

PKD OTAKU #4

You Don't Know Dick

by E.A. Johnson

"One mind there is; but under it two principles contend."

Message broadcast to Earth from VALIS, ca. 1974 AD

Thomas struggled to keep up with the crowd. His leather *phallos* banged painfully against his real one. He stopped for a second to slide it over to the side before running on. As he did, he vowed to himself for the hundredth time that he would get in better shape. But for the moment, he sought consolation in the thought that his priestly robes and sandals did not make running any easier.

Other than the angry crowd, the downtown business district was deserted. Everyone who still had a job had gone home long before nightfall while it was still safe. There wasn't a single policeman in sight. Everything was just as it should be.

The mob roared. They had flushed their quarry from its hiding place. Thomas spotted a single figure sprinting across a tiny city park ahead of a surging mass. Panting, Thomas stopped to catch his breath and then ran on.

A few minutes later, he heard another cheer. The crowd had cornered its prey in a dead-end alley between two buildings. At long last, Thomas caught up with the others. Looking around, he could tell that everyone was still high on the fans that he had given them during the ritual blessing. He could see the red glint in their eyes. Fascinated, he focused on the place where everyone else was staring. The object of the crowd's attention was trying to scrape its way through the brick walls with its bare hands.

Realizing at last that escape was impossible and resistance futile, the victim huddled in a corner next to a huge dumpster. It stared at the mob with huge frightened eyes. It might have been trying to say something but Thomas couldn't hear anything over the rumble of the crowd.

As one man, the mob advanced on the target of their hatred with bats, clubs, and two-by fours. Thomas could hear the sickening thuds and crunches. Within minutes, the bloodied wreck was hog-tied and then dragged to the center of the alley.

"Burn the andy bastard!" someone shouted. The mob cheered. Other anti-android curses spread through the crowded alley like a wild-fire. Everyone had a good reason why they hated all android, robot, and replicant trash.

Without waiting for instructions, the crowd began emptying the contents of all the dumpsters in the alley. Using cardboard boxes and an assortment of other trash, they worked as a single creature to build a huge funeral pyre. When the pyre was done, they threw the moaning android on top.

And then, out of nowhere, a gas can appeared. A large angry man doused the android and the pyre. He barely had time to jump back before a sudden shower of lighted matches poured through the air. The mound caught fire with a breath-taking whoosh.

The crowd members closest to the surging flames lost some of their hair. While those in front struggled to push their way back from the overwhelming heat, those at the rear of the mob pushed forward to get a better look. After repeated surges and much thrashing around, the mob reached a tentative equilibrium.

And then, through the thick black smoke heavy with the awful stench of burning trash and toxic android flesh, Thomas heard the android scream. It was the most frightening sound that he had ever heard. A bone-shattering cry of inhuman pain.

Shuddering, Thomas forced his eyes away from the spectacle of the pyre. He stared at the mob instead. The bright flames made everyone glow red. It seemed as if the fans had finally possessed not just their eyes but their entire bodies.

Thomas went around the corner and gulped down big breaths of fresh air. When he was able to breathe, he yanked open his pill box. His hands were shaking so much that he spilled his collection of holy pills all over the sidewalk. A scattered rainbow of red fans, yellow blessings, blue tongues, orange voices, and green visions stared back up at him. After kneeling down on the cement, he found two white blisses and dry-swallowed them. But several hours later, he was still twitching.

* * *

On the other side of town, John paused by the entrance to the *Zebra Room*. The tips of his fingers were stained red after a hard day's night as a graffiti artist. Before stepping into the pizza parlor, he checked to make sure that the stencil and spray paint were hidden at the bottom of his backpack. He found his way to the bar and sat down on an empty stool.

"What'll it be?" the barman asked.

"A double. *Laphroaig*. Neat," John answered. He had already decided to treat himself.

While the bartender looked for the right bottle, John tried once again to remember the idea that had come to him while taking his morning shower. He had forgotten to write it down before leaving his tiny conapt. By the time he had remembered, the idea had vanished. The loss had haunted him the entire day.

When the *Laphroaig* arrived, John paid for it with a \$20 coin and left a generous tip on the bar. He gave the glass a gentle swirl and then paused to breath in its aroma. He raised a silent toast to the lost thought and took his first sip. As he felt the welcome warmth spread down into his belly, another thought bubbled to the surface. Reaching for a *Zebra Room* napkin, John pulled out a pen and jotted down the words as they appeared, adding the title to the top only when the rest of the poem was finished.

THE BUBBLE

From unknown depths the bubble rose
and broke the glassy smoothness of my day.
As it soared into the hollow of my mind
I marveled at the rainbow in its belly
and tried to catch it.
But my hands,
rough and over-eager,
ignored its fragility
and shattered the delicate thought ...
...leaving nothing but a fading taste
on the palate of my awareness.

Savoring his scotch, John re-read what he had scrawled on the cocktail napkin. Not sure whether it was any good, he shrugged, folded the napkin, and put it away in his pocket. He would figure it out tomorrow when he wasn't as tired.

After he finished his drink, John grabbed his backpack and headed for the men's room. Since the room was empty, he pulled out both the stencil and the red spray paint and then went to work. Within seconds, the words **Remember #6. The Empire Never Ended** from the Holy Tractates were bleeding on all three stalls. John put away his tools, stopped to piss in the single working urinal, and then strolled out.

