



Late breaking and utterly fabulous news! Thanks to the heroic efforts of PKD otaku Marc “Zito” Oberst “PKD OTAKU” is now online. Marc created an incredibly cool site at [www.sinnsitiv.de/pkd-otaku](http://www.sinnsitiv.de/pkd-otaku) to house all back issues of the zine as well as selected articles from an earlier Philip K. Dick zine, SIMULACRUM MELTDOWN. Please check Marc’s site right away and please spread the word about it to any and all.

## King Felix By Lord RC

In 1978 Philip K. Dick wrote two interesting essays, “Cosmogony and Cosmology” and “How To Build A Universe That Doesn’t Fall Apart Three Days Later”.

“Cosmogony and Cosmology” is a summary of what he’d written in his *EXEGESIS* to that time. The essay posits a universe that would explain the infinitude of God and at the same time explain the reason for suffering on this world that we all live in. It’s obvious that PKD had been doing some heavy reading in his new *Encyclopedia Britannica* for this essay, referring to such religious and philosophical thinkers as Plato, Boehme, Bruno and Hans Driesch and incorporating ideas from several religions including Gnosticism, Hinduism and Christianity.

But this first essay will not concern us here and we turn our attention to “How To Build A Universe That Doesn’t Fall Apart Three Days Later”.

This speech/essay was published first in *THE DARK-HAIRED GIRL* (1985) and is now most available in Sutin’s *THE SHIFTING REALITIES OF PHILIP K. DICK* (1995).<sup>i</sup>

PKD starts out with him in the whirling tea-cups at Disneyland being interviewed for French TV then goes on to the main themes in his fiction: what is real? and what is human? He speaks of our false media-created reality and wonders what affect it will have on our children since they watch so much TV. Soon he’s off into *EXEGESIS*-inspired neognosticism and writes of the false in reality and the true in fiction. And of how his writing sometimes seems precognitive.

*FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID* is singled out as showing the truth in fiction as well as the precog nature of his writing. As a mundane example he relates how in the novel he created a character named Kathy who was a drug dealer and possible nark for a particular policeman. Then, after PKD had completed the novel, he actually met this character named Kathy, a real-world nark.

For more esoteric support he singles out the section in *FLOW MY TEARS* where Felix Buckman meets the black man stranger at the all-night gas station and they talk. Phil recalls telling the story to his priest:

As I described the scene in more and more detail, my priest became progressively more agitated. At last he said, “That is a scene from the Book of Acts, from the Bible! In Acts, the person who meets the black man on the road is named Philip – your name.” Father Rasch was so upset by the resemblance that he could not even locate the scene in his Bible. “Read Acts,” he instructed me. “And you’ll agree. It’s the same down to specific details.”<sup>ii</sup>

Phil goes on to single out a few similarities between the scene in *FLOW MY TEARS* and the Book of Acts; the name of Felix for the Roman official who arrests St. Paul and PKD’s own police official Felix Buckman. The name Jason, PKD notes, is found in only one place in the Bible and that is in the Book of Acts. The situation for the Biblical Jason

is similar to that of Jason Taverner in the novel. PKD concludes:

A careful study of my 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? That was four years ago that I discovered all this. For four years I have tried to come up with a theory and I have not. I doubt if I ever will.<sup>iii</sup>

This speech which was probably never delivered, is in a sense PKD's justification for seeing FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID as in part, at least, a revealed text important for the effects that accompanied its publication, such as Nixon's downfall.

It's also interesting in that it enables us to make a comparison between what PKD said above and the actual Book of Acts. On doing this we find that things are quite close.

In the Book of Acts Philip is one of the seven disciples of Jesus chosen to minister to the world so the thousands of other disciples can return to taking care of their families. Philip is a great preacher and miracle worker who almost single-handedly converts the city of Samaria to Christianity. After accomplishing this, he is visited by an angel and told to go south towards Gaza. On the road he meets a man from Ethiopia, a high eunuch under Queen Candace. Philip is told by the Holy Spirit to approach the Ethiopian who is reading the prophet Esaias. He does so and joins the chariot of the Ethiopian on the road to the south. Philip converts the eunuch and baptizes him before disappearing to show up later at Caesarea. This is all I can find of 'Philip' in the Book of Acts.

Felix is actually the Roman Governor over Jerusalem where Paul, against advice, has returned to take on the Jewish elders there as he had done in many cities of the Middle East, spreading the word of Jesus to the gentiles. In Jerusalem Paul is arrested and appeals to the Romans who, to put it briefly, transport him to Caesarea to be brought before the Governor Felix. Felix is a fair-minded individual who protects Paul while a local king, Agrippa, confirms that as Paul is a Roman he must go to Rome for judgement. Paul is taken by slow boat to Italy and after the ship

wrecks he finally gets to Rome where the local Jews agree he should go free. He then spends several years in Rome involved in theological discussions with all and sundry. And there ends the Book of Acts.

