

"VAGUE NEW THEOLOGY"
By Philip K Dick

Phil wrote these notes in 1968 as part of an outline for a new book called "The Hour of the T.E.N.C.H" in manuscript but published in 1970 as *A Maze of Death*. In the "Author's Foreword" to that work, Phil remarks, "The theology in this novel is not an analog of any known religion. It stems from an attempt made by William Sargill and myself to develop an abstract, logical system of religious thought based on the arbitrary postulate that God exists."

The outline, entitled "NOTES ON THE <<TENCH>> NOVEL," consists of sixteen sheets of typing paper numbered 1 through 12 and 3 through 6. The theological speculation begins in earnest on page numbered 11 but as part of discussing the novel's plot. Beginning on the page numbered 3 (there are two sheets numbered three, of course; this would be the "second" page 3 following page 12) the theology makes no reference to the novel's plot at all. Originally I believed that the "second" page 3 was a typo on Phil's part and that the manuscript should be numbered 1 through 16. I now think that the outline proper is pages 1 through 12 (it ends logically there) and the additional pages are from a separate document of which the first two pages are most likely missing. Since this second document lacks a title we might for convenience call it "Vague New Theology" after a reference on page 6. A detailed description of the collection from which this document comes may be found in *Radio Free PKD* no. 7 (August 1998). I have made only a few minor editorial corrections (in brackets) to these notes otherwise retaining Phil's exact words and his curious use of "<<,>>" for quotation marks.

[page 10] ... (Gods are no longer on Earth, but once were.) (But all gods wherever they are receive prayers from all worshippers. Maybe sometimes --but rarely-- return to intervene on planet's they've left (left when classified as homeostatic, i.e. self perpetuating.)

When asked who --or what-- he is, a god shows flat pack of official type i.d. Since these are earthmen.

Pinal [sic] gland in each person acts as transmitter of prayers to the gods (defined as self-creating ultra-homeostatic quasi-organic polyencephalyic organisms possessing absolute knowledge, unlimited power and objective --i.e. non subjective-- capacity for judgement-basing.) If any god wishes to act on prayer it is his business. But the Walker-on-earth (Or Walker-in daytime?) often shows up to alleviate suffering unasked -- unlike Manufacturer, etc. Or: the walker-on-earth always is present, watching, but does not act. The One-who-has-sinned (not Christ but Judas) replaces suffering humans with himself. Christ rescue, instead. The Manufacturer alters the situation retroactively -- each has his own way of approaching problem of those <<trying to die.>> (No death comes unwanted. By dying a person ransoms himself back to purity from original sin; his death cancels the sin.) (the death urge --thanos-- is the desire to make the ultimate sacrifice in repayment of the Debt, which, each person knows, must come sooner or later) (knows on nonconscious level) (animals pray, too, to The Mother-of-us-all, a sort of nourishing shewolf -- they go to suck at her teats, and are freed) (the curse is on nature, too).

[page 11] The Maker-of decay. The manufacturer built all; the Maker-of-Decay declines it. Of the good gods, the only one whom the M-of-D can affect is the Manufacturer; this is why the Walker-On-Earth-in-daylight came into being. The decay can't be reversed, but the original curse which the Manufacturer put on it --which came because of the appearance of the M-of-D-- is lifted by death. And the two other gods locally help, prior to death: through them the ultimate sacrifice is allowed to be postponed, on the grounds that at this time it is asking too much. The real desire to die has not arrived yet. Prayer is the expression of

the unwillingness to make the ultimate sacrifice. The one who p[r]ays is asking for the forward-motion machinery (of the Manufacturer) to halt. Maybe the Manufacturer never intervenes; it is always the 3 others.

The Maker-of-Rocks-and Gas or -Grass? Or, the maker-of-Rocks. The M-of-Grass. Or the Maker-of -Rocks-and Glass? Or M-of-Glass. A universe spunt [sic] of molten glass? Forms? All shapes?

[page 12] The Dooer-of-Decay. Decay is retrogression of form -- hence the unformer or Unform-Dooer. The Entropy-Dooer, -Maker, -One. Each category has a name; hence: the Unnamer, the Undoo[e]r-of-Names, the Dooer-of-Unnames, <<Puddled.>> Hence the Puddler. The Dooer- or Maker-of Puddles.