As he whistled his way down the well-lit street, John spotted several acolytes headed his way. Each was wearing a brand new leather *phallos*. John stifled a laugh. No matter how many times he saw the Brethren wearing the symbol of their faith, he always imagined them as dazed revellers who had lost their way to the Bacchanalia or confused actors in search of one of Aristophanes's plays.

John smiled at the acolytes as they walked by, flashed them the peace sign with his stained fingers, and said, "KING."

Surprised to hear the traditional greeting from such a non-traditional source, it took a moment for the acolytes to respond with the appropriate "FELIX."

* * *

Thomas spent a sleepless night in his spartan cell. When morning finally came, he stumbled out of the monastery and crossed the huge courtyard in order to attend the Matins at the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia. When the service ended, he followed the other brothers back towards the refectory to break the night's fast.

During the silent morning meal, one of the elder brothers approached and left a short note. Thomas almost choked when he read, "The Dick will see you at the *Omphallos*. Now." Without taking another bite of his bread, Thomas put away his water cup and then hurried towards the spiritual center of the Cathedral.

When he arrived at the circular *Omphallos*, The Dick was sitting alone in the middle of the room. The Pink Beam flickered on her forehead. The wallscreens were covered with Holy *Vuzak*--an endless succession of Klees, Picassos, and Kandinskys flashing in and out of view.

After a moment, Thomas managed to croak out his greeting. "KING!"

"Ah ... FELIX," The Dick replied as she turned towards him. "FELIX to you, Brother Thomas. We are glad that you could come and see us now. We have been meaning to talk to you for quite a long time ..."

"I am honored, Father Margaret," Thomas replied as he kissed the offered ring. "How may I serve Your Grace?"

The Dick frowned as if deep in thought. "So tell me, did you enjoy the little retirement party last night?" She didn't seem to notice that her left hand was playing with her ringed *phallos*. "We heard it was quite a success ..."

"Yes, Your Grace," Thomas answered. "The Church's loyal followers retired the offending replicant."

"We are glad," The Dick commented. "So very glad. We also heard that you distinguished yourself at the pre-retirement blessing."

"I always strive to do my best, Your Grace."

"Yes, you should ... strive that is" The Dick paused for another moment before continuing. "You know, your older brother John is becoming quite a thorn in the side of the Church. We find his work with those MAN! Schismatics to be rather annoying."

"I am sorry, Your Grace," Thomas hastened to reply. "But--"

"But ... we are not our brother's keeper. Yes, we understand," The Dick paused again. "However, we would like to bring him in for a little ... ah ... conversation. Do you think you might be able to help?"

"Of course, Your Grace. What did you have in mind?"

After The Dick explained what was on her mind, she blessed and then dismissed Thomas. As he walked out of the *Omphallos*, the elder who had delivered the note cornered Thomas. The obsequious brother wanted to know if the meeting with the *Iron Maiden* had gone well. Annoyed by the man's impertinence, Thomas held up the little pill that The Dick had given him along with her blessing: a rare pink beam.

Disgusted, the elder brother stared with envy at the pill before saying, "Well, I guess you must have done something right. You're dismissed ... brother."

* * *

A small group of peaceful demonstrators gathered at Speaker's Corner in Buddha Park to protest last night's brutal lynching of another android. John mingled with the crowd, stopping to talk to some, while exchanging a sad glance or a simple touch with others.

The size of the demonstration grew as everyone listened to the passionate words flowing from the alternating human and android speakers. John worked the crowd, passing out copies of one of the little *samizdat* pamphlets that he had prepared for MAN! This particular *double* featured two Dick essays--"The Android and the Human" backed by "Man, Android, and Machine"--that had long been banned by the Church.

At some point, one of the meeting organizers ran up to him and said, "Hey, John, you're on. It's your turn next."

John threaded his way through the crowd and climbed up on the stage. He stood silent in front of the microphone for a full minute. He could feel the anxious crowd locking its full attention on him as they waited in anticipation for his first word. When he felt the tension reach its peak, he said: "The violence must stop!"

The crowd responded on cue. The demonstrators began clapping in unison after a shouted scattering of "Amens!" The unified clapping grew louder and louder. After another minute passed, John raised his hand for silence. The clapping stopped.

"Androids are not corporate chattel. Androids are not human property. Androids can not be 'disposed of after use.' As you all know, the Church failed each and every one of us when it declared that androids were not human. Instead of continuing to ask Dick's great question: 'What is Human,' the Church had the audacity to provide **the answer**. But their answer is the wrong one." The rapt crowd absorbed John's every word.

"It doesn't take much to see that androids are living, thinking, and feeling beings, now does it? Hath not an android eyes? Hath not an android hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Is not an android fed with the same spiritual food, hurt with the same weapons, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a human?" John paused again as if waiting for an answer.

"The selective and systematic slaughter of androids by corporations must be terminated. The random lynchings in our cities and towns must end. The violence must stop. And the only way to stop the violence is to bring an end to the institution behind it. As it is written in the Forty-First Tractate of the Great Dick: "***The Empire is the institution, the codification, of derangement; it is insane and imposes its insanity on us by violence, since its nature is a violent one.***"

After one last pause, John shouted: "The Empire must end so that MAN! may be born. Manumit Androids, Now!" He raised his fist in the air.