So, the two are in general agreement. Father Rasch was right, it was all in the Book of Acts. Jason is there, too, a man who shelters the two disciples Paul and Silas and who is hauled off by the Jews for his troubles.

But there is more in the Book of Acts of relevance to FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID.

The man from Ethiopia who Philip met on the road is sitting in his chariot, waiting. This does bear a close resemblance to the situation at the end of FLOW MY TEARS where Felix Buckman meets the black man waiting by his car at the gas station.

Another stranger coincidence can be found in VALIS where Philip K. Dick selects two statements from his *Tractates Cryptica Scriptura* appended to the novel:

#18. Real time ceased in 70 CE with the fall of the temple at Jerusalem. It began again in 1974 CE. The intervening period was a perfect spurious interpolation aping the creation of the Mind. "The Empire never ended," but in 1974 a cypher was sent out as a signal that the Age of Iron was over; the cypher consisted of two words: KING FELIX, which refers to the Happy (or Rightful) King.

#19. The two-word cypher signal KING FELIX was not intended for human beings but for the descendents of Ikhnaton, the three-eyed race which, in secret, exists with us.<sup>iv</sup>

But in VALIS he does not tell his friends where the cypher was to be found nor what it meant. Later, though, his friend and fellow science fiction writer, Tim Powers said that PKD told him

that on p218 of the first edition of FLOW MY TEARS the last paragraph break juxtaposes the word "king" directly over the name "Felix". The novel was published in Feb 1974, and Phil said Doubleday told him that

the Army did buy -- as I recall -- more than 400 copies of it.<sup>v</sup>

With that established we return to the Book of Acts to when Paul is taken before King Agrippa and allowed to speak for himself. This Paul does:

I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews.<sup>vi</sup>

It made my eyes blink when I saw it: 'happy, king'. King Felix?! PKD's secret cypher had been in the Bible for thousands of years! In the King James Version anyway. Here are actual words – probably the only time they occur together in the Bible – unconsciously chosen by PKD when he wrote FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID and later woven into VALIS. It bears thinking about.

But, like PKD himself, I cannot come up with an explanation for the uncanny parallels between FLOW MY TEARS, VALIS and the Book of Acts.

## Late Night Thoughts About Chapter Thirteen While Listening To AC/DC's "Hells Bells"

By Frank C. Bertrand

A most curious, if brief, conversation takes place in chapter thirteen of Phil Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* between Pris Stratton and John R. Isidore wherein a dead white metaphysical poet from the seventeenth century – who was once a libertine but became an Anglican priest – is mentioned:

"Are you sure?" Isidore asked.

"Yes." She nodded. "You mean am I sure he [Rick Deckard] has incentive? Yes, he has incentive. He *enjoys* it."

"I think," Isidore said, "you're mistaken." Never in his life had he heard of such a thing. Buster Friendly, for instance, had never mentioned it. "It's not in accord with present-day Mercerian ethics," he pointed out. "All life is one; 'no man is an island,' as Shakespeare said in olden times."

"John Donne."

Isidore gestured in agitation. "That's worse than anything I ever head of. Can't you call the police?"

"No." (Ch. 13)

I find this singular for several reasons, not least of which is that Isidore – a human "chickenhead" – who misattributes the quote "no man is an island" to Shakespeare is then corrected by a Nexus-6 android who knows that John Donne actually wrote these words.

Why is that? What is Phil Dick getting at by having these two particular characters allude to Donne's infamous quote?

I should note that there is some connection between Donne and Shakespeare. John Donne (1572-1631) became Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, in London, in 1621, five years after William Shakespeare (1564-1616) died. It is also known that Donne attended the London theaters in his youth, which may account for the frequent allusions in his *Devotions* to the plays of Shakespeare and Marlowe. And it has been conjectured that Donne, who knew the Earl of Southampton, is the "Rival Poet" referred to by Shakespeare in certain of his sonnets (78-83, 85, 86)

As for the Donne quote, it's from his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (1624), number XVII, part of a remarkable sequence of "devotions" about a tolling bell (XVI, XVII, XVIII). It seems that he was seriously ill in 1623, with either typhus or relapsing fever, and during this time wrote *Devotions* as a series of "religious meditations" on the course of his disease. While doing so he could hear the daily tolling of a bell for the funerals of the dead from the nearby church (some 40,000 Londoners died of the plague in 1625) – thus the equally infamous concluding phrases of meditation XVII:

"No man is an island, entire of itself...

Any man's death diminishes me,

Because I am involved in mankind;

And therefore never send to know

For whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

Yes, this is indeed the passage from which Hemingway culled the title of his 1940 novel *For Whom The Bell Tolls*.

