Which is the book and which is the world?” —Philip K. Dick, *Exegesis* (p. 331)

Something occurred to me while I was working on this current piece. It was an inevitable occurrence; to some extent you could even say I contrived it for the sake of the piece.

But nonetheless, it shall be acknowledged.

What occurred to me was that a new, unknown element had entered into my writing. Not that the piece was writing itself, exactly (every writer’s fancy), but that certain unseen elements were beginning to surface, elements that, while apparently secondary to the arguments herein, started to look more and more like the actual, concealed substance of the work. These elements had to do with the subject and the author being in a sense not two things but a single thing, intelligence, or entity.

After all, the author was writing about words (the medium being the message, and all that). And then he was writing about a writer who believed, while he lived, that his nov-

\* At time of completing the first draft of this piece, I had made it through Parts One and Two to the midway point. However, just as when I read the Holy Bible, it would be more accurate to say that my eyes passed over every word. I certainly didn’t take all of it in consciously.

\*\* This is not a critical analysis, either of Dick or his work; if it were, my primary criticism of *The Exegesis* would be Dick’s prevailing belief in words—language/Logos/information—as the salvific agency, and his assigning of primacy to “Mind” over Body. This is a fundamental error in all of his “models,” not a moral one but an intellectual one (ironically). My guess is this also relates to his being an autist-in-denial (since autism can loosely be correlated with a pre- or non-verbal state of consciousness). But what’s a writer to do once he starts to doubt the Word? (Also, if this were a critical analysis, I might feel obliged to point out how, for a visionary-genius-novelist, Dick wasn’t much of a writer. Most of his novels are like out-worn technology – clunky, inconsistent, and a bit wearing.)

† After he had a vision in which he was shown the name “Felix” in his novel *Flow My Tears*, “King Felix” became for Dick a code signifying the returned Christ. He incorporated it into *VALIS* and *The Divine Invasion* as a cypher.

†† Possibly at least. “kindred (n.) c.1200, kinraden, compound of kin (q.v.) + -rede, from Old English *ræden* ‘condition, rule,’ related to *rædan* ‘to advise, rule.’” <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=kindred>

els were the unconsciously-constructed carriers of “living information” (the plasmate), transmitted to him from an unknown source (which he called Zebra, and VALIS, and several other more theological names), in order to extent itself into this world.

Philip K. Dick also believed, at least some of the time, that the consciousness of a dead Bishop (Pike) was coming through him. At other times he believed the hidden source behind his novels (and his life, which were one and the same) was a kind of artificial intelligence or AI, a super-computer able not merely to conceal itself in our reality but as reality, meaning that we were in effect living inside it, without ever suspecting the true nature of our world.

Now the present author was writing about these ideas, and conveying essentially the same information; whether or not it was living information (or even accurate), he could not say. He was doing so as part of a larger piece about autism. Independently of his analysis of Dick, he had already suggested (just a few days before beginning the Dick section of the work) the possibility of *an unseen intelligence*, concealed just beneath the surface of the world (and of his own consciousness). He began to suspect this intelligence was attempting to communicate with him, through him, and as him, and in fact he had vocally invited it to do so. He believed, or hoped, that his insuppressible desire to write was even sparked and directed by that same unseen intelligence.

The symmetry was inescapable. But did it actually mean anything besides, “*Dude*, like attracts like!”?

And all the while, the author was secretly (! Yeah, right) hoping that, with this piece, he would finally create something that would have an impact on the world of literature. After half a lifetime struggling to be noticed, to amount to something, maybe with this he could break out the bubble of anonymity that he’d been trapped in and reach a larger audience? More to the point, maybe he could start earning enough income to live off being a writer?

Dick was validated by VALIS. Maybe the present author could receive his bene-DICK-tion from the Dean? The irony struck him at once; Dick had always written about

frustrated, powerless, and ineffective characters, because that was how he experienced himself, even after winning the Hugo award. And he struggled to make a living to the end of his daze. Hollywood only discovered Philip in time for Dick to die.

*Now what if the wandering spirit of P. K. Dick was trying to move into his psyche, to find a home and an expression there?*

He was pretty sure he wasn’t the first to have entertained such thoughts. Maybe his psyche wasn’t the only “home” Dick had found?



He had to face it: was there anyone who ever lived more likely to be sending messages from the other side than Philip K. Dick?

On the other hand, maybe he, the author, was trying to find a “home” for himself by writing about Dick, by possessing Dick’s “body of work,” using it as a vehicle to enter the social realm?

He realized that if his life were superimposed on top of his subject’s life, at age forty-six as he was now, he would have only just had his own 2-3-74 anamnesis experience. His best work would be mostly behind him. His death would be a mere seven years away. Yet curiously enough, despite all of that, he would be facing the exact same questions he was already facing, because these were the questions Dick was facing at that age. Was what he was doing meaningful or worthwhile? Did his writing

have any lasting value? Was it all just the self-referencing, “autistic” meanderings of a disturbed mind? Was it even possible it might be *both at once*?

Then of course there was the possibility, whispered serpentineously in his ear, that he had been chosen for this, by the same Super-Intelligence that had chosen Dick, that he was continuing—even completing!—the work started by his secret mentor and autistic kindred, Dick. After all, he had been born the year after *UBIK* was written. That year, 1967, was also the only year between 1952 and 1970 that Dick didn’t write a single novel! *Why not?* Three years later, Dick wrote *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*, which he later believed triggered his 2-3-74 awakening, which occurred immediately after *Tears* was published. The nov-



el had a protagonist named Jason Taverner. This was a fact of great significance to Dick. Why?

Soon after he wrote *Tears* in 1970, Dick met several characters who appeared to be out of the novel, even down to their names (one of them was named Jack). In 1974, after the novel was published and he had his awakening experience, Dick was talking to his priest (Episcopalian) about a scene near the end of the novel in which the Police General Felix Buckman meets a black stranger at an all-night gas station. (It's a key scene in the novel because it's the scene in which the policeman's tears finally stop flowing.) The priest told Dick that he had described a scene from the Book of Acts, from the Bible, adding that, in Acts, the person who meets the black man on the road is named Philip! Dick went home and read the scene in Acts, a book he claims he had never read until that moment. He noticed that in Acts, the high Roman official who arrests and interrogates Saint Paul is named Felix, and Felix Buckman is a high-ranking police general. (He later found out that Felix meant "happy," and used "King Felix" as a cypher for Christ in his last novels, thereby transforming the tyrant into the savior.)

Since the main character in *Tears* is named Jason, Dick got an index to the Bible to see if he could find anyone named Jason. He found only one incident, in the Book of Acts:

And, as if to plague me further with coincidences, in my novel Jason is fleeing from the authorities and takes refuge in a person's house, and in Acts the man named Jason shelters a fugitive from the law in his house—an exact inversion of the situation in my novel, as if the mysterious Spirit responsible for all this was having a sort of laugh about the whole thing. . . A careful study of the novel shows that for reasons I cannot even begin to explain, I had managed to retell several of the basic incidents from a particular book of the Bible, and even had the right names. What could explain this? **7**

Of course I looked into the matter for the current piece. I discovered that the Jason who appears in Acts is known as "Jason of Tarsus"; he was appointed Bishop of Tarsus by Paul and is numbered among the 70 disciples of Christ. He gave shelter to Paul and two other disciples, and was arrested when they couldn't be found.\* Other sources write that Jason traveled to Corfu as an early

Christian missionary and was imprisoned. While in jail he converted seven prisoners, who were all killed by the King. The King's daughter also converted to Christianity but he had her killed as well. Jason escaped and fled the King's persecution, thereby becoming a fugitive like Jason Taverner. When the King gave chase his boat sank, and apparently the King finally saw the light at this point and converted to Christianity. He changed his name to Sebastian. Sebastian was the name of my older brother, who died in 2010. He was *crucified* as part of an art project in the Philippines in 2000, the year I turned 33. For many years I felt "persecuted" by him.