The crowd took up the chant with their fists in the air. "Manumit Androids, Now! Manumit Androids, Now! Manumit Androids, Now!" Here and there, humans stopped to embrace the few androids in the crowd. And within minutes, everyone was ready to march on City Hall, placards held high and banners waving.

As John climbed down from the stage, someone stepped out of the crowd and slipped him a piece of paper. Without even thinking, John stuffed it into his pocket and ran ahead. He was going to lead the chanting crowd on its march through the center of the city and past the walls of the Hagia Sophia Cathedral.

That night, as he undressed after an especially exhausting day, he found two pieces of paper in his pocket. One was the napkin that contained his poem. The other was a note that said: "Please meet me at the *Palm Tree Garden* tomorrow at noon. It's very important. Your brother, Thomas."

* * *

The *Palm Tree Garden & Waterbar* was one of the swankiest places in town. An eclectic cross between a cafe and a botanical garden, the somewhat steamy greenhouse was host to the city's elite movers, shakers, powerbrokers, and religious elders. Between the branches of giant ferns and towering coconut palms, you could catch occasional glimpses of the latest commercial *Vuzak* playing on the wallscreens. An image of a nude *Madonnita*--one of the many cloned offspring of last century's legendary Madonna--undulated in and out of view.

"Hi, Tom. You must be doing well if you're hanging out at a place like this," John smiled as he walked in the door five minutes late. He held out his hand to his waiting brother.

Thomas hesitated for a moment before shaking it. "You know I hate it when you call me that." After a pause, he went on, "But I guess I should be grateful that you even bothered to show up at all."

The belly-dancing hostess led them to an isolated table hidden deep in the lush green jungle. The menu screen displayed a tiny portion of the five hundred different types of mineral and spring water available that day. If you touched any of the little bubbles on the screen, the terminal would display the chemical analysis, source, certification of purity, description of taste, and a dozen other pieces of information about the water of your choice.

John and Thomas sat in silence as they scrolled through the water list and pretended to look at all the rare types of domestic and imported water. When they stopped playing with the screen, someone materialized beside their table.

"Hi, my name is Terry. I'll be your waterboy this afternoon. May I tell you about our special waters today--or are you ready to order?"

"I think we're ready to order," Thomas answered. "I'll take twelve ounces of the chilled *Canadian Glacier*. No ice."

"A lovely choice, sir," Terry agreed. "At only four particles per million, it's simply the purest water left in the world. You can't do any better than that--even if you were to find out where in British Columbia it comes from. And you, sir? What will you be having?"

"I think I'll try the *Akva*. Twelve ounces would be fine--chilled and without ice," John said.

"Ah, the wonderful gift of Hesjuvalla Spring--the glory of Iceland. A lovely choice as well, sir. I will be back with your drink orders in a minute," Terry said and vanished. The uncomfortable silence returned.

John pulled out a copy of his little underground *double*. "Here, try a sample of my latest effort. Don't worry, it won't bite you. They're words by the great Dick himself. Of course, you might not have seen them before ... since your beloved Church has banned certain texts as being *unorthodox*. You might want to read these essays before you go off and do any android bashing."

Thomas twisted in his seat but crammed the pamphlet in his pocket. The silence resumed.

"OK. I'll bite. So why did you want to see me?" John asked. "Are you having doubts about your religious calling?"

"Actually, I was hoping that you would have seen the error of your ways and decided to join us," Thomas replied.

"Oh, Tom. Come off it. When are you ever going to give it up? Haven't you figured it out yet? The world has always been divided into two types of people. There are people like you who want answers and there are people like me who want questions. So what is it you really want?"

Terry returned with their glasses of water. A consummate professional, he realized that the two men were having an argument. As a result, he served their drinks without a single word or wasted motion and disappeared back into the garden without even being noticed.

"You know, John," Thomas continued. "I'm worried about you. I really am. Those MAN! Schismatics you associate with are nothing but trouble."

"Trouble?" John laughed. "You've been hanging out with your Rhipidon Society thugs for so long that you are starting to sound like them."

Thomas reddened. "They're not thugs. The Society and its allies brought down the Empire. They are the ones who put an end to Fremont's Regime. You should be grateful to them. They freed us--and you--from the Black Iron Prison."

"That's where you're wrong, Tom. Because all you have managed to do is to recreate the Empire. It may be a kinder, gentler Empire, but it's still the same Black Iron Prison."

"No," Thomas said getting angry. "No. We fought against it. We defeated it. We destroyed the Empire."

John gave him a sad smile and said, "*Remember #42. To fight the Empire is to be infected by its derangement. This is a paradox; whoever defeats a segment of the Empire becomes the Empire; it proliferates like a virus, imposing its form on its enemies. Thereby it becomes its enemies.*"

Another long pause followed.

"Well, I see that even my brother can quote scripture," Thomas frowned. "Of course, understanding the meaning of what was written is an entirely different matter But let's just pretend for a moment that I agree with you. According to that line of reasoning, you would be arguing that if you Schismatics should happen to defeat us, then you will become like us. You will be the new Empire."

"Absolutely." John smiled. "But after us will come new schismatics. And after them, even newer ones. And each tiny correction will bring us that much closer to the One Mind."

"Forget it." Thomas pushed his chair away from the table. "I never could argue with you. And you've gotten crazier than ever. I should have known that there was no point in wasting my time talking to you." Thomas stood up, tossed a \$50 coin on the table to cover the cost of the expensive imported water, and walked off.