Now, it's actually appropriate, but also paradoxical, that Isidore should point out "no man is an island." He lives, in fact, as if on an island, "...alone in this deteriorating, blind building of a thousand uninhabited apartments..." (Ch. 2) More tellingly, "Once pegged as special, a citizen, even if accepting sterilization, dropped out of history. He ceased, in effect, to be part of mankind." (Ch. 2)

It would seem PKD is depicting Isidore as isolated, cut off from the rest of society, a "human" island. Isidore's situation and surroundings remind me of the second stanza in Simon and Garfunkel's 1966 hit, "I Am A Rock":

I've built walls,  
A fortress deep and mighty,  
That none may penetrate.  
I have no need of friendship; friendship  
causes pain.  
It's laughter and it's loving I disdain.  
I am a rock,  
I am an island.

But, Isidore does work "...driving a pickup and delivery truck for a false-animal repair firm; the Van Ness Pet Hospital and his gloomy, gothic boss Hannibal Sloat accepted him as human..." (Ch. 2) And he uses the black empathy box. With it "he experienced them, the others, incorporated the babble of their thoughts, heard in his own brain the noise of their many individual existences." (Ch. 2)

Isidore is, then, not totally isolated; there is some interconnection with the rest of mankind. And there is also interconnection with three Nexus-6 androids, in particular the one who corrects his use of the Donne quote, Pris Stratton. It's she who says to Isidore, "You think I'm suffering because I'm lonely. Hell, all Mars is lonely. Much worse than this." And, "The androids," she said, "are lonely, too." (Ch. 13)

This gives me the thought that PKD wants us to apply Donne's quote not just to Isidore but to the Nexus-6 androids as well. That is, one could also read it as, "No Nexus-6 android is an island," at least in terms of their experiencing an android form of isolation and interdependence. In doing so, however, we make problematic PKD's statement about *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* in a September 1981 interview: "I was beginning to develop the idea of the human versus the android,

the bipedal humanoid that is not essentially human." (*Philip K. Dick: In His Own Words*, p. 182)

Just who, therefore, is **more** "essentially human" here, Isidore or Pris? Is **how** one experiences and copes with loneliness indicative of essential human-ness? Or, make Pris vs. Isidore more of an island?

As PKD has Rick Deckard reflect in Ch. 12, "So much for the distinction between authentic living humans and humanoid constructs...my feelings were the reverse of those intended." And Deckard is meant to be the novel's primary protagonist. What he thinks should be contrasted with what John R. Isidore thinks in Ch. 14: "...they're all strange. He sensed it without being able to finger it. As if a peculiar and malign abstractness pervaded their mental processes."

What an ominous Kafka-like phrase: a *peculiar and malign abstractness*.

But why is it that Isidore – who "...had been a special now for over a year, and not merely in regard to the distorted genes which he carried. Worse still, he had failed to pass the minimum faculties test, which made him in popular parlance a chickenhead" (Ch. 12) – is able to sense this peculiar and malign abstractness and Rick Deckard is not?

Phil Dick himself gives one potential answer, near the beginning of his 1976 essay "Man, Android, and Machine," when he writes:

"A human being without the proper empathy or feeling is the same as an android built so as to lack it, either by design or mistake. We mean, basically, someone who does not care about the fate that his fellow living creatures fall victim to; he stands detached, a spectator, acting out by his indifference John Donne's theorem that "No man is an island," but giving the theorem a twist: That which is a mental and moral island *is not a Man.*" (*The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick*, pp. 211-12)

What this implies is that PKD finds empathy (someone who cares about the fate that his fellow living creatures fall victim to) a specific quality, or essence, constitutive of a human being (human-ness). And he uses Deckard, Isidore and Stratton as antithetical manifestations of this specific "human" quality.

So, what's the connection between this, John Donne and the island? From PKD's rephrasing of Donne's theorem – that which is a mental and moral island is not a man – we can infer that which is a mental and moral island lacks empathy, exhibits indifference to his/her fellow living creatures. But this has me wondering what PKD means by “mental and moral island,” in particular the word “moral.” And I'm not at all certain that Pris Stratton is this kind of island or displays such indifference. She is as much a part of Nexus-6 android-kind as John Isidore is of humankind.

What I think is more certain this scene is essentially about John R. Isidore, and not Pris Stratton or Rick Deckard. It's Isidore whose classification as a “special” and “chickenhead”, along with living by himself in a large apartment building, makes him a kind of “island.” And how he chooses to cope with being an island renders him a far more intriguing and engaging, if not sympathetic, character than the novel's ostensible protagonist, Rick Deckard.

Which leaves me with the thought that Phil Dick has, with this brief conversation (and allusion), given one of his best formulations of, and insight into, the problem of “humanness,” even though his solution in this instance is problematic.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *The Game Players of Titan*

**Robert Silverberg: *Amazing May 1964*, pp. 125-26**

Philip K. Dick is a Californian who erupted into science fiction about a dozen years ago with what seemed like fifty short stories at once. Before long, he had turned to the paperback novel, producing such memorable Ace items as *Solar Lottery*, *Eye In the Sky*, and *The World Jones Made*. His outstanding characteristics were a knack for creating convincing future histories and equally convincing characters.