The Manufacturer keeps time forward generally, unmakes when needed -- dismantles, which is not what the Undooer-of-Names does. Decay still moves forward in time; to halt decay one (e.g. the Manufacturer) would -- could-- halt time. But decay is <<out of time.>>

The decay of plants is not a step in the creation of new plants but a process which is undone by /seeded/ new plants. If there were no decay, no new plants would be needed. Creation must be reattempted every day -- and often fails (as witness the extinction of species. The evolution of life forms is an attempt to foil decay by offering improved or rather new forms, which may be more resistant to decay. Creation each day does not repeat itself -- since it occurs in forward time it can be always be different. This is one of its characteristics: new <<names>> are brought forth daily, while old ones are preserved, if possible.

Decay does not occur in time but instantly, striking like death.

[page 3] The problem of the dualism suggested by the notion that the Form Destroyer is not God and never was (and hence was able to surprise God) can be reasoned into monism this way.

The Form Destroyer is Absolutely-not-God.

<<Absolutely-not God>> is a category of being.

God contains all categories of being.

Therefore God can be Absolutely-not-God, which transcends human reason & logic but is felt intuitively as being correct. Or:

God is absolute good.

Absolute good, by its nature, knows nothing about evil (since inability to know evil is an attribute of absolute good, in the Christian Science sense).

Therefore if there were an absolute evil, God would not know of it until it manifested itself within the framework of God's creation, the universe.

From this would follow:

God's learning about absolute evil from the relative evil of evil events in cosmological history, would infringe on the absolute quality of God's goodness since to know of evil is to become to an extent evil. Therefore, soon after creation, God became diminished --or tainted-- by knowledge of evil, and, like man, fell into the realm of the Curse (which is an expression of that knowledge of evil by what has been purely good). It has taken God thousands if not millions of years to work his way back out of this critical situation, and, as stated before, the appearance of God in the form of the Redeemer is a sign that he has managed to climb back upward sufficiently to reintroduce new good into his creation. God, then, is once again available to man, and vice versa.

[page 4] A final note regarding the novel. God can become plural, and/or can appear plural any time he wishes, for obvious reasons. Therefore, the existence of many gods in the novel does not diminish the fact that one God exists behind or beyond this multiplicity. Also, in these various forms there can be distinction, a variety of attributes as well as names (which are applied of course by man, not God). Also, God can manifest himself in various roles, as for example the contradictory manifestations reported in the Old Testament (the best example is God-as-he-appeared-to-Job). During that period, the interval of the Curse, God both loved man (as his creation, and in replica of him) and hated him (as something corrupted by the Form Destroyer and

hence not in the form God had given him; hence alien). God's reaction to his experience of finding man, his highest creation, evil, has been well-told in the Old Testament and needs no repeating here. Anyhow, as regards these contradictory roles of God, the underlying reason can be found in this short, vague, theological resume.

[page 5] One further point. It is said in this outline, <<God existed alone as a creature of absolute good, knowing nothing about evil or the existence of an absolutely evil entity.>> In this case, it means nothing to say, <<God existed as a creature of absolute good,>> because without evil, or knowledge of evil, God could neither be good nor know what <<good>> was. (This is why, in the Old Testament it is said that Adam and Eve acquired a knowledge of both good and evil -- not merely evil alone. Up until they acquired this knowledge they were as ignorant of good as they were of evil.) What God would be aware of, in himself, would be his existence, felt as neither good or evil, nor in any relationship to good or evil. What he would experience is being, which is merely a jargon-term for reality, for awareness of existence. His creation --the universe-- would not strike him as good but merely as existing. Later, when he encountered manifestations in his creation of evil, he would experience the changes as motion away from reality -- the undermining of forms being a pulling away of the supports of existence. God would then perceive existence --existence of himself and his creation-- as desirable....hence eventually the term <<good>> would be applied to his creation --because it exists-- and him, because he made it and tries to keep it existing. So it is enough to state that originally God was; it is unnecessary to state that <<he was good,>> because we know that he created the universe, and this implies all the good --the legitimate, actual good-- there is. No more is needed. So for <<good>> read <<real.>> For <<evil>> read <<unreal>> or something made <<partially unreal.>> (That thing at a former time having been <<fully real.>>)

[page 6] On the Presence of the Manufacturer.