"Hey, Tom!" John called out after him. "You never even touched your water!"

A few minutes later, while John was still enjoying his glass of chilled *Akva* in the lush tropical comforts of the *Palm Tree Garden*, several Rhipidon Society Enforcers made an abrupt appearance around the table.

Somewhere down the street, Thomas hid his brother's pamphlet deep in the folds of his robe with one hand while he fumbled to open his pill box with the other. The pills scattered all over the sidewalk. Thomas looked up into the sky and muttered, "Oh, Dick. What have I done?"

The End

Philip K. Dick: A letter to Richard Geis from *Psychotic* #20 (December 1967): p. 18

Thank you for your nice letter and the copy of PSYCHOTIC. It is a good fanzine, I think; there is a proper amount of material devoted to s-f and not so much gossip that is used as filler for so many fanzines. (What it was like crossing the country in my VW, etc.). Your comment on MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE interested me; I agree it's the best I've done. The man Tagomi is as real to me as anyone I know, and, to speak cornily, I wrote my heart out in depicting his tribulations...and especially the scene -- which is the climax of the novel -- when he refuses to turn the captured jew over to the Nazi officials. Tagomi's state of mind at that moment reminds me of a phrase by the Irish poet James Stephens; he speaks of timid rage. I will always love Mr. Tagomi for refusing to comply with the Germans' request; it is one of those tiny heroisms which is overlooked and yet fills a great part in the living of human -- true human -- life.

I also liked your review of my novel ZAP GUN. I would say that it is the most astute so far of any comments on any of my writing. It forms an interesting contrast to Judy Merril's lengthy analysis of my overall work in the November F&SF, which although brilliant, has no relationship to my work whatsoever. She has manufactured it all in her own mind. What especially impressed me was the amount of synopsis -- and accurate -- which you developed in a signle page. Have you considered the possibility of writing professionally? I think you should. You say a lot in a few words, and what you say is both interesting and meaningful. (My ego thanks you, kind sir.)

One final word. Yes there is a basic satire and humor throughout my writing. Like Abraham Lincoln, I have to see the funny side of life, the pataphysical side, or otherwise the tragedy, the many little sorrows, become too much for me.

Frank Bertrand: "Reality Therapy"

Reality Therapy (for Philip K. Dick)

Fragile blue flowers in a mountain Spring,
Among the concealing corn; death rising
From the damp earth on short stalks. Wring
Off the stubbled blue plants now disguising
His reality as though a glass, dark
Ly reflected some Bosch profanity.
Even though his mind be ravaged and stark
Naked, offer him some of your insanity.

Joe Vitale: THE WORLDS OF PHILIP K. DICK: AN INTERVIEW WITH AMERICA'S MOST BRILLIANT SCIENCE-FICTION WRITER *The Aquarian* 11 Oct. 1978

AQUARIAN: When did you decide that you wanted to be a science fiction writer?

DICK: Well, I knew I wanted to be a writer of some sort very early in my life. My mother was an editor for the U.S. Department of Labor but her ambition was to write and sell stories and novels. It was from her that I got the idea that writing was a very important thing.

I started on my first novel when I was 13 years old. It was called "Return to Lilliput" and was never completed.

I got interested in science fiction, however, totally by mistake. I was interested in science when I was a boy. I wanted to be a paleontologist. One day I went to the local candy store to buy a copy of *Popular Science* and came across something by mistake called *Stirring Science Stories*. I didn't really know what it was but it only cost 15 cents (a nickel more than a comic book). What it turned out to be, of course, was a science fiction magazine (at that time called Pseudo-Science). And, boy, there were some really great stories in there! People went back in time, other people fell over a wall that only had one side so when they fell over they were back on the first side again, others traveled to the center of the universe where there was a gigantic flat plane where you could walk around.

AQUARIAN: A point that was discussed at length in a *Rolling Stone* article about you in 1975 was the break-in at your house in San Rafael in November 1971. Your home was burglarized, your file cabinets blown open and many of your personal papers stolen. The crime has never really been solved and you have stated that you think it was perpetrated by people who were trying to discredit you. Has any new evidence about the burglary surfaced in the intervening years? Are you more certain now about exactly what happened and why?

DICK: That whole thing is something that fills me with a great deal of anxiety. I try not to think about it.

No new evidence has surfaced since then. I don't think any will. The only thing's that happened since then is that a producer came down to visit me one time from Hollywood and said, "I've researched you and know you were driven out of Marin County (which is where the break-in took place)." And I said, "really?" And he said, "Yeah, you were a dope guru to high school kids and someone took a shot at you." And I said, "Gee, that's really interesting. I always wondered why the cops told me to get out of Marin

County or I'd be shot in the back some night or worse." Obviously that's what the cops thought I was. It's like in my novel, *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said* (1974), where the cops know more about you than you know yourself. I didn't know I was a dope guru to high school kids. I had lectured to high schools in Marin County. I had never discussed dope. But maybe they put together the fact that I've dealt with drugs thematically in my work and the fact that high school kids were always coming to my house and concluded that I was a pusher.

I remember after the burglary the police questioned me as to whether I was "teaching" the kids things. I had posters on my walls from the Russian Revolution, which I thought were very beautiful aesthetically, but they did say things like, "Workers of the World Unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains."

I mean, it's a very frightening thing when the head of a police department tells you that you better leave the county because you have enemies, and you don't know who these enemies are or why you've incurred their wrath.