After a few dazzlingly prolific years, Dick vanished from science fiction almost entirely, returning last year with a burst of activity reminiscent of his debut years. Once again there are short stories by Philip K. Dick in every magazine on the newsstand; his 1963 novel, *The*

*Man In the High Castle*, won a "Hugo" award for excellence at the Washington Science Fiction Convention; and now, full circle again, he is producing original paperbacks for Ace.

*The Game-Players of Titan* doesn't match the high level of his Hugo-winner of last year -- or even of some of his Ace titles of six and seven years ago. It starts off in proper Dick fashion, dumping the reader head long into a complex future world and letting him figure out the background as he goes along. One soon learns that a ray broadcast by the Chinese Communists has made the world sterile and cut its population to a few million; that, contrariwise, an operation to remove something called the Hynes Gland has conferred eternal youth on the survivors; that non-humanoid aliens from Titan have invaded the Earth and seem to be in possession of it. It develops that a small aristocracy of Earthmen, who have won their eminence by chance and not by birth, own all the real estate (by intolerance of the Titanians) and swap it back and forth among themselves in a game that seems like a combination of poker and Monopoly.

So far, so good. Dick's first five chapters or so work within A.E. van Vogt's tradition of tossing a new plot gimmick at the reader every few hundred words, a technique Dick had handled to perfection in the past. (Unlike van Vogt, who calmly threw fifty plot elements into the air and, instead of juggling them, let them hang there, Dick believes in resolving his plots.) Where the book goes astray is when Dick introduces one plot element too many, a fatal one -- psionics.

For his book is about gambling and conspiracies and murders and other suspenseful things, and the suspense is killed stone dead once a bunch of telepaths and precognitives are brought in. The hero, conveniently, is not psionic himself, so he alone remains in bewilderment while the other characters make the plot spin around him. A host of pulp cliches suddenly appear; there is a murder and all the suspects develop amnesia; a secret conspiracy of psionic characters is afoot, directed against the Titanians; the Titanians themselves seem to take on human form from time to time; characters change sides in the conflict almost at random. The book is woefully overplotted, and there are long stretches of dreary gray prose in the middle.

Too bad. The background society is fascinating, and the book would have been a memorable one if Dick had sidestepped psionics and cut out about 10,000 words of conspiracies and the hero's hallucinations. It's good to seem him back at the typewriter, at any rate.

### ***The Penultimate Truth***

**Robert Silverberg: *Amazing* April 1965, pp. 125-126**

Philip K. Dick is a burly, bearded man who seems to operate on an all-or-nothing basis: either stories pour from him in torrents or he doesn't write at all. A couple of years ago he broke a silence of many years with his Hugo-winning *The Man in the High Castle*, and since then he's continued his triumphant return to science fiction with book after book in amazing profusion. This is, I think, his fourth novel in the past twelve months -- or perhaps it's his fifth. And it's a good one, well up to Dick's usual high standards of performance.

The year, despite the jacket copy, is 2025. Most of the world's population lives in "ant tanks" below the surface, having been shepherded there fifteen years before as atomic war threatened. A skeleton government remains on the surface, conducting the war with robot soldiers manufactured in the ant tanks and periodically sending bulletins via television to the hordes below.

What the dwellers in the ant tanks do not know is that the war has been over for thirteen years. Two years of fierce atomic combat had left much of the world a wasteland, but the radiation has died down in most places, and the elite few who live above ground have carved out fiefs for themselves covering enormous areas. They live in lonely majesty, surrounded by robot retainues, tormented by guilt even as they continue the deception being practiced on the people in the tanks. In short, a nightmarish situation, which Dick exploits to the fullest.

Deftly shuttling from character to character, he builds up an elaborate webwork of plot that generates its tension not only from the background situation but from the rivalry among the members of the surface elite. As in any Dick novel, the characters are vivid and real, the pace is headlong, and the fine detail-work is executed with astonishing and unflinching inventiveness. The

book shows signs of having been written at white heat, and this is both good and bad; the prose style is often clotted and lumpy, with fragmented sentences tumbling helter-skelter over one another, but there is a breathlessness about the writing that carries the reader along awesomely and irresistibly.

Recommended. This man is in the very top rank of today's science-fiction writers.

### ***The Man in the High Castle***

**Robert Silverberg: *Amazing* June 1969, pp. 123-24**

This one hardly needs much indorsement at this late date. Last year the World Science Fiction Convention at Washington D.C. gave it the "Hugo" award as the best s-f novel of 1962, and the richly deserved honor was roundly applauded, for this brilliant book is one of the finest works in our field in a long time. The new paperback reprint makes it available to those who didn't snap up the hardcover edition, published by Putnam in 1962.