Generally the <<life cycle>> is regarded as a clear-enough example of the need for there to be decay and death for new life to appear; the term <<cycle> is self-explanatory. However, the preChristians regarded the appearance of new life each year (the new-grown corn, etc.) as a miracle which might not always occur; hence the need for ritual & ceremony. We are positive that no miracle is involved; the old plants sprout seeds; fish evict eggs; man reproduces along with nature as a whole, so that when he dies --when each living creature dies-- the next generation will be there to replace him and them. But in the Vague New Theology we have it this way: the decay & death are unnatural, to start with, they being evidence of the workings of the Form Destroyer whom God had not anticipated. Each year creatures die; the Form Destroyer, as for so long before us, has been successful. But the Manufacturer is active, too, and replaces the dead & dying with new examples...many of which are altered so as to have a greater chance of surviving. God, then, is always fiddling with the universe to make it work better, and the Form Destroyer is always ahead of him, bringing about the decay of reality which prompts the Manufacturer into new activity (originally he believed that, after the sixth day, the universe had been completed; he rested, and then later on, which walking the earth of his creation, discovered the Form Destroyer at work...so, for him, the work would require perpetual new activity on his part. His resentment is well-recorded.)

Stalking the PKD Fiction Oddities: Part I (*Yuba City High Times*) by Frank Hollander

Back in the 1980's when I was tracking down the PKD novels, I never really dreamed of collecting the stories in magazine form. There was a brief period before the Collected Stories was announced that I tried to figure out which stories had not yet been collected, but the thought of being able to read them seemed absurd. Once Collected Stories arrived, the need for new sources of PKD short fiction was over, right? Aside from a

small stack of *Galaxy's* that I once found in a store and picked over for a couple PKD souvenirs, I didn't really have much of a collection of the stories from their original appearances.

By the late 1990's I had begun reading PKD again after a period mostly away from sf, and I was much more interested in short fiction than in the past. Also, I had the feeling that the early PKD, the short fiction writer, had been too often neglected in the waves of Dick fandom that I had enjoyed in the 1980's. So I became interested in experiencing the original publications, finding out what all those magazines were like, that had published the stories. And with a healthy pile of money and internet access, suddenly it was possible to collect beyond my wildest dreams. So in waves, I started acquiring the magazines. The number of items is at first staggering, but unlike, say, many of the first edition novels, most of the individual prices are not terribly high. With a bit of persistence, by early 2001 I had all but finished collecting the magazine appearances. And I've been reading them ever since, enjoying the original context, the interior artwork, the notorious covers, the goofy "fannish" writing in magazines like *Imagination* and *Planet Stories*.

But left were the oddities. Not only did I not have them in my collection, but nobody among the many PKD collectors appeared to have even seen them. I figured that I had put so much effort into tracking down the mainstream items, I shouldn't just quit without an attempt to find them. And so began my quest for the PKD fiction oddities. This first article is about my search for *Yuba City High Times*, a high school newspaper said to have published Dick's last short story "The Alien Mind" in early 1981 before its publication in *F&SF*. As noted in PKDS #8, a high school student had solicited the story from Dick while waiting in a line for cat food. Having collected the *F&SF* issue (October 1981), I saw that the editor's blurb was clearly the source of that explanation:

"This short and surprising tale grew from an encounter at a Santa Ana, CA grocery store, where the author was buying cat food and encountered a teenager who was editor of the Yuba City High School student paper and who was enterprising enough to ask Mr. Dick to write a story for the paper. Phil agreed, and here is the happy result (which also will appear in the *Yuba City High School High Times*)."

It seemed like a long shot, but maybe I could find someone who had a copy of the issue, or perhaps remembered something about the incident. The internet made it easy enough to find out that Yuba City was far away from Dick's Santa Ana, Ca.--instead being a rural town North of Sacramento. I thought maybe I could find an alumni group that might have contacts. By now it was early 2001, and this seemed as good a time as any, with a 20 year reunion likely coming up for the class of 1981 (that I figured was most likely to have published the story). As it turned out, the timing was perfect. There are a number of commercial sites that compete for the business of finding old classmates, but back then the dot-com well had not quite dried up, so those services were much more open than they are today. I found such a site that had a reasonably active section for Yuba City High, and there was a mechanism that allowed emailing messages to alumni who had registered.