I moved to Canada for a while and then down here to Orange County. I've cut my ties with just about everyone I knew in Marin County. I don't know if I'll ever find out what really happened. This whole thing is still very traumatic for me.

AQUARIAN: It seems that, throughout your career, you've always put yourself in a vulnerable position by opposing powerful forces within the country. Back in the 1950s, you published several short stories and novels that could have been labeled "subversive." In fact, you were one of the only science fiction writers doing those kinds of stories. Didn't they get you into trouble with the authorities?

DICK: They did more than that. They got me many friendly visits from Mr. Smith and Mr. Scruggs of the FBI. They were members of the famous "Red Squad."

They came to my house every week for what seemed like ever and ever and ever. And they asked many questions about my life and my writings and my political philosophy.

This, of course, made me very angry and very frightened. They asked me all about my wife, about her political philosophy, about what student groups she belonged to.

I mean I honestly expected to be called before the House Un-American Activities Committee. But I guess they didn't consider science fiction writers that important.

AQUARIAN: Do you think there's any connection between that and the break-in at your home?

DICK: I really don't know. In the early Sixties I *did* write a novel about a phony war between the United States and Russia that's carried out with the sole purpose of keeping the citizens of those countries underground while the leaders lived in palatial splendor above ground. (*The Penultimate Truth*, 1964) In the novel, some Americans and some Russians are able to get above ground and find out what's really going on and they become friends.

Now maybe certain people thought this was too close to the truth and that I had some kind of information. Maybe that's why they wanted to get my files. I don't know.

At least Mr. Smith and Mr. Scruggs had the decency to identify themselves. I wish whoever it was that broke into my house had left a note saying "We are so-and-so, and we can be reached at the following number if you have any questions."

Years later I wrote away for my FBI file under the "Freedom of Information Act." Do you know what I had in it? Things like "...has a long beard and frequented the University of Vancouver." "Frequented the University of Vancouver." I delivered a lecture there! I was granted an honorary doctorate and was a guest of the faculty club. They made it sound like I hung out in the shadows selling dope.

AQUARIAN: Since drugs have cropped up in the discussion, it's no secret that many of your novels have been seen as "drug-oriented" or as outgrowths of your own drug experiences. Since one of your most

enduring themes has been the breakdown between illusion and reality, has drug taking been a positive influence in this regard?

DICK: No, absolutely not. There's nothing good about drugs. Drugs kill you and they break down your head. They eat your head. In "White Rabbit," Grace Slick says, "feed your head." But I say, "What are you really feeding it?" You're feeding it itself. Drugs cause the mind to feed on itself.

Look, I'll be honest with you. There was a time in my life when I thought drugs could be useful, that maybe if you took enough psychedelics you could see beyond the illusion of the world to the nature of ultimate reality. Now I think all you see are the patterns in the rug turning into hideous things.

A friend of mine had a shower curtain with tigers on it. You know, one of those prints. During an LSD trip once, the tigers started moving and tried to eat him. So he ran outside into the back yard and burned the shower curtain.

That epitomizes drugs to me: some guy in his back yard burning his shower curtain.

I used to think that drugs put you in touch with something. Now I know that the only thing they put you in touch with is the rubber room of a psychiatric hospital.

My drug experiences have not manifested themselves in my work. Many critics have said that *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich* (1965) was the first "LSD novel." I wrote that after reading a magazine article on hallucinogenics by Aldous Huxley.

Drugs have taken the lives of some very, very dear friends of mine.

AQUARIAN: Then what is the major influence on your work?

DICK: Philosophy and philosophical inquiry.

I studied philosophy during my brief career at the University of California at Berkley. I'm what they call an "acosmic pan-enthiest," which means that I don't believe that the universe exists. I believe that the only thing that exists is God and he is more than the universe. The universe is an extension of God into space and time.

That's the premise I start from in my work, that so-called "reality" is a mass delusion that we've all been required to believe for reasons totally obscure.

Bishop Berkeley believed that the world doesn't exist, that God directly impinges on our minds the sensation that the world exists. The Russian science fiction writer Stanislaw Lem poses that if there was a brain being fed a simulated world, is there any way the brain could tell it was a simulated world? The answer, of course, is no. Not unless there was a technological foul-up.

Imagine a brain floating in a tank with millions and millions of electrodes attached to specific nerve centers. Now imagine these electrodes being selectively stimulated by a computer to cause the brain to believe that it was walking down Hollywood Boulevard chomping on a hamburger and checking out the chicks.

Now, if there was a technological foul-up, or if the tapes got jumbled, the brain would suddenly see Jesus Christ pass by down Hollywood Boulevard on his way to Golgotha, pursued by a crowd of angry people, being whipped along by seven Roman Centurions.

The brain would say, "Now hold on there!" And suddenly the entire image would go "pop" and disappear.

I've always had this funny feeling about reality. It just seems very feeble to me sometimes. It doesn't seem to have the substantiality that it's suppose to have.

I look at reality the way a rustic looks at a shell game when he comes into town to visit the fair. A little voice inside me says, "now wait just a second there..."

AQUARIAN: Religion and religious inquiry also occupy a very prominent place in your writing.

DICK: I've always been interested in religion. In man's relationship with his god, what he chooses to worship. I was raised a Quaker but converted to Episcopalianism very early in my life.