It's a story of a world in which Germany and Japan triumphed in the war; the turning point of Dick's World-of-If seems to be the attempted assassination of President-elect Roosevelt in 1933. (Curiously, Dick seems to think Roosevelt was already in office when the attempt was made; it's one of the few historical slips in this otherwise meticulous book.) The novel takes place in the year 1962, in this other world. The United States has been partitioned between Japan and the Reich, and is under occupation. Most of the action takes place in California, under Japanese control, and the book's fascination derives in large measure from Dick's artful depiction of the relationships between conqueror and conquered.

The theme has been handled before, by British novelist Sarban and by the late Cyril Kornbluth. But it has never been handled so well. Dick's prose crackles with excitement, his characters are vividly real, his plotting is stunning.

Interestingly, Popular Library has chosen to conceal the fact that the book is science fiction. It's been packaged as a political novel, bracketed with such recent thrillers as *Fail Safe* and *Seven Days in May*. The strategy backfires a little, since it forces the publisher to leave out a blurb to the effect that this was voted "Best Science Fiction Novel of the Year." And I wonder what mundane readers will

think when they pick up the book, believing they're about to get a simple-minded job like those two best sellers, and find themselves enmeshed in a subtle and uncompromising parallel-word novel. Let's hope they're not too bewildered. This book (which mysteriously didn't get serialized in any science fiction magazine) deserves a wide public.

***The Best of Philip K. Dick / Solar Lottery / A Scanner Darkly***

**Robert Silverberg: *Cosmos* September 1977, pp. 33, 39.**

Suddenly it's Philip K. Dick time all over the publishing industry, and long overdue it is, too. His career now extends over twenty-five years, and during much of that span he toiled in obscurity and downright poverty and personal torment, turning out dazzling short stories for penny-a-word pulp magazines and brilliant novels for \$1000-a-book paperback companies. He has seen his best work remain out of print for five and ten years at a time. He has received one, count it, *one* trophy from the s-f readership in all that time, a Hugo in long ago 1963 for *The Man in the High Castle*, a novel which almost immediately went off sale and remained in oblivion until rescued by an enterprising paperback editor just a year or two ago. Not for him the five-figure advances, the platoons of awards, the nifty multi-volume reissues in uniform format, the guest-of-honor invitations, and all the other perks that sweeten the lives of some science fiction writers. And all the while Dick has pursued his own dark and desperate vision of the precariousness of life, producing a body of work that for unity of theme and power of human perception is unmatched in science fiction. Somehow he has hung on, through what has been a turbulent and exhausting personal life, continuing to write, continuing almost heroically to turn out his books, supported mainly by income from sale of translation rights (his books are extraordinarily popular in Europe) and from the all too occasional domestic bonanza.

And now, at last, it is changing. We have a new Dick novel, a hardcover reissue of his earliest novel, and a fine fat collection of his short stories. And, at the same time, at least nine of his books have reappeared in shiny new editions from three or four softcover publishers. At last, he has some visibility and some measure of prosperity, and

perhaps now he'll be something more than a writer's writer, an unsung artist known only to the passionate few. For the odd thing about his long sojourn in obscurity is that he's not a literateur, an experimentalist aiming his work at a cultured elite. No, he's a storyteller, whose books (with the exception of a few, notably *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich*) out to be readily accessible to the mass market science fiction consumer. Perhaps Dick's commercial failure, up to now, is as much a fluke, and accident of publishing, as it is a function of the terrifying honesty of his work. Honesty on that level sometimes repels the reader looking for easy kicks, but even the more dedicated reader can't pay much attention to a writer whose books are impossible to find.

The short story collection, prefaced by a brief essay in which John Brunner splendidly characterizes Dick's accomplishments -- "Reading a Philip K. Dick story is a highly efficient means of destroying preconceived perceptual sets." -- offers nineteen pieces ranging from Dick's very first, the delicious "Beyond Lies the Wub" of 1952, to his 1974 "A Little Something for Us Tempunauts." Most of the stories date from the 1950s and early 1960s -- after an amazingly fertile start as a short story writer, Dick at mid-career shifted his energies almost entirely to novels -- and all are familiar from anthologies and from Dick's own previous collections.

Dick as a short story writer is something a little different from Dick as novelist, for his novels tend to be piled high with detail -- for awhile they were almost turgid with it -- whereas his short stories are graceful, swift, elegantly constructed. But the same preoccupations are to be found here. Dick is, above all else, the poet of paranoia and schizophrenia, and reality refuses to hold still in these stories just as it does in his novels. Such stories as "Imposter," "The Days of Perky Pat," and "Foster, You're Dead" show Dick concerned at the outset of his career with the political and philosophical dilemmas that are the core of his mature novels.