At this point I had a moment of pause, always remembering a story (apparently untrue) of how a fan had "unmasked" James Tiptree, Jr. by stalking her (Alice Sheldon) at her post office box. Were my obsessed fan needs great enough to justify spamming a bunch of people from a town I knew nothing about? With a little more thought I decided to go ahead with it, resolving to be as polite as possible, referencing my own experience as a 1982 high school graduate, and trying to avoid sounding like a treasure hunter. So over the course of a few days (as a free "guest" I was restricted in the number of messages I could send per day) I sent messages to just about everyone listed from the class of 1981, maybe 15 or 20 people. I figured I'd start with that, see if anything came up, and give the classes of 1982 and later a try if there was any hint of optimism. I got a few responses, invariably friendly, including a class leader who thought he might be able to talk to some people who might remember more about the student newspaper.

Almost immediately in my last wave of messages I got a response from the husband of an alum, saying he had grabbed a box out of storage that had a few of the newspapers, pulled them out, and... The first one he looked at was the issue in question, February 20, 1981! He'd be happy to make a copy, and what else would I like to know? It was stunning how quickly I had the information. The student in question was named Ben

Adams, and some of the others remembered that he was probably a freshman at the time (and not the editor of the paper). No details beyond that, and the "cat food" story remained unverified.

Once I finally had the photocopy in hand, I was amazed. This really was a high school newspaper that had published "The Alien Mind", and with no fanfare at all. The lead cover story is a "Teacher Feature" about the school baseball coach. The bottom of the page has a picture of the "New Gal in Town," an Australian exchange student. On page 5 (of 8 total pages) is the PKD story, wrapped around a Top Ten list of albums. To this day I'm fascinated every time I look at it.

Despite the surprise of turning up a copy of the newspaper, there was still the question of the "cat food" story. And this mysterious Ben Adams, a freshman, how could he have managed to publish the last short story written by Philip K. Dick? I got distracted from the hunt, and let it go for a bit after a failed attempt or two to find Ben Adams. I had decided to publish my findings one way or another, but kept putting it off. Fast forward to 2002 in a much changed internet world. By then I had some good hints of what might have really happened, wasn't sure I should really pursue it, but decided to give it another shot. This time my search was a success, and I found the adult Benjamin Adams on Usenet, and learned the real story. He also sent a scan of a PKD letter from January 20, 1981 that simply stated: "Enclosed you will find a short-short story that I wrote for you. Needless to say, I expect no monetary remuneration; go ahead and print it." I'll leave the telling of that story to Benjamin Adams, who was kind enough to write it up for publication.

NOBLY WILD, NOT MAD: MEMORIES OF PHIL DICK **by Benjamin Adams**

I first met Phil Dick in the mid 1970's. My father, an Episcopal priest, had moved our family to Santa Ana, California, where he had assumed a position as rector of the Church of the Messiah.

My memories of the time aren't the clearest, and I can't quite remember in what order things happened. The order in which events are presented here seems to be the most logical way of presenting the facts and relationships involved.

A parishioner in her 20's, Doris Sauter, quickly became friends with our family. She visited us at our home quite a bit. She knew of my interest in science fiction, and took me to meet Ray Bradbury when he spoke at the local public library. Note: Took me to meet Ray Bradbury. They knew each other. To me, 11 years old, who had taught myself to read by reading science fiction, this was rather like meeting a rock star. Or God.

But Ray Bradbury wasn't the only Southern California SF writer Doris knew. She had at one point dated Norman Spinrad. Through her a pair of old science fiction anthologies which had once belonged to K. W. Jeter passed into my hands. Hell, Jeter hadn't even published anything yet . . . I had no idea who he was, all I knew was that his name was inscribed inside these books!

And she knew Philip K. Dick. She lived in the same apartment complex as Phil Dick. She dated Phil Dick. I hadn't even heard of Phil Dick, though.