The new novel I'm currently working on for Bantam Books has its basis in theology and what I've had to do, in short, is to create a new religion right from scratch.

It reminds me of something a girl said to me a couple of weeks ago. She said, "You're really smart, too bad you're not religious." (Laughs) And here I am doing nothing all day but reading the Bible, the Apocrypha, the writings of Gnosticism, histories of Christianity. I'll tell you, I could go out and get a degree in theology right now!

It seems like a natural progression of sorts. I got badly burned in the political arena. I was hounded by Mr. Smith and Mr. Scruggs. I would literally get thrown out of Socialist and Communist Party meetings when I was in college for disagreeing with party doctrine. And so I turn to religion, and I find incredible bigotry. Two thousand years of history and the names change but the activity remains the same. Somebody was always throwing someone else into prison for his beliefs or burning him at the stake.

I believe that the establishment churches have lost the keys to the kingdom. They don't even know what the Kingdom of God is.

It's like some guy who loses the keys to his car. He knows he had them a second ago but now they're gone. The churches, however, don't even know what the car looks like anymore. They can't even give a description of it to the cop.

Organized religion is crooked, dumb, and it's lost the keys. I mean, it's OK to be crooked and dumb, we're all crooked and dumb. But the tragedy is that they've lost the keys. They can't even point us in the right direction much less take us there.

The whole question of religion is very melancholic. It makes me very sad really. I mean, I've read so much and still, I haven't found God. We have a "deus abscondatus," a hidden God. As Plato says, "God exists but He is hard to find."

I've spent the majority of my life studying and reading and seeking God, but, of course, the thing is you can't find God. God has to find you. I've learned that.

AQUARIAN: To abandon your themes for a moment and talk about your style, your writing has always been concerned with people rather than technology. Other science fiction writers concentrate on the nature of alien environments, methods of time and space travel, etc., but you're more concerned with human beings, their interactions, their everyday affairs. How do you account for this?

DICK: During the time when I was first beginning to write, I was kind of experimenting with different characters. I was looking for a type of person who would express my innermost observations, ideas, desires.

I was reading a lot of English and American literature, all the novels of Huxley, all the novels of Orwell, Maugham, Thomas Wolfe, D. H. Lawrence. And when I was reading Sinclair Lewis' *Babbitt*, I found my character. *Babbitt*. You know, *Babbitt* walks around saying things like, "My car is not gonna start today. I know it, I know it." Everybody else just gets into their cars and turns the keys and they don't think about it. Not *Babbitt*. And so I said, "There's my character. That's him."

You can say I'm like the Nineteenth Century French novelists. I write about the human predicament. And it doesn't matter if it's centuries in the future, the predicament is still the same.

I'm with the little man. I wouldn't be with the "supermen" characters for all the money in the world. You know, the characters in Ayn Rand and Heinlein who have such a contempt for everybody. Because one day that little man is gonna rise up and punch the superman out and I want to be there when it happens.

AQUARIAN: In terms of broad acceptance, science fiction has undergone quite a change in the last few years. Always considered a popular, inferior brand of writing, it has now been accepted, not only by the masses but by the academic community. Science fiction courses are now part of almost every English department, people are doing theses and doctoral dissertations on science fiction. What do you think of all this?

DICK: I hate it. I just hope we can survive it.

You know, we've survived complete obscurity. We survived complete condescension, the "are you people really doing anything serious?" attitude. I hope we can survive acceptance. It's really the most dangerous thing.

You know, sometimes I think it's all a plot, to praise you and accept you and treat you like a serious literary form. Because in that way they can guarantee your demise.

The only thing that's worse than being treated as "not serious" is being treated as "serious." I'd much rather be ignored. And this "scholarly" science fiction criticism is the worst.

You know, if they can't destroy you by ignoring you, they can destroy you by annexing you.

They, the literary critics, write these incredibly turgid articles which see all this "meaning" in your writing. The end result, I guess, is to drive all your readers away screaming.

AQUARIAN: What is the most important quality for a writer to have?

DICK: A sense of indignation. As I said, science fiction was effective for so many years because it was a rebel art form. It wasn't accepted. The idea was to offend people. But not just with garbage. Just because something is offensive crap doesn't necessarily mean it's any good.

But there is nothing else, really, for a writer to do. He must offend people if he's going to be effective. It's like someone once said about opera. "Stab a tenor and he sings." Stab a writer - or step on his toes - and he'll write. It's an automatic reflex reaction. A writer writes because it's his response to the world. It's a natural process, like respiration.

But above all, a writer must have a capacity for indignation. The capacity for indignation is the most important thing for a creative person. Not the aesthetic capacity but the capacity for indignation. And especially indignation at the treatment afforded other people.

It's like the trials of the dissidents that are going on now in Russia, or when you see a blind and deaf baby on TV like I did last night.

To see some of the things that are going on in the world and to feel indignant, at God, at the Soviet Union, at the United States, at the military, *that* is the greatest capacity in the world. To see a blind and deaf baby and to feel anger, to feel fury, at the starving of children and the arrest of political dissidents. That is the basis of the writer.