From Gregg Press's series of handsome and sturdy hardbound photo-offset reprints of old s-f comes Dick's first novel, *Solar Lottery* of 1955 - a kind of van Vogt novel, as Thomas Disch makes clear in his exemplary preface, but a van Vogt that makes some sense, and with a dollop of Kornbluth-Pohl extrapolation. It is written in neat, clean,

functional prose, with no trace of the post-1965 mannerisms that at once irritate and define, and that weirdly over-explicit prose by which in a welter of gratuitous dependent clauses, he tells his readers (and his characters tell each other) information which is already in their possession or which is not at all necessary to the comprehension of the situation.

*Lottery* is a straightforward, suspenseful and very 1950ish s-f tale -- the characters move against a background of one-note extrapolation: "Suppose the head of the government were chosen by random process instead of election" -- yet Dick's hand is already evident. Perhaps the ironic reversal by which the president is chosen at random while his official assassin-designate is duly elected by a formal convention, is second-hand Kornbluth-Pohl, but the climatic revelation that the dice are stacked even in this randomized society looks forward to the cynicism of the radicalized Dick of the late 1960s. And in chapter eight Dick offers an actual scene of love, loneliness and frustrated yearning (very real -- amazingly real for 1955 s-f) that would not have come from Kornbluth, Pohl, van Vogt, or anyone else writing at the time. (well, perhaps from Kornbluth.) Dick's miserably lonely nineteen-year-old Eleanor is a forerunner of all the girl-women of his mature books.

*Solar Lottery* is, by the way, a book so old that "hopefully" is used correctly.

Dick's latest novel, *A Scanner Darkly*, is obviously a deeply felt personal memoir, the surprising outcome of his experiences in the California drug culture. In a recent interview he declared: "I believe that *Scanner* is a masterpiece. I believe it is the only masterpiece I will ever write...because it is unique." In fact, the book is a masterpiece of sorts, full of demonic intensity, but it happens also not to be a very successful novel.

It is, let us note, *not* a science fiction novel however it may be packaged when it shows up in paperback. Ostensibly it takes place in 1986 or thereabouts, but except for some peripheral gadgetry it might just as well be happening in Southern California this week, and there is no real extrapolative content that I can see. It is written in trendy 1969 slang and in the peculiarly clotted prose typical of post-1965 Dick. It is populated by a cast of zonked zombies; people without pasts, without futures, and with precious little in the way of present; and sad burned-out junkies of no

redeeming social purpose except as object lessons on the evils of dope. The book is a tract: its characters indulge in hard drugs, lose their grip, and go under, meeting horrid dooms. At times, it has the lunatic seriousness of high farce, as in the sequence which involves the synthesizing of cocaine from drugstore sunburn spray. (This is in places a *very* funny book.)

It is full of metaphors of paranoia not to be taken seriously, as when Dick suggests that *all* telephone calls are monitored in taped playback by police officers, a task that would in actuality require a staff of several million full-time agents. It oscillates crazily between these impossibilities and searing insight into the lives of the assorted losers it displays, and though the book is, beyond doubt, something of terrible importance to its author -- a testament, in truth -- it is such a jumble of levels and techniques that it is hard for the reader to share the intensity of its author's feelings, not when he alternates between distancing us and hauling us into the heart of the turmoil. Page by page, it is dazzling, wildly comic, desperately inventive; but because its characters are going nowhere, the book goes nowhere. Dick thinks he is taking us on a journey through hell, and undoubtedly *he* has been on a journey through hell while preparing himself for writing this novel, but most of the time he's really only fooling around. Although, suddenly in the thirteenth chapter, his protagonist's drug-sodden head finally comes apart and Dick drops all his jittery hasty pop mannerisms and uncorks a dark and somber chapter, enormously powerful and unexpectedly moving, written in straight pure classical prose. It seems almost gratuitously tacked on to what has gone before, but of itself it is a wonder.

And Philip K. Dick is a wonder. His newest novel is a failure, but a stunning failure, and now that so many of his books have returned to print we can see the magnitude of his accomplishment, the true heroism of the man. He has laid himself bare in two dozen novels and a stack of short stories, and has crated a unique, idiosyncratic, instantly recognizable world. He is a great science fiction writer; in his weird fouled-up way he may also just possibly be a great human being.



## Some miscellaneous primary source material from "The Tuesday Dose"

### THE ACTS OF PAUL

Brief Synopsis for Alternative World Novel

*Premise:* Paul of Tarsus does not have his conversion experience on the road to Damascus, is not converted to Christianity, continues to persecute it as Saul, never writes his Christian letters but instead leaves a canon of anti-Christian letters. This is what caused an alternate world to branch off.