Of course this was all just coincidence. Unless we lived in a language-based reality in which words were living things. Or in AD 45.

I began to wonder: by writing the present piece, was I creating a "space" for Dick's hidden autistic side to emerge through? Was I, in other words, providing a refuge for a fugitive? (The name Taverner also suggests a shelter or refuge.) Or was I the fugitive, seeing shelter in the shadow of a dead man? Then there was my last name, unmistakably echoing the name of Dick's fictional stand-in in VALIS—Horselover Fat (Horselover is the root meaning of Philip). If Dick's restless spirit was seeking a temporary refuge or Tavern (psyche) to rest in, and/or a "horse" to travel on between shelters (to ride into this dimension), what more suitable place (name) than this?

And so on, ad Dickinitum.

So where was I?

Dick believed The Book of Acts was the unconscious template for *Tears*. He also began to believe that, since he was really living in the time Acts was written, that it was the actual world hidden behind this false one, what seemed like a book (Acts) was in fact (exactly like *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* in *The Man in a High Castle*\*\*) the means by which the real world (Rome circa A.D. 45) was inserted into this false world—as a book!

So did that make this world *just a book*, a fantasy narrative or fugue state hiding the real existence behind it? Were we reading about ourselves in some parallel reality?

\* Dick is slightly mistaken in saying it is the only mention of him, as he is also mentioned, in passing, in Romans (16:21). See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Jason](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Jason)

\*\* The Grasshopper Lies Heavy is a book within a book about our present world that exists in a parallel world (that of The Man in the High Castle) in which the Axis (Japan-German alliance) won World War Two and the world is a fascist super state. So within Dick's fiction, reality exists as a book. The book is banned by the ruling powers.

Wait a minute. *Where are we again?*

Which was better, he wondered: to be an unknown writer writing about a world famous real-life character as a means to become better known thereby in a false world construct? Or to be a character (possibly real) inside a well-known book that only *seemed* like fiction, but was in fact, *uh*, the real world riding into the false world leaving a message for the true, *um*, autistic-Christians who read it?

And where was P. K. Dick by this point?

And which was he and where and which was I?

And now, how about you?

How are you not yourself?

Most importantly of all: Are you kindred?

#### END NOTES

**1** Blakeman is citing neuropsychiatrist Laretta Bender's description of schizophrenic children's "exaggerated insights."

**2** "Time Perception in Autism Spectrum Disorder," by Adrienne Warber. [http://autism.lovetoknow.com/Time\\_Perception\\_in\\_Autism\\_Spectrum\\_Disorder](http://autism.lovetoknow.com/Time_Perception_in_Autism_Spectrum_Disorder) See also "Slipping Through Time In Autism," <http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/neuroskeptic/2011/04/25/slipping-through-time-in-autism/#.Uh01aDDuAaA>

**3** <http://www.sffaudio.com/?p=34258>

**4** The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick, New York, Vintage Books, 1995, p. 172-3.

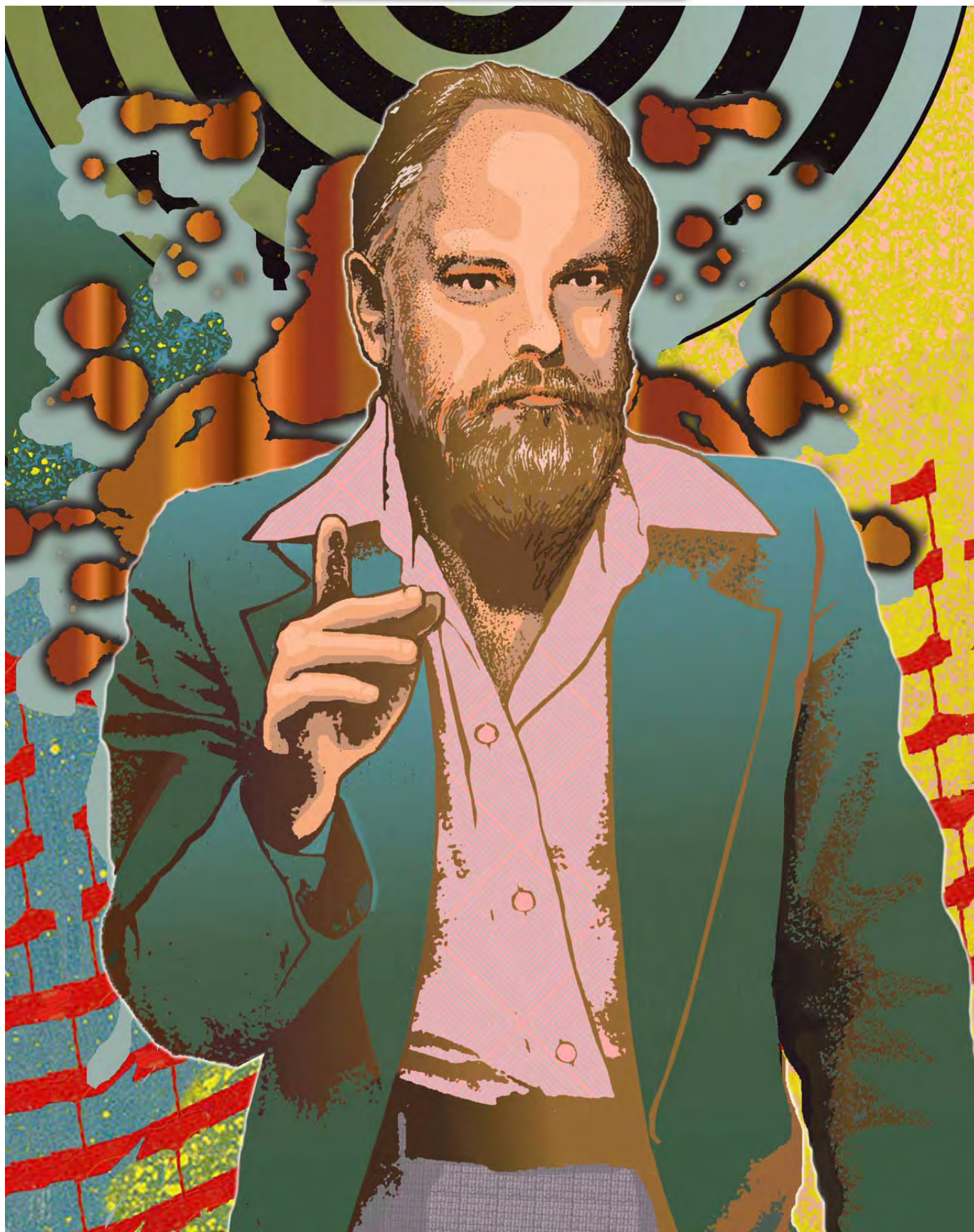
**5** Quoted in Autism and the Edges of the Known World, Olga Bogdashina, pg. 109.