The first I knew of Phil was when a hardcover copy of his collaboration with Roger Zelazny, DEUS IRAE, appeared on the small table next to my dad's reclining chair. Since my dad also read science fiction voraciously, I figured that this may be something that interested me. I picked it up. Began reading. Was immediately sucked in, although something about the book was a bit . . . different . . . than other SF novels I'd read. I asked my father where he'd gotten it, and he said he knew one of the writers. Philip K. Dick. My dad, Episcopal priest and counselor to those in need -- psychiatrist for God -- then said, "He's crazy."

Wow, I thought. My dad knows a crazy writer?

It turned out that Phil K. Dick lived in town and actually even came to our church sometimes. He was seeing my dad for religious counseling on a weekly basis . . . looking back on it, it's obvious that Phil was talking to my dad about the hallucinatory revelations covered in the Exegesis, and that form the core of his last several books. My dad even wound up immortalized -- after a fashion -- in the character of "Father Larry," in VALIS. (This characterization wasn't the kindest, however . . . and the less said about it the better.)

And for Thanksgiving 1978, Phil Dick came to our house for dinner. Again, looking back, it's obvious he came as Doris Sauter's date. Being only 11 years old, I had no true idea what to talk to him about. I

remember a benign, faintly bemused man who didn't quite seem all there. And what did I do? I asked him if he knew Larry Niven or Frederik Pohl, who were my big heroes at the time!

After dinner we retired to the living room, where I tried to be the center of attention, as kids often do. And Phil bribed me to be quiet. He had brought paperback copies of two novels . . . THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH, and the original trade edition of CONFESSIONS OF A CRAP ARTIST. He said if I would go and read them, he'd inscribe the books for me as a gift.

In PALMER ELDRITCH, he wrote, "Dear Ben, I hope this book doesn't disturb you. It deals with absolute evil."

The inscription in CONFESSIONS is much simpler. He merely signed his name on the title page, underneath the title . . . but lower, where the fictional character Jack Isidore's name is printed, he printed in a shaky hand, "JACK ISIDORE." For a moment, Phil BECAME Jack Isidore, became the character, and signed the book as him. This still strikes me as extremely magical.

My next clearest memory of Phil is of attending a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper at the Church of the Messiah. As we stood in the parish hall, waiting to get our pancakes, I told Phil of premonitory dreams I'd had which later came true. Phil looked at me with all seriousness, and said, "Ben, you are a shaman. You are set aside from the rest of the tribe."

Somehow we had formed a little friendship . . . not anything ground shaking, but my relationship with Phil managed to continue once my father relocated my family to Yuba City, in Northern California. He'd become rector of a parish in Marysville, which was on the other side of the Yuba River. At the time I was only a third of the way into my freshman year in high school, and the trauma of the move was devastating. I would write Phil -- who was now a link to my old life in Santa Ana -- and send him my first attempts at stories, which he would faithfully critique and send back to me.

I wound up on the high school newspaper, and without much thought, sent Phil a letter in which I asked him if he would be interested in writing a short story for us.

Rather startlingly, he did. He sent along the original MS of the short-short story "The Alien Mind," which wound up seeing print in the YUBA CITY HIGH TIMES. I was so bold as to attach Phil's name to mine for the introduction, because part of its text was in his own words. A little "collaboration," I thought naively at the time, although really it was nothing of the sort.

When the story was eventually reprinted in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, the introduction at its head startled me. Ed Ferman, the editor, wrote of some nonsense regarding a chance encounter in a pet food store between an unnamed high school student and Phil, where the student boldly asked Phil to write him a story. It's a great anecdote, and very very Phildickian . . . but it just simply did not happen that way. And I have to wonder, did Phil eventually wind up believing this piece of self-propaganda? Or was he aware all along that he had merely created another piece of the mythos he had built around himself . . . anecdotes that do not stand up to close scrutiny, but which sound wonderful when mentioned in the coziness of a living room with friends, or in the text of a submission letter to F&SF.

It makes one wonder how many of the anecdotes about Phil which have been relayed in various biographies about him are really true, and which actually sprang full-blown from his own head, because they sounded good to him at the time. I never had the chance to ask Phil, though, because he died not long after that, around the same time that VALIS was published.

But he did speak to me one more time, in his dedication to his posthumously published novel, THE TRANSMIGRATION OF TIMOTHY ARCHER, where he quoted Herrick's "An Ode to Him."

Ah Ben!
Say how or when
Shall we thy Guests,
Meet at those lyric feasts
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tunne;
Where we such clusters had
As made us nobly wild, not mad?

As the years went by, I set aside my own writing for a time and then eventually resumed it in the early 1990's. I'd wound up living in Chicago with my then-wife, and had fallen in with a group of professional writers who lived there. Through them, I met the editor Robert Weinberg, who purchased the first several stories I submitted to him! And at that point I really understood what Phil Dick had meant when he said that I was a shaman.

He meant that I was a writer.

THE END

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The central figure in Dick's novel *A SCANNER DARKLY* is both a police agent and a junkie of a kind he has been ordered to obtain evidence against. Such dichotomies marked Philip Dick's work from the very beginning of his career. His is the world where insanity is in the air we breathe. Only the ultra-sane speak such things, or they will sink from sight under their own psychoses.

Dick was never out of sight since his first appearance in those great glad early days of the fifties, when the cognoscenti among us scoured the magazines on the bookstalls for names that had suddenly acquired a talismanic quality: J. G. Ballard, William Tenn, Philip K. Dick. Now he's gone, the old bear, the old sage and jester, the old destroyer, the sole writer among us who, in Pushkin's mighty phrase, "laid waste the hearts of men."

It was easy to love Dick the writer. The ashen humor of his novels found more robust voice in his speech. Because he was both genial and modest, he never knew how many people all over the world revered him, thought of him in the same breath as Samuel Beckett, and considered that Dick, too, deserved a Nobel Prize.

These words – this shot at an obituary nobody can write – are being scribbled in a crummy hotel room in New York. No typewriters. The plumbing knocks at the mind like eternity, the banshee police sirens wail outside and, two blocks away by Grand Central Station, an enormous skyscraper avalanches down slice by slice into Mack trucks standing below. It's Dick's world okay. If it had all disappeared on his death into the ever-waiting void, I would not have been surprised. No other writer of his – or our – generation had such a powerful intellectual presence. He has stamped himself not only on our memories but in our imagination.

Brian W. Aldiss, *Locus* May 1982 p. 11

**Late Night Thoughts About *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?*, While
Listening To Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures At An Exhibition*
By Frank C. Bertrand**

1. I've been wondering lately about some parts of chapter twelve in Phil Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* More specifically, I ponder the blatant allusions to two works by the Norwegian painter and printmaker, Edvard Munch (1863-1944), and how they are used thematically, if not philosophically, in the novel's plot.

The two in question are *The Scream* (or, *The Cry*), 1893 (91 x 73.5 cm, tempera and pastel on board), and *Puberty*, 1894-95 (151.5 x 110 cm, oil on canvas). In the novel they are part of a Munch exhibit in a museum down the street from the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco, circa January 2021.

Now, it is, perhaps, somewhat incongruous to find a museum Munch exhibit in San Francisco, amidst the serious effects of radioactive dust, several years after World War Terminus. That is, why Munch? Why not use Bosch or Hogarth to aesthetically represent the devastating results of this war? Then again, those still living are perhaps striving for a kind of normalcy, to include a museum, exhibits and an opera house. Or, could Phil Dick be implying the need for, and uses of, Art/Culture in a post-apocalyptic society?

But I digress.

2. The first Munch painting alluded to is *The Scream*:



“At an oil painting Phil Resch halted, gazed intently. The painting showed A hairless, oppressed creature with a head like an inverted pear, its hands clapped in horror to its ears, its mouth open in a vast, soundless scream. Twisted ripples of the creature’s torment, echoes of its cry, flooded out into the air surrounding it; the man or woman, whichever it was, had become contained by its own howl. It had covered its ears against its own sound. The creature stood on a bridge and no one else was present; the creature screamed in isolation. Cut off by – or despite – its outcry.”

I think it’s important to note how who is “screaming” is characterized – “oppressed creature,” “creature’s torment,” “creature screamed,” not to mention “the man or woman, whichever it was.” It’s an *it*, a *creature*, more so than a man or woman. This is no doubt intentional because Phil Resch shortly says, “I think that is how an andy must feel.” Then, Luba Luft – an “andy” – is shot by Resch:

“She began to scream; she lay crouched against the wall of the elevator, screaming. Like the picture, Rick thought to himself...”

This powerful image is given even more poignancy if we note what Munch writes in a January 22, 1892 diary entry, while in Nice during a period of illness:

“I was walking along the road with two friends.
The sun was setting.
I felt a breath of melancholy -
Suddenly the sky turned blood-red.
I stopped, and leaned against the railing, deathly tired -
looking out across the flaming clouds that hung like blood and a sword
over the blue-black fjord and town.
My friends walked on - I stood there, trembling with fear.
And I sensed a great, infinite scream pass through Nature.”

3. But just what does Phil Dick want this scream to represent, to mean within the larger thematic context of the novel?

In seeking a plausible answer, I can't help but think of Phil Dick's favorite Sir William S. Gilbert quote: "Things are seldom what they seem / Skim milk masquerades as cream."

The immediate, and obvious, connection is with the android opera singer, Luba Luft, whom Resch initially shoots in the stomach and Deckard finally kills. Some of Deckard's thoughts about her, however, make this association problematic:

"I don't get it; how can a talent like that be a liability to our society?
But it wasn't the talent, he told himself; it was she herself...But Luba
Luft had seem *genuinely* alive; it had not worn the aspect of simulation."

Without going into what "aspect of a simulation" means, a second possibility is Phil Resch himself, whom Deckard suspects of being an android. It is Resch who gazes intently at *The Scream*, and after his statement about this is how an andy must feel:

"...traced in the air the convolutions, visible in the picture, of the
creature's cry. "I don't feel like that, so maybe I'm not an – "

I think if we rephrase Resch's statement as a question – How an andy must feel about what? – we can get at Phil Dick's intention(s) for choosing this specific Munch painting.

We need to remember that the Nexus-6 androids in *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* (without getting into why the title is an interrogatory!) are "created" as an "incentive" to encourage people on Earth to emigrate to colony planets. The androids, as a TV commercial in chapter two informs us, are meant to be nothing less than "body servants or tireless field hands." Yet, these androids have a brain unit capable of "...two trillion constituents plus a choice within a range of ten million possible combinations of cerebral activity." But because their manufacturer has been unable to solve a problem involving metabolism and cell replacement, the Nexus-6 androids "live" for only four years. More importantly, according to Deckard, they lack empathy. They don't possess the "...ability to feel empathic joy for another life form's success or grief at its defeat..."

We can, and should, contrast Deckard's "human" perspective with what Pris – a Nexus-6 android – says in chapter thirteen:

"Hell, all Mars is lonely. Much worse than this..."The androids," she
said," are lonely too...We came back because nobody should have
to live there."

Or what another, Rachael, says in chapter sixteen:

"How does it feel to be born, for that matter? We're not born; we
don't grow up; instead of dying from illness or old age, we wear
out like ants."

4. My thought, then, is that Phil Dick means for Munch's *The Scream* to metaphorically personify the plight of these Nexus-6 androids – their angst, anxiety, despair and alienation – a disquieting existential fear.

I also think it can represent Rick Deckard's situation as he attempts to cope with the nature and consequences of his job. Near the end of chapter twelve he thinks, "...my feelings were the reverse of those intended. Of those I'm accustomed to feel – am *required* to feel." (Why *required*? By whom?) Then, in chapter twenty-one, "But what I've done that's become alien to me. In fact everything about me has become unnatural; I've become an unnatural self."

I found the phrase "unnatural self" intriguing and somehow familiar. It just so happens that in William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (the 14 book 1850 version), Book First, lines 19-23, is:

"Trances of thought and mountings of the mind
Come fast upon me: it is shaken off,
That burthen of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day
Not mine, and such as were not made for me."

And we should especially note John R. Isidore, who serves as an antithesis to both Deckard and the Nexus-6 androids. Early in chapter two he reflects, "Once pegged as special, a citizen, even if accepting sterilization, dropped out of history. He ceased, in effect, to be part