*Plot:* An alternate world (set in the present) in which although Jesus was crucified, Christianity died out in favor of Manichaeism in the third century (called, of course, the first century based on the birth of Mani). The New Testament doesn't exist. The books of the New Testament (excepting Paul's letters) are known to contemporary scholars to have once existed, since they are mentioned in early Manichaean writings. Mani is known as the "Apostle of Light" and supreme "Illuminator." Like Jesus he was crucified. These mentions of Christianity are in a defamatory form, hence only garbled quotes and accounts of Jesus are extant. The narrator of this novel has been trying for years to reconstruct the actual Christ story. He has gotten it all wrong; essential parts are missing, and totally absurd spurious interpolations abound in his exegesis. The narrator (as he tells us), having studied the extant references to Jesus, has come to the conclusion, which he expresses in his novel, that Christianity was the true religion, and because Ahriman (the evil deity of dualistic Manichaeism) rules the world, it follows from Manichaean doctrine itself that the true religion would be suppressed (the narrator has fed this problem to a computer and derived this answer). And if it is the true religion, and Jesus was God or the Son of God, then Christianity must still – but totally secretly – exist (so agrees the computer). The narrator decides to seek out the secret Christians, and with the help of the computer analyzes where he will find them if his hypothesis is correct. He looks there – place "C" – finds nothing. So, disappointed, he abandons his search and retires in scholarly defeat. At the end a true Christian finds him: the Christian, shining like

an angel, hands him a book. It is the Fourth Gospel, intact; it contains the Logos Doctrine. The Christian, as if a supernatural being, vanishes without a trace. The narrator feeds the Fourth Gospel into the computer's permanent memory banks and then instructs the computer to print it out at every one of its terminals throughout the world.

Source: the original source for "The Acts of Paul" is unknown to me. It was included as a special supplement to the deluxe edition of Underwood-Miller's *The Collected Stories of Philip K. Dick*; 1987.

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[This "story," according to Anne Dick's biography of Phil, was sent to Daniel Gilbert in September 1978. Gilbert had sent a seven page manuscript to Phil called "Confessions of a Troublemaker." Phil praised the story and, in a letter to Gilbert, sent back the following piece.]

In the back of the bus an old wino in tattered clothing sat hunched over, holding a wine bottle ill-concealed in a brown paper bag. He seemed to be staring at me -- in a listless and depressed sort of way -- and I found myself returning his stare.

"Don't you recognize me?" the old wino said suddenly. "No." I answered, hoping his limited span of attention would wander away from me. But the old wino lurched to his feet, shambled over and seated himself beside me. "I'm Phil Dick," he said hoarsely. "At the end of my life. Changed, haven't I?" He chuckled but without mirth.

"This is how a giant of the field winds up?" I said, amazed, distress filling me. "My life was an unending failure," Phil said, and I saw now that it was, indeed, Phil Dick: I recognized the eyes, the sorrow-drenched but still proud glare of a person who had known torment but had not bowed to it. "Marriage after marriage down the rathole...money gone...my children and friends deserting me...all my hopes for a family and stability shot." He took a covert swig from the bottle; it was, I saw, Ripple. "I may have been a success as a writer," he continued, "but what does that matter really? Living alone year after year in a rented room, paying off the I.R.S. and my endless child support, waiting vainly for the right girl, the girl who, when she finally showed up, merely laughed at me." Tears filled his

eyes. "Being a giant of science fiction is not all that much," he rasped. "It's like Goethe said: the peasant with his hearth and wife and children is happier than the greatest philosopher."

From behind us a sharp laugh sounded. "I'm doing fine," a needle-like voice penetrated at the two of us. Turning, I saw that it was Harlan Ellison, wearing a snappy suit, his face dancing with satisfaction. "Tough luck, Phil, but we get what we deserve. There's a logic to the universe."

"Okay, Harlan," Phil murmured, clutching his wine bottle. "Lay off." "You may have wound up in the gutter," Harlan continued, unabashed, "but I have my big house in Sherman Oaks; I have a library of all my thousands of --"

"I knew you when you were a twerp fan," Phil broke in. "Back in 1954. I gave you a story for your fanzine." "And a crummy story it was," Harlan said with a smirk. Falteringly, Phil murmured, "But you said you liked it." "I liked the name of the main character," Harlan corrected. "Waldo. I remember exactly what I said; I said 'I always admire people named Waldo.' I threw the story away."

Slumped over in misery, Phil said nothing. The bus continued on; and, as I scrutinized the gloating, amused face of Harlan Ellison and the unhappy, defeated figure beside me I wondered what it was all about, what it was all for. Which of the two of them did I feel the most pity for? Gloating cruelty and triumph, or wretched despair? It was hard to say.

Source: Anne R. Dick, *Search for Philip K. Dick, 1928-1982*; Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd., 1995, pp. 265-267.

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#### A Note from the Author

"I became interested in the Theory of Games, first in an intellectual manner (like chess) and then with a growing uneasy conviction that Minimax was playing an expanding role in our national life. Although specialists in related fields (mathematics, statistics, sociology, economics) are aware of its existence, the Games Theory has been little publicized. Yet it was instrumental in the Allied strategy in the Second World War. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union employ Minimax strategy as I sit here. While I was writing SOLAR LOTTERY,

Von Neumann, the co-inventor of the Games Theory, was named to the Atomic Energy Commission, bearing out my belief that Minimax is gaining on us all the time."