Frank Bertrand: Another *Dr. Futurity* translation found

Tajidi mesa sto horo kai to chrono

Tr. Dimitris Panagiotatos

Athina: Antikosmoi, 1976

Future Boy: a conjecture

So, let's pretend that the mormons are right. I was once told that mormons believe that if you are a really good mormon you get your own planet when you die. Suppose that is true then our planet, our reality, could in fact be the fabrication of a long since dead mormon. A good mormon but one with a twisted sense of humor and a bit of an ego. So he created a world in which mormonism is not the oldest religion and instead came up with Judaism and Hinduism, etc. etc. etc. If this is the case then that means the gnostics were right. This world was created by an "evil" demi-urge who is actually subordinate to a higher being but who doesn't know that because he's deluded himself. Mormonism could actually be really old but then for us the concept of "old" is really meaningless. Gods exist outside of time and logically so should their creations. But because of our design we are forced to view time in a strictly horizontal, linear sense. Unless the veil is lifted, as it was for PKD. Maybe the whole "pink light" thing

and that guy in PKDs head was actually a neighboring planet-owning mormon trying to show him how deluded our particular creator has become. Which would mean that Jesus was a messenger from that same mormon of perhaps from the higher being who tried to straighten everybody out but was just too cryptic. Maybe that guy in Phil's head who showed him ancient rome super-imposed over santa ana and who showed him the Black Iron Prison was just trying to show him that linear time is an illusion and that we're all simply fabrications. That ultimately for us life is meaningless and purposeless. But I guess if you can't tell the difference you might as well try and make something out of it. You know, play along. Of course, the mormons could be wrong. Comments, anyone?

Andre Welling: A whole lotta bibliography - a couple of German collections

Philip. K. Dick: *Kosmische Puppen und andere Lebensformen. Ein Philip K. Dick-Reader*
[trans.: *Cosmic Puppets and Other Life Forms. A PKD Reader*]
Herausgegeben von Uwe Anton [edited by Uwe Anton]

Deutsche Erstveröffentlichung [German First Edition/Publication], Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, Munich:
1986. ISBN 3-453-31321-6

543 pages, full page pictures of Dick on pages 6 and 510, dedicated [by Anton] "Fuer Heike",

Collects a mix of NOVEL: *Cosmic Puppets*,

STORIES: (in order of appearance): The Defenders, Some Kinds of Life, A World of Talent, Null-O, Fair Game, Waterspider, Holy Quarrel, A Little Something For Us Temponauts, The Exit Door Leads In, Frozen Journey [Boy, alone this listing gives me a kick. A.W.],

ESSAYS: Strange Memories of Death, The Android and the Human, If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some Of The Others,

INTERVIEW between Uwe Anton, Werner Fuchs and Philip K. Dick, conducted in METZ [France], 9/77.

[Reminiscence: a real good hunk of more esoteric Dickiana in German, handy and for a fair price, I enjoyed it GRREAT! and devoured it 13 years ago; in a way, this book was only possible by his death, when I think of it. A.W.]

The other one:

Die seltsamen Welten des Philip K. Dick [trans: *The Strange Worlds of Philip K. Dick*]
Herausgegeben von Uwe Anton [edited by Uwe Anton]

Corian Verlag Wimmer, Meitingen: 1984 [Edition Futurum, Band 7] ISBN 3-89048-207-4

160 pages, Title essay by Uwe Anton [p. 9], mixes translations of:

Roog, by Philip K. Dick

In Pursuit of UBIK, by Michael Bishop

Ist Gott ein negantropisches Wirbelfeld?, by Uwe Anton [original German]

Die Macht des heimarmeme [letter from 2/2/1980], by Philip K. Dick

Interview with Philip K. Dick, by Arthur Byron Cover [orig. Vertex Magazine, 2/74]

The World She Wanted, by Philip K. Dick
Man , Android and Machine, by Philip K. Dick
Bibliographie [bibliography], by Uwe Anton

So both are selections / mixes for the more-than-casual Dick reader. The last one was pretty expensive!

*A Late Night (marish) Thought About Dead Bug Words,
While Listening to QUEENSRÜCHE's song “Silent Lucidity”*
By Frank C. Bertrand

Perhaps you've recently had a PKDickian experience similar to mine.

I had to have surgery to fix a large, partially bound up right inguinal hernia, and while recovering, drifting in and out of a "percosef fog" – to help me cope with post-op "discomfort" (a wonderful medical euphemism for PAIN!) – I spent some of my lucid moments re-reading Dick's *Martian Time-Slip*. Doing so is something I try to do whenever possible because I've learned that the first time through one of his stories or novels things are not what they seem, to paraphrase Dick's favorite Gilbert & Sullivan quote.

Now, it's not easy to forget the aptly named indigenous Bleekmen – Bleek, indeed, "dying out anyhow, the remnants getting more tattered and despairing every year." (Ch. 2) Or, the mysterious "autistic" child, Manfred Steiner and the nasty sounding neologisms he uses, *gubbish* and *gubble*. Speaking of which, I wonder if Phil was aware of Lord Byron's late 1816 gothic dramatic poem, *Manfred*? Or, that the German word, "stein," means *stone*?

*Relax child, you were there
But only didn't realize it and you were scared
It's a place where you will learn
To face your fears, retrace the years
And ride the whims of your mind
Commanding in another world*

But I was caught up quite short by the following, near the beginning of chapter eleven:

"It [Jack Bohlen] poured its wet, sticky self near and nearer to her [Doreen Anderton], and the dead bug words popped from its mouth and fell on her. The dead bug words scampered off into the folds of her clothing, and some squeezed into her skin and entered her body."