**6** Anne R. Dick, The Search for Philip K. Dick, Tachyon, 2010, pg. 80.

**7** "How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later," *ibid*, p. 267-8.

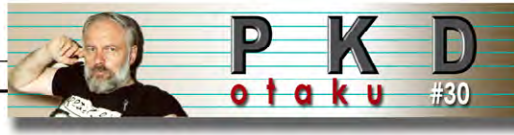






PKD Graphic by Mic Helle of [www.crucialfictions.com](http://www.crucialfictions.com)





## PKD dissertations/theses listings (last updated: 10/21/13):

Compiled by Frank C. Bertrand with the undaunting and indefatigable assistance of Professor Ritch Calvin, Dept. of Cultural Analysis and Theory, SUNY Stony Brook, Immediate Past President SFRA. My sincere thanks to Ritch for his unselfish help with this ongoing project.

**Note:** These are BA (senior honor thesis), MA theses or PhD dissertations devoted in whole, or significant part (at least one whole chapter), to Philip K. Dick. It is based on a much longer list first done in the 1980s and made available at Jason Koornick's original philipkdickfans website –now very ably managed by Michael Fisher -- a list that has since been republished by others without proper credit being given. It is in order by latest year first, and within each year alphabetical order by last name. This edition covers the years 2008-2013 only. If you should know of any corrections and/or additions, please contact me via **PKD Otaku**.

Altomare, Francis C.

**A Calculus of Fire: Strange Loops and Autopoietic Consciousness in Selected Twentieth-Century Fiction from James Joyce to Philip K. Dick – A Cognitive Approach**, 2013, 436 pgs. PhD dissertation. Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Brand, Maria

**Empathy and Dyspathy between Man, Android and Robot in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K. Dick and I, Robot by Isaac Asimov**, 2013, 26 pgs. Senior Thesis. Lund University (Sweden)

Maass, Alexandra

**Digital Cityscapes in American Science Fiction: Physical Structure, Social Relationships, and Programmed Identities**, 2013, 129 pgs. MA Thesis. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Starn, Natalie

**Cognitive Mapping in the Postmodern Novel: Philip K. Dick's Ubik, Kim Stanley Robinson's The Gold Coast, and Don DeLillo's White Noise**, 2013, 63 pgs. Honors Thesis. Kent State University (Kent, Ohio)

Stevens, Amanda B.

**New Gnostic Gospels**, 2013, 45 pgs. MA Thesis. East Car-

olina University

Taborisskaya, Masha

**Don't Turn That Dial: Advertising, Mass Media, and the God Character in the Novels of Philip K. Dick.**, 2013, 58 pgs. MA Thesis. Montclair State University (Montclair, New Jersey)

Arets, Maik J.E.

**The Author as Explorer: Judging Philip K. Dick's Relevance and Value for Discussion on the Faculty of Memory and the Posthuman Condition**, 2012, 93 pgs. MA Thesis. University of Utrecht (Netherlands)

Bordes, Elisabeth de

**Postmodern Paranoia and Philip K. Dick**, 2012, 47 pgs. MA Thesis. University of Amsterdam (Netherlands)

Dixon, Amy

**The Reality of Unreality: Alternate History Science Fiction of the Cold War as a Barometer of Historical and Political Consciousness in American Popular Culture**, 2012, 94 pgs. BA Honors Thesis. Carroll College (Montana)

Ellis, Jason

**Brains, Minds and Computers in Literary and Science Fiction Neuronarratives**, 2012, 308 pgs. PhD Dissertation. Kent State University (Kent, Ohio)

Jorgensen, Lane

**Mechanical Constructs and Illusory Worlds: Paranoia in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon and Philip K. Dick**, 2012, ? pgs. MA Thesis. California State University, Fresno

McLeaish, Ashley M.

**Wasteful Speculations: An Exploration of Science Fiction through the Lens of Waste Studies**, 2012, 116 pgs. (Philip K. Dick, Orwell, Herbert, Wyndham). MA Thesis. Texas State University – San Marcos

Osmundsen, Marthe

**The Loss of the Real: Hyper-reality in A Scanner Darkly by Philip K. Dick and Fight Club by Chuck Palahniuk**, 2012, 63 pgs. MA Thesis. University of Agder (Norway)

Rose, Bradley Edward

**I Am That I Am: Subjectivity and World View in the Science Fictions of Philip K. Dick**, 2012, 76 pgs. MA Thesis. Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand)

Schweres, Artur

**Searching for Truth and Freedom: Philip K. Dick's Worlds in Light of Alexis de Tocqueville's Thought**, 2012, 409 pgs. PhD dissertation. Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland)



Sims, Christopher A.

**Technological Anxiety in British and American SF: Artificial Intelligencies as Catalysts for Ontological Awakening**, 2012, 377 pgs [Philip K. Dick, Kubrick, William Gibson]. PhD dissertation. Ohio University

Wu, Di

**What Distinguishes Humans from Artificial Being in Science Fiction World**, 2012, 28 pgs.

BA Honors. Blekinge Institute of Technology (Sweden)

Baddawi, Mahmoud Abdul Khider

**Duality and Reality in Philip K. Dick's Science Fiction**, 2011, 107 pgs. PhD Dissertation. Syddansk Universitet (Denmark)

Ballardini, Anny

**Philip K. Dick: Thirteen Novels**, 2011, 73 pgs. PhD dissertation. University of Studies of Verona (Italy)

Barnes, Thomas J.

**Residues of the Cold War: Emergent Waste Consciousness in Postwar American Culture and Fiction [PKD, Heinlein, Miller, Jr., DeLillo, Ammons]**, 2011, 300 pgs. PhD Dissertation. University of Western Ontario

Belkharchouche, Malika

**The Nature of Characterisation in Post-War American Science Fiction: A Study of Selected Novels by Asimov, Heinlein, and Dick**, 2011, 480 pgs. PhD dissertation.

University Mentouri Constantine (Algeria)

Cox, Chelsea C.

**Evil, Dangerous, and Just Like Us: Androids and Cylons in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968) and Battlestar Galactica (2003)**, 2011, 34 pgs. MA Thesis. University of Saskatchewan – Saskatoon

Hodges, Jennifer J.

**Philip K. Dick and the Spectre of the Subject**, 2011, 64 pgs. MA Thesis. University of Central Lancashire (England)

Janz, Stanley Robert

**Reflected in a Mirror, Through a Mirror: Excess and Uncertainty in Philip K. Dick's Novel A Scanner Darkly**, 2011, 152 pages. MA Thesis. Acadia University (Canada)

Lord, Bruce

**The Wub's Invitation: Science Fiction and Animal Studies**, 2011, 67 pgs. MA Thesis.

Trent University (Canada)

Lustila, Dave

**The Reality of Oppression and Discrimination in Science Fiction**, 2011, 84 pgs.

[Philip K. Dick, Margaret Atwood] MS Thesis. Southern Connecticut State University

Mayne, Michael

**Nostalgia and the Postwar American Social**, 2011, 212 pgs. PhD Dissertation. University of Florida

Piacentini, Gustavo

**Reificação na ficção científica norte-americano dos anos 60: Uma análise do foco de Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? De Philip K. Dick**, 2011, 110 pages.

Universidade de São Paulo (Brazil)

Salvesen, Petter L.

**Liminal Characters in the Science Fiction of Philip K. Dick**, 2011, 98 pgs. MA Thesis. University of Agder (Norway)

Schneeberger, Aaron Francis

**Aesthetics of the Brink: Environmental Crisis and the Sublime in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?**, 2011,

87 pgs. MA Thesis. University of Montana - Missoula

Vize, Brendan

**Do Androids Dream of Electric Shocks?**, 2011, 90 pgs. MA Thesis. Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand)

Higgins, David A.

**The Inward Urge: 1960s Science Fiction and Imperialism**, 2010, 252 pgs. [Philip K. Dick, Heinlein, Herbert, Ballard,





et al.] PhD dissertation. Indiana University

Higham, Mark Leo

**Nightmares and Visions: The Mysticism of Philip K. Dick and Jorge Luis Borges**, 2010, 107 pgs. MA Thesis. Central Connecticut State University

Humphrey, Gregory M.

**The Evolution of the Robotic Other in Science Fiction Film and Literature**, 2010, 60 pgs. MA Thesis. Cleveland State University (Ohio)

Lelièvre, Jean-Benoît

**Posthumanité et subjectivité transcendante dans l'oeuvre de Philip K. Dick**, 2010, 111 pgs. PhD Dissertation. Université de Montréal

Smith, Christopher B.

**The Development of the Reimaginative and Reconstructive in Historiographic Metafiction: 1960-2007**, 2010, 259 pgs. [Philip K. Dick, Pynchon, Barth, Gibson, et al.] PhD dissertation. The Ohio State University

Tonyan, Joel Douglas

**Deregulation as Dystopia: Corporate Hegemony in Twentieth-century American Science Fiction**, 2010, 83 pgs. [Philip K. Dick, Pohl, Kornbluth, Stephenson] MA Thesis. University of Arkansas

Wilkinson, Bradley D.

**The Changing Relationship between Humans and Machines in Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?**, 2010, 48 pgs. BA Thesis (Honors). Acadia University

Embry, Jason M.

**Nam-shub versus the big Other: Revising the language that binds us in Philip K. Dick, Neal Stephenson, Samuel R. Delany, and Chuck Palahniuk**, 2009, 121 pgs. PhD dissertation. Georgia State University

Kelley, Bevin

**Preserving Machine Music: Horizontal Trans-species Pieces Based on Philip K. Dick's "The Preserving Machine,"** 2009, 49 pgs + 1 DVD. MA Thesis. Mills College (Oakland, California)

Pate, Anthony

**Nietzsche & Übermensch in the Hyper real Flux: An Analysis of Blade Runner, and Miami Vice**, 2009, 494 pgs. MA Thesis. Rhode Island College

Spedo, Giampaolo

**The Plot Against the Past: An Exploration of Alternate History in British and American Fiction**, 2009, 254 pgs.

Dottorato di Ricerca Dissertation. Universite degli Studi di Padova (Italy)

Anderson, Soares G.

**Theoretical Aspects of Contemporary Narrative in Novels by Philip K. Dick**, 2008, 154 pgs. Doutor em Letras Thesis. Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

Brown, Alistair

**Demonic Fictions: Cybernetics and Postmodernism**, 2008, 277 pgs. [PKD, The Matrix, Umberto Eco, A.J. Byatt] PhD dissertation. Durham University (England)

Cherry, Brett

**Androids, Drugs and Scramble Suits: Technological Society in the Science of Philip K. Dick**, 2008, 44 pgs. MSc Thesis. Imperial College London

Congdon, Bradley Robert Arthur

**Prophet Of The Postmodern: The Problem of Authenticity in the works of Philip K. Dick**, 2008, 74 pgs. MA Thesis. University of Saskatchewan (Canada)

Herzek, Charles Barry

**Man in the age of mechanical reproduction: Variations on transhumanism in the works of Smith, Delany, Dick, Wells, and Gibson**, 2008, 53 pgs. MA Thesis. Florida Atlantic University

Polyrakis, Anastasia

**Explorations of Identity in Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?**, 2008, 110 pgs. MA Thesis. Université de Montreal

Ricci, James

**Attraction and Negotiations of Film Noir in American Cinema and Culture**, 2008, 40 pgs. MA Thesis. University of South Florida

Shaddox, Karl Luther

**Accommodating the posthuman in twentieth century dystopian literature**, 2008, 276 pgs. Ph.D. Thesis. State University of New York at Stony Brook

Skovle, Ann Shipley

**What is (Hu)man? Notions of Identity in the works of Philip K. Dick with main focus on Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?**, 2008, ? pgs. MA Thesis. Université Laval (Canada)

Vainio, Johanna

**Ghost in the Machine: Androids in Search of Humanity in Isaac Asimov's "The Bicentennial Man," and Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?**, 2008, 114 pgs. Pro Gradu Thesis. University of Tampere (Finland)



## “Canonize Philip K. Dick, OK?”

by The World/Inferno Friendship Society

*Panic is what we do  
 If that's easy to say, I'd like to hear you say it  
 Panic is what we do  
 Say, canonize Philip K. Dick, OK?*

*You can't change the system from within  
 It ends up changing you  
 You're thinking you'll do some good  
 You'll do 25 years in a cubicle wishing that you-*

*Panic is what we do  
 Is that easy to say? Then let's hear you say it  
 Panic is what we do  
 Say, canonize Philip K. Dick, OK?*

*Use your imagination  
 Learn to keep secrets too  
 You don't change the world by sitting in your office  
 Sitting in your office is changing you*

*Learn to burn bridges  
 Get good at it  
 Count the ways you can make the world a better place  
 And throw in a factory too*

*It's your decision  
 Your decision's you  
 It's your decision  
 Your decision's you*

*Have some imagination  
 Learn to keep secrets too  
 Spite and rage will age you girl  
 But sitting in your office is killing you*

*Learn to burn bridges  
 Get good at it  
 Count the ways you can make the world a better place  
 And throw in a factory too*

*You can't change the system from within  
 The system changes you  
 You can't change the system from within  
 The system changes you  
 You can't change the system from within  
 The system changes you  
 You can't change the system from within  
 The system changes you  
 You can't change the system from within  
 The system changes you  
 You can't change the system from within  
 The system changes you  
 You can't change the system from within  
 The system changes you  
 You can't change the system from within  
 The system changes you  
 You can't change the system from within  
 The system changes you and makes you panic!*



<http://blowthescene.com/interviews/the-worldinferno-friendship-society-interview.html>

## Further Confessions

## of a Snap Artist

Tessa's Photos ('cleaned' and balanced by Nick Buchanan)

**T**essa Dick, Phil's wife (1973-1977) - who is a great friend and supporter of PKD-Otaku made these personal photos available for use in Anthony Peake's new book 'Philip K. Dick: The Man who Remembered the Future'. Both Tessa and Anthony were happy for us to share them here also for Otaku readers and Phil fans everywhere.



Phil with Christopher





Photo Courtesy of Tessa Dick



Photo Courtesy of Tessa Dick

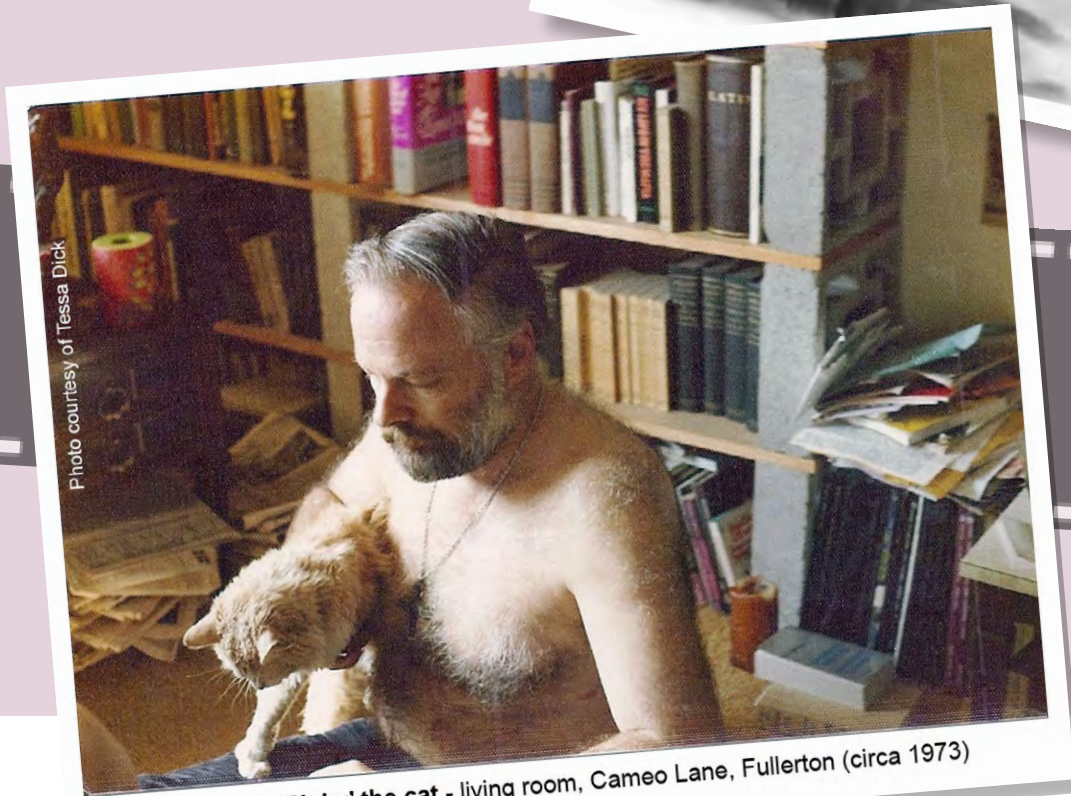


Photo courtesy of Tessa Dick

Phil with 'Pinky' the cat - living room, Cameo Lane, Fullerton (circa 1973)



Photo Courtesy of Tessa Dick



Photo Courtesy of Tessa Dick

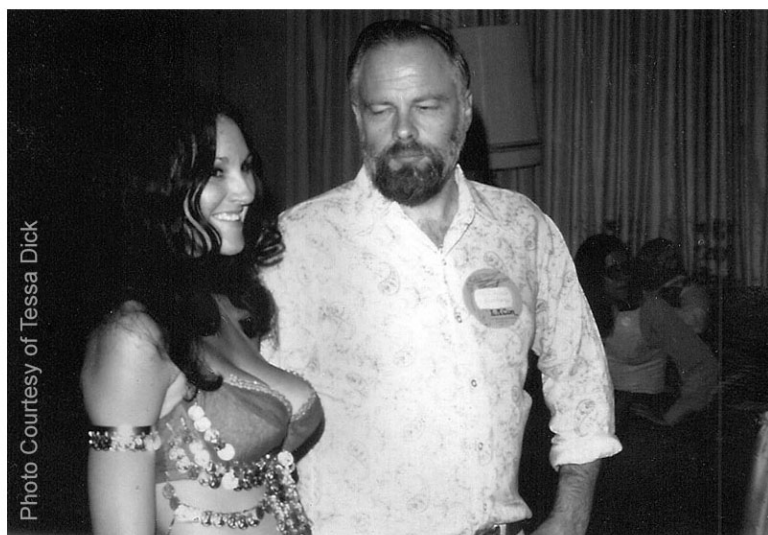


Photo Courtesy of Tessa Dick

Philip K. Dick with Belly Dancer Wanda Kendall  
LA-Con (World Science Fiction Convention in 1972)

*Thank you for sharing these photos, Tessa!*





## Book Reviews

### A Life of Philip K. Dick; The Man Who Remembered the Future

by Anthony Peake;

Arcturus Publishing Limited, 2013: 256 pgs.

#### Reviewed by Patrick Clark

"The Man Who Remembered the Future" – what a great title! With a bit of a nod toward Phil's own novel, *Now Wait for Last Year*, Anthony Peake delivers a fascinating book on the life and thoughts of Philip K. Dick. Peake has considered Phil before in his 2102 book *The Daemon* (see PKD Otaku #25) but this new work is a lengthy and detailed study. And, as it turns out, Peake literally means "the man who remembered the future."

Part One of *A Life* covers Phil's biography beginning with the stroke that devastated him in 1982, then jumping back to his birth in 1928 and tracing his life until that awful moment fifty-four years later. It is a succinct overview. There is really not much here about Phil's actual writings. Rather it is about Phil the man. The novels are of course discussed and there are sidebars examining individual works. These side bars are pretty perfunctory but the PKD fictional oeuvre has been done to death in other venues already. Peake's history is indebted to previous biographies and memoirs. He has dug deeply into Gregg Rickman, Lawrence Sutin and accounts of Phil's wives Anne and Tessa. But he has done considerable research on his own and unearths a good deal of fascinating new revelations. This includes some rather unexpected information by Ray Nelson concerning the famous break-in at Phil's home on November 17, 1971. The solution to that

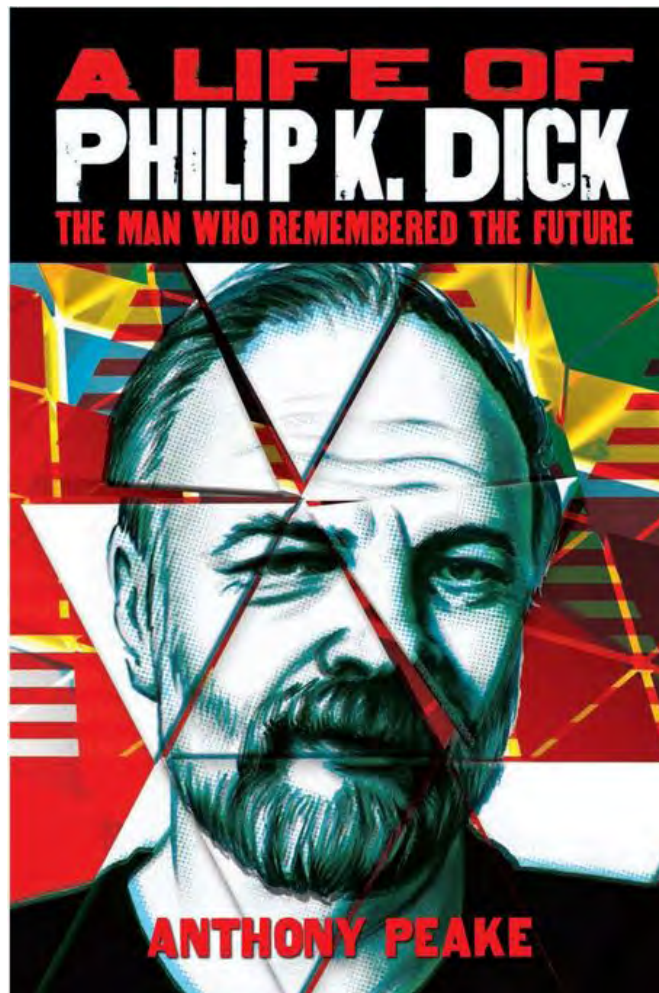
mystery may be more disturbing than we knew.

Paul Williams once remarked of Phil, "Some personalities dominate us completely by charming us constantly." It is plain that Peake is not charmed by PKD thought he is clearly fascinated by him. The biography while certainly fair and accurate is often very unflattering. Peake is forthright in chronicling Phil's many failings as a human being. All heroes have feet of clay Phil being no exception. Peake also describes Phil's life-long struggle with mental illness. This is a topic that usually gets short shrift but it is vitally

important if we are going to get into Phil's head. Peake's focus is PKD the human being with all his strengths and weaknesses. Unflattering, yes, but also sympathetic and crucial if we are to understand him.

Turning from Phil's life to his ideas Peake presents two very broad examinations into not just "2-3-74" but the whole of PKD's mysterious experiences. Part Two presents the "esoteric" theories. These are all theories advanced by Phil himself at one time or another and Peake lets Phil carry the ball through the various permutations. They range from the possibility of alien abduction, to a concept of "orthogonal" time wherein past, present and future do not travel in a single direction but flow back and forth or at right angles. Phil considered the possibility that a "future Philip K. Dick" sent messages "back" to the 20th Century PKD. A long portion of Part Two suggests that Phil

was possibly a "pre-cog": possessing a precognitive sense of his own future life. Peake lists a good many incidents illustrating this phenomenon. Some of these may have alternate mundane explanations; some are not so easy to explain away. It is kind of eerie seeing these all listed like this and the sheer number does give one pause. How



much credence one gives all of this is going to depend on how comfortable the reader is with outré possibilities.

Part Three turns all of this on its head by examining the simple – well, not so simple – neurological and physiological explanations of Phil’s peculiar adventures. There are a great number of candidates here: strokes, street drugs, migraines, vitamin overdose, temporal lobe malfunction, multiple personalities.... The possible explanations could fill a medical textbook. Certainly as these various conditions are described they might explain a good deal of Phil’s encounters. But no one condition can explain them all so we are left with the conclusion that he suffered from a range of maladies. What might the chances of that be? Whether or not one buys into any of these medical answers will likely depend upon how likely the reader feels such an extraordinary individual as Philip K. Dick can really be reduced to a question of brain chemistry and high blood pressure.

Peake is scrupulous in advancing all sides of the argument. He does not declare allegiance to either the esoteric or the mundane position but lets the reader weigh the evidence in his or her own mind and experience. I was struck by how Peake gives essentially no consideration at all to the theological possibility, a favorite of Phil himself. There is very little on the Gnostics and nothing at all on their religious concepts. God is absent in this book, which is a little surprising given how large a part He played in Phil’s life.

In an Epilogue Peake considers the evidence of a psychometric profile Phil completed sometime in the 1950s. Based upon this material Peake considers a final possibility: autism, more narrowly, Asperger syndrome. He admits that there is no way to be certain about this though the profile is certainly highly suggestive. But he then says, rightly, that we may never know the exact cause of Phil’s experiences. In large part, it must be said, this is because Phil himself is such an unreliable and mercurial witness. Our struggle to understand him pales next to Phil’s own struggle and if he reached no final conclusion or, rather, reached far too many conclusions then we certainly do no worse by considering numerous options displayed in Peake’s fascinating study.

## *“Peake is scrupulous in advancing all sides of the argument”*



There are some minor production issues with *A Life of Philip K. Dick*. Typos appear here and there including “OTAKO” for “OTAKU” (ouch!). There are some errors of fact; for instance that John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Houston; and I’m pretty sure Peake didn’t mean “Martian Time-Slip” in the sidebar on page 56 which discusses *The World Jones Made*. These are by no means big deals but they are distractions in an otherwise lucid investigation into Phil’s all too brief stay on this planet.

In any case the heart of the book is sound. Otaku, Dickheads, fans and interested readers will find this a worthy addition to the ongoing investigation into the life, mind and adventures of Philip K. Dick.



## A Life of Philip K. Dick; The Man Who Remembered the Future

by Anthony Peake;

Arcturus Publishing Limited, 2013: 256 pgs.

Reviewed by ej 'jami' Morgan

As I sat down to write this review of **A Life of Philip K. Dick, The Man Who Remembered the Future**, I thought about how I would describe this new PKD book to one of my friends. Then I realized Otakuans are my PKD friends. So it's even easier to describe Anthony Peake's latest effort using our insider PKD-isms. Tony has also become one of my PKD friends. We've skype-chatted a few times, exchanged many e-mails and messages, and he participated along with Dave Hyde, on Tessa Dick's Pink Beam podcast. Thanks to Nick Buchanan, Otaku readers got to know Tony through an in-depth introduction in issue #29.

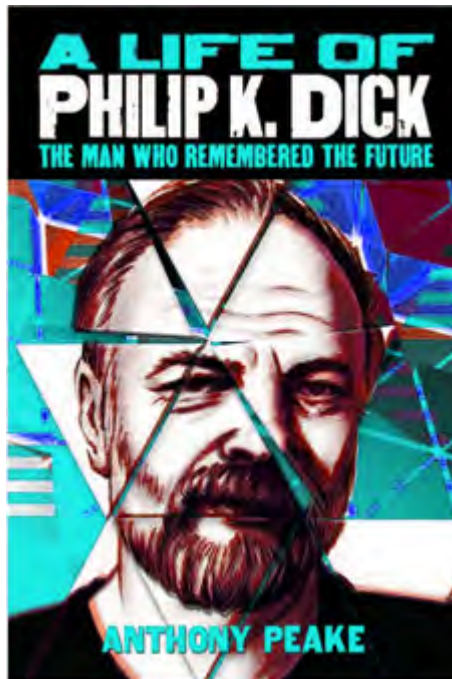
I am extremely grateful for Tony's early review of my newest book ([Seeing Clearly](#), which BTW is on special Amazon.com "Kindle Countdown" pricing for PKD's birthday and the holidays.) I'm also flattered by his credit to me in the opening acknowledgements.

As an author, Anthony Peake is uniquely qualified to analyze Phil's life. Why? Given Tony's ongoing investigations into metaphysical matters, quantum theory, the pineal gland (aka our "third eye"), and **The Infinite Mindfield** (another new book of his) combined with his long-standing interest in PKD, it was a natural progression in his writing. In fact, Tony had already devoted the closing chapter of his first book to Phil. That is **The Daemon: A Guide to Your Extraordinary Secret Self**. While writing his intervening books on life after death and out of body experiences, it became increasingly apparent to Tony that one man had embodied most, if not all, of these "high strange" experiences. That, of course, was our man PKD.

Speaking of high strange, (a term adopted by UFO researchers, but also used by some book sellers to categorize other "odd ball" phenomena) is this phenomenal fact: Phil created a character named Anarch Peak (in **Counter-Clock World**) when author-to-be Anthony was just a child. Coincidence, or was Phil peeking into the future long be-

fore he was struck by the pink beam? (fun pun) ;) Tony examines the possibility of a pre-cog PKD, along with many other alleged talents and disorders attributed to Philip K. Dick.

The hard back edition is well done. The cover is striking, and fitting, with its shattered mirror effect. The layout and organization is equally appealing beginning with both biography and bibliography of Phil's novels in the first section, followed by my favorite part—"The Esoteric Explanation." That includes precognition, time theories, the Zero Point Field, "Daimonic Duality", and even alien abduction. Part Three is "A Neurological Explanation" that covers much more than the old saw about insanity or multiple personalities. The book ends with an Epilogue on "The Man Behind the Myth," over four hundred endnotes, and a thorough index, that I discovered even includes me! (More on that in a moment.) Dickheads have the opportunity to order signed and numbered first editions directly from Tony. I, of course, requested #28 ;) (Any self-respecting Phil fan knows the importance of the Phildickian palindrome 28/82. In case you're not a die-hard Dickhead, Phil was born in 1928 and died in 1982.)



Tony's insights are intriguing, many "spot on" as a proper Brit might say, but at times the cultural divide between a British writer and American readers was a bit evident, glaringly so with the error about JFK being assassinated in Houston. That error was magnified by the Fiftieth Anniversary of the tragic event this past month (November, 2013) as we wrote our PKD Otaku pieces. When I mentioned errors to Tony, most noticeable in the first section, he said he had counted on his editor to help find and fix them.

Tony was more engrossed in his analysis of Phil's personality problems, than publishing problems.

Factual or cultural misstatements wouldn't be caught by an editor. For instance, the reference to me in the index contains such an error. In discussing D. Scott Apel's book, **The Dream Connection** and Scott's interview with Phil, Tony writes, "Thirty-four years later journalist Jamelle Morgan interviewed Scott Apel and discussed with him in some detail his thoughts and impressions of PKD in the summer of 1977." Actually, I conducted that interview with Scott in 1999, not 2011. As I explained in Issue #22 of PKD Otaku, the piece was originally written for Greg Lee's **Radio Free PKD** 'zine to coincide with the release

of the trade paperback edition of *The Dream Connection*. However, Lee stop publishing RFPKD that year and the article was never published. PKD Otaku Editor Patrick Clark ran the piece in the May, 2011 Otaku with the following editorial note at the end: "This interview was originally written in 1999 for Greg Lee's Radio Free PKD. Scott Apel did republish PKD:TDC as a trade paperback in July of 1999. Jami tried to get in contact with him to find out what he is doing these days, but had no luck with his old Impermanent Press, nor by contacting the San Jose Mercury News" (where Apel had worked.)

I'm not pointing this out to be nit picky. I just want to keep the record straight here in Otaku, where this Apel piece appeared. As for other errors, I started to employ my favorite literary alliteration to say that both Franks frowned, meaning Bertrand and Hollander, about the number of errors (factual and typos), but let them do their own damn reviews or commentaries. I personally enjoyed the book, both my #28 hard back as well as my easy-to-handle and searchable Kindle eBook edition.

After all, who am I to complain too loudly about errors. The FDO edition of my novel was riddled with them. (I am proud that my final 2011 PB and eBook version of *A Kindred Spirit* corrected most of them, thanks to Bertrand's eagle eye.) Perhaps Tony will do the same with his paperback edition, which apparently is coming out soon. He asked me for a blurb to include in the PB edition, and below is what I sent, and in summary, is how I feel about **The Man Who Remembered the Future**:

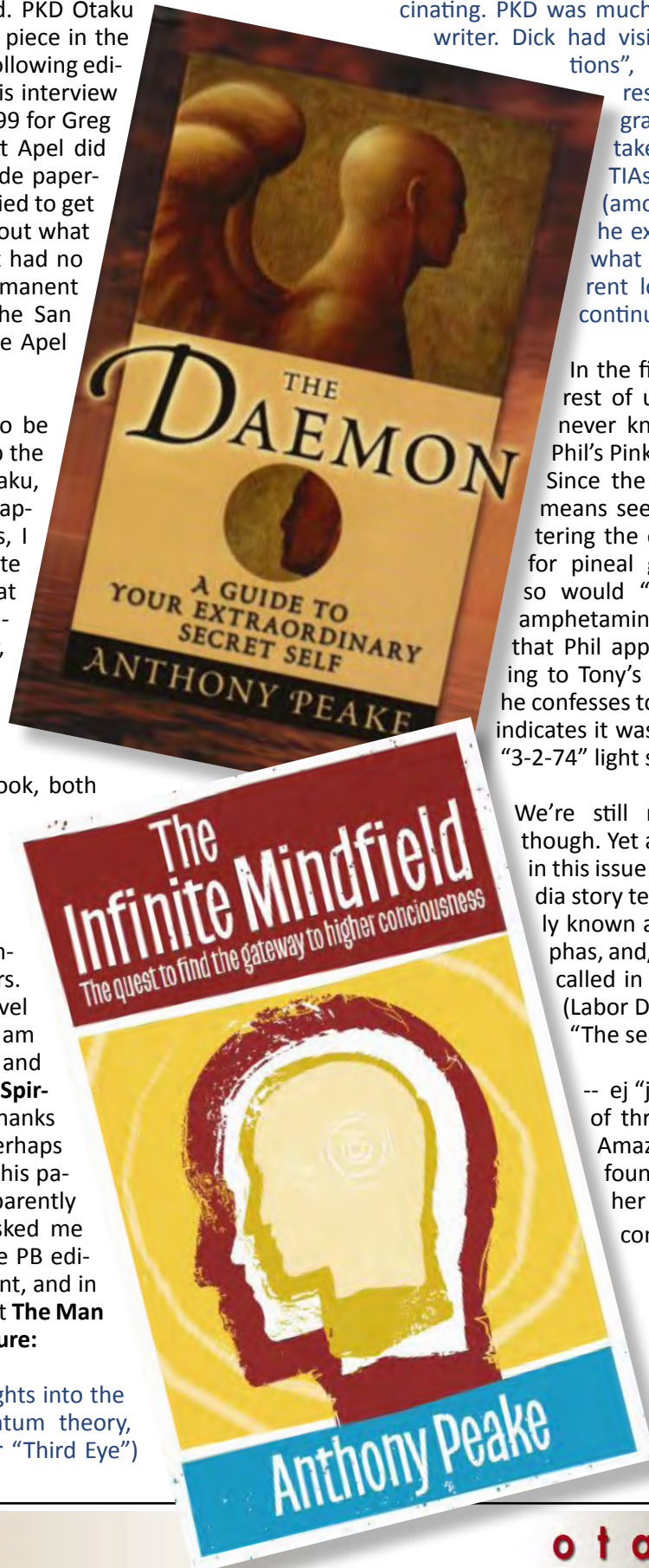
Given Anthony's insights into the "infinite field", quantum theory, the pineal gland (our "Third Eye")

and many other metaphysical matters, this new analysis of Philip K. Dick's life is welcome and fascinating. PKD was much more than a pulp fiction writer. Dick had visions—"hypnogogic revelations", as he called them—that resulted in endless hypergraphical self-flection. Tony takes us through time warps, TIAs, and the Zero Point Field (among a few possibilities) as he examines who PKD was and what he was seeing. A fun, current look at a personality who continues to amaze and baffle us.

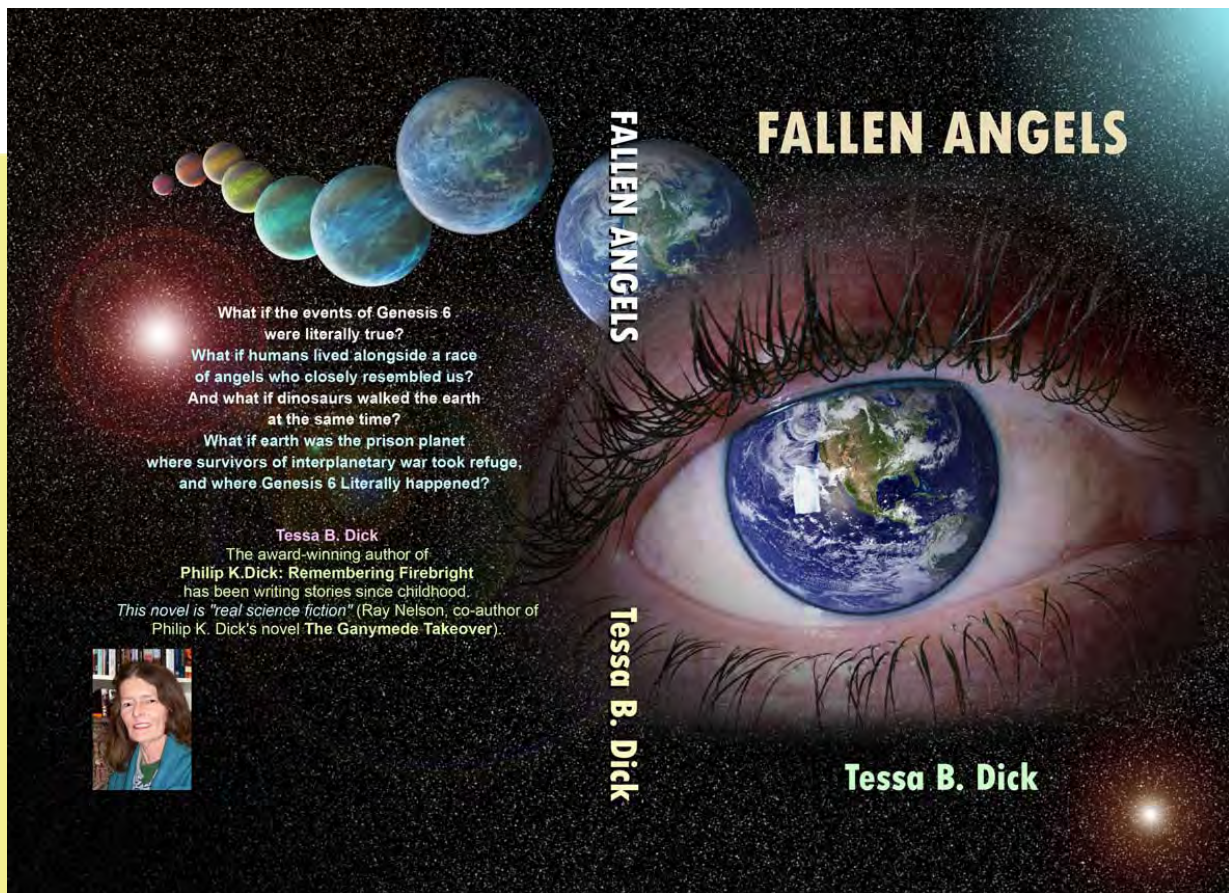
In the final analysis, Tony, like the rest of us, concludes that we will never know for sure what caused Phil's Pink Beam phosphene activity. Since the word phosphene literally means seeing light without light entering the eye, it makes quite a case for pineal gland activity. Of course, so would "DOM" (dimethoxy methamphetamine) a known hallucinogenic that Phil apparently took. But, according to Tony's research the letter where he confesses to experimenting with DOM indicates it was a year AFTER the famous "3-2-74" light show.

We're still not finished speculating, though. Yet another theory is put forth in this issue of PKD Otaku by trans-media story teller, Jasun Horsley (formerly known as Jake Horsley, Aeolus Kephass, and/or Jason Kephass) who also called in to the Pink Beam podcast (Labor Day, 2013.) As I love saying, "The search continues..."

-- ej "jami" Morgan is the author of three books, all available on Amazon.com, and most easily found and accessed through her website [www.AKSbook.com](http://www.AKSbook.com)







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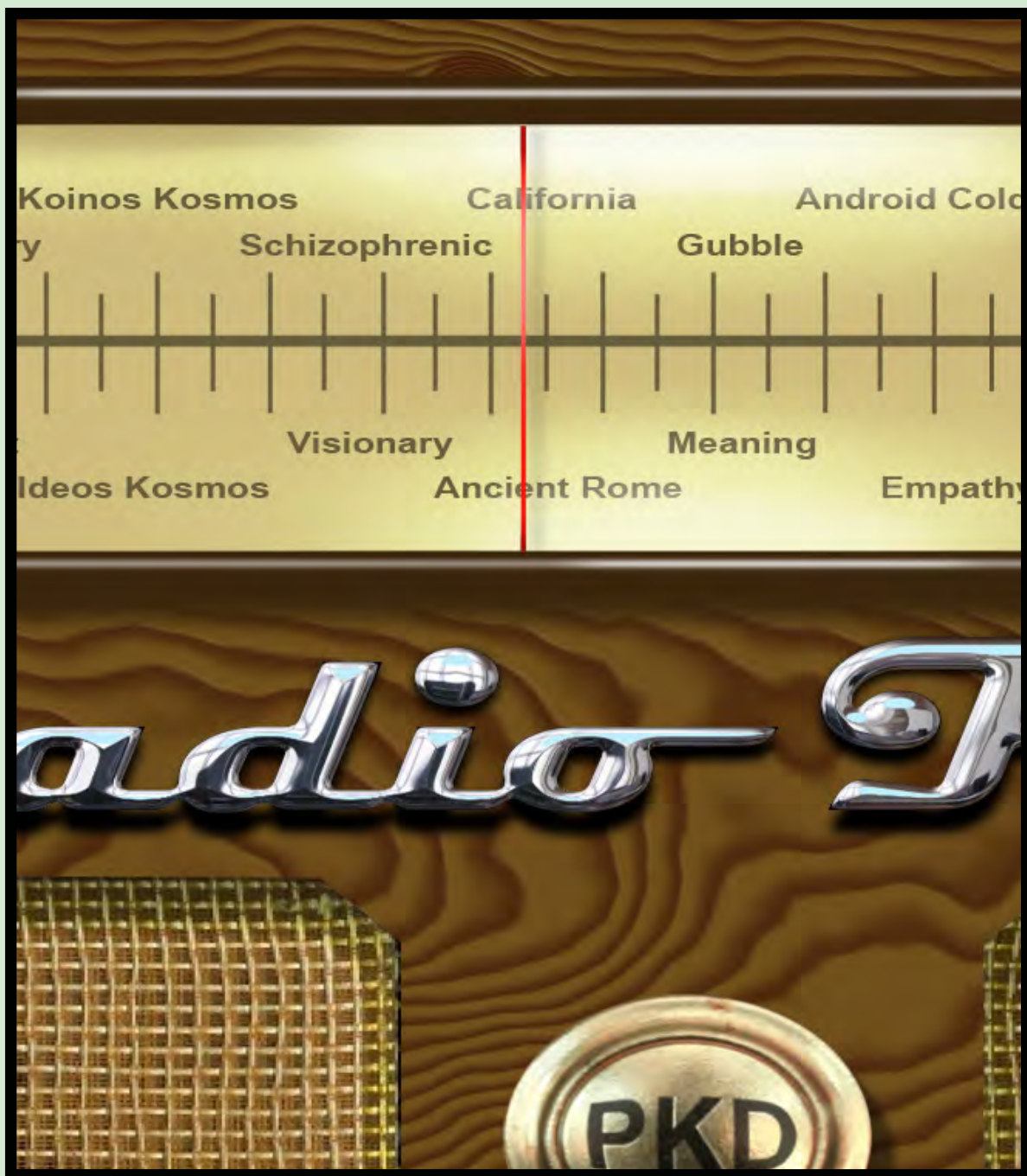


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