Source: *Solar Lottery*; Ace Books [first edition], 1955. This note seems to be absent from most of the later editions.

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...Dick was one of the handful of American science fiction writers to be highly praised by mainstream critics for his literary abilities. And one of the highest points of his career was *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* "It's one of my favorite novels," Dick said. "Although it's essentially a dramatic novel, the moral and philosophical ambiguities it dealt with are really very profound. The book stemmed from my basic interest in the problem of differentiating the authentic human being from the reflex machine, which I called an android. In my mind, 'android' is a metaphor for people who are physiologically human, but who behave in non-human ways."

Dick first became interested in this problem while doing research for *The Man in the High Castle*. Given access to original Gestapo documents in the closed stacks of the University of California at Berkeley, Dick discovered diaries by SS men stationed in Poland. One sentence in particular had a profound effect on the author.

"The sentence read, 'We are kept awake at night by the cries of starving children,'" Dick explained. "There was obviously something wrong with the man who wrote that. I later realized that, with the Nazis, we were essentially dealing with a defective group mind, a mind so emotionally defective that the word human could not be applied to them."

"Worse," Dick continued, "I felt that this was not necessarily a solely German trait. This deficiency had been exported into the world after World War II and could be picked up by people anywhere at any time. I wrote *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* during the Vietnam war. At the time, I was revolutionary and existential enough to believe that these android personalities were so lethal, so dangerous to human beings, that it ultimately might be necessary to fight them. The problem in killing them would then be: 'Would we not become like the androids in our very effort to wipe them out?'"

Source: Paul M. Sammon, "The Making of Blade Runner." *Cinefantastique* July-August, 1982: pp.22-23.

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"Meanwhile, due to all the money I'm making I'm experiencing a vast depression, mirrored by a decay in the reality around me. (1) The refrigerator makes odd noises. (2) There is CB interference on my TV. (3) The rear-end of my car is leaking oil. See? UBIK revisited. However, my girlfriend who has/had cancer has been pronounced cured. I guess that's good (boy, I AM depressed!)."

PKD in a letter to Daniel Gilbert; September 1978

Source: Anne R. Dick, *Search for Philip K. Dick, 1928 - 1982*. The Edwin Mellon Press, Ltd.: 1995, pg. 267. [This letter is not in the *Selected Letters of Philip K. Dick* published by Underwood/Miller.]

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Dedication in the 1st edition of *We Can Build You* published by DAW Books 1972:

FOR KATHY DEMUELLE  
MY BEST FRIEND

"MEA VOLUPTAS, MEA DELICIAE,  
MEA VITA, MEA AMO ENITAS..."

Dedication in the 2nd Edition (1975) and all following editions:

TO ROBERT AND GINNY HEINLEIN  
WHOSE KINDNESS TO US MEANT MORE  
THAN ORDINARY WORDS CAN ANSWER

Source: First and second editions of *We Can Build You*.

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[Anthony Boucher, Phil's friend and mentor, died on April 29, 1968. *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, a publication Boucher co-founded, asked writers to contribute their reflections on the passing of their colleague. Here is Phil's.]

Tony loved the world and found beauty in it everywhere. With his death that beauty is not now so strong. We must manufacture that beauty -- and wit and warmth and love -- back once more, so that it will be as it was before he left it. When I think of Tony I think of music, because he understood and had for his idols the kindness and drama that music contains. With music, as with everything else he carried into his heart, he was in some mysterious way merged with it; he did not merely hear it but in this strange way added himself to the music, so as to change it. I knew Tony for almost twenty years, and he did for me such powerful things that I am not the person I would have been if there had been no Tony Boucher. Here is a poem he loved, the last text of Schubert's *Die Schone Mullerin*:

Good night, good night!  
Until all awakens.  
Forget your joy, forget your sorrow!  
The full moon rises,  
The mists disperse,  
And the sky above, how vast its arch!

Source: "Anthony Boucher," *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* Vol. 35, no. 2 (August 1968): p. 5.

### Footnotes to "King Felix"

<sup>i</sup> THE SHIFTING REALITIES OF PHILIP K. DICK:

Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings, Ed. Lawrence Sutin, Vintage Press, tp, 1995, ISBN: 0-679-74787-7

<sup>ii</sup> TSR 267.

<sup>iii</sup> TSR 268.

<sup>iv</sup> VALIS, Bantam, pb, 14156-2, Feb 1981, p150. Also in the *Tractates Cryptica Scriptura* appended to VALIS.

<sup>v</sup> *The Philip K. Dick Society Newsletter*, Ed. Paul Williams, #4 p5.

<sup>vi</sup> *The Holy Bible*, The National Publishing Co., hb, Translated out of the Original Tongues and with the Former Translations diligently compared and revised. Commonly known as the Authorized (King James) Version. The Book of Acts 26.2, p1164. Courtesy of The Gideons.