DEAD BUG WORDS!

What a stark, ominous Kafkaesque image these three little words conjure up, as though Gregor Samsa were painted by Munch or Bosch for a *Penthouse* centerfold. They are made even more so when compared with what Helio, a Bleekman, says about a book, Pascal's *Provincial Letters* (1657), he's been reading to Manfred:

"The rhythms. Great prose establishes a cadence which attracts and holds the boy's wandering attention." (Ch. 13)

Well, the cadence of “dead bug words” certainly held, and holds, my attention. They are crawling around and around in the shadowy recesses of my mind, like those ants on a moebius strip by Escher. And Hamlet’s incisive injunction, “suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o’erstep not the modesty of nature,” (III, iii) gives me little solace in trying to cope with them.

It’s certainly possible to relate them to the apparent theme of *Martian Time-Slip*, the nature and effects of schizophrenia, in particular as manifested by Jack Bohlen and Manfred Steiner. And we could point to what another character in the novel, Dr. Glaub (the German word, “glaube,” means *trust, belief*), states about trying to communicate with Manfred:

“...decades ago Jung cracked the private language of the schizophrenic. But in child autism, as with Manfred, there is no language at all, at least no spoken language. Possibly totally personal private thoughts...but no words.” (Ch. 7)

Also of importance is that the phrase – dead bug words – is, it seems, indeed a “personal private thought” of Manfred’s as he observes, and introspectively describes, the interactions between Jack Bohlen, Doreen Anderton and Arnie Kott at a meeting, the narration of which occurs no less than three times – twice in Ch. 10 and once in Ch. 11 – each time progressively different with added details, the phrase being a part of the latter two.

And, it turns out, Phil Dick is of potential help when he writes, in his essay “How To Build A Universe That Doesn’t Fall Apart Two Days Later,” (1978, 1985) that: “The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words. If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use the words.” Or, in Ch. 4 of his 1959 novel, *Time Out Of Joint*, writes: “Central problem in philosophy. Relation of word to object... what is a word? Arbitrary sign. But we live in words. Our reality, among words not things.”

Is Manfred Steiner manipulating reality in *Martian Time-Slip* with dead bug words, or living his reality among them?

*The walls you built within
Come tumbling down, and a new world will begin
Living twice at once you learn
You’re safe from pain in the dream domain*

As Jack Bohlen thinks, in Ch. 9, “he [Manfred] does not perceive the rest of reality, which we do. And it is a dreadful section which he does see; reality in its most repellent aspect.” But, then, he is the very same guy from whose mouth Manfred sees the dead bug words popping.

Just whose repellent section of “reality” is being featured in this novel? Maybe it, they, we, and this are all devolving into gubbish (entropy?), being eaten away by DEAD BUG WORDS...

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Patrick: Editorial Statement

First a definition composed by Steve McGraw that I revised slightly. “Otaku” is a Japanese word for someone with a hobby that has become an unhealthy obsession generally characterized by exhaustive artifact collecting and fanatically detailed knowledge of some subject. The Otaku's social life and

livelihood may be organized around his obsession, so much so that it becomes his way of life. The word itself is supposed to come from fanboys' use of an overly formal second person pronoun at conventions, which is supposed to be a sign of social awkwardness and lack of human warmth. Outside of Japan it primarily means a serious fan of Japanese animation and does not have the same stigma attached to it.

"PKD OTAKU" actually comes from a review that I read somewhere of *The Gospel According to Philip K. Dick*. It seemed like a catchy title and it's *supposed* to be tongue-in-cheek. But what is this zine intended to do? In truth, I have no clear idea. Some of my readers may recall *Simulacrum Meltdown*, another PKD zine I published. *Meltdown* took too much time to produce so I recast it as a stripped down version that would be shorter in length but which would appear more often. Hence OTAKU. I've been reading PKD for decades and I've been known to exhibit standard otaku behavior in hunting down hard-to-find material. Over the years I've collected interviews and letters, book reviews and critical analysis, reminiscences and fiction. These various zines of mine exist to share this information with other folks who, for one reason or another, have made Phil a part of their lives.

I didn't want to be the only voice in my zine. I already know what I think about Phil. I want to know what other people think. So PKD OTAKU is intended to provide a voice for others to present their ideas and feelings about Phil however they want. And I've gotten some great responses to that offer. Be it Vittorio's memoir or Giles's interview transcriptions, Frank's philosophical ruminations, Perry's dreams or Gerardo's encyclopedic survey of Spanish translations the results has been extremely gratifying to me and, I hope, to the readers. I'm especially pleased to have Eric Johnson's short story in this issue. Eric has written several stories in this curious genre and they are all great. (Kind of hard to find them but at least try to track down "The Dick's Hard-Boiled Dilemma" in *The New York Review of Science Fiction* May 1999.) So I hope if you are reading this you will give some thought to contributing something yourself. The zine can only get better with more voices in the conversation. It doesn't have to be a formal composition. It can be a simple as a letter, a passing thought or question. It can be as involved as an academic essay. If you need an entire issue to say what you want to say I'll give it to you. The only requirement is that, after all, it has to have something to do with PKD.

Next issue will present the continuation of Gerardo's astonishing history of Phil in Spanish. Future issues will have some unpublished letters and more book reviews from the SF press and – hopefully -- your own thoughts and ideas. Email me at pclark@jhill.org or send hard copy to me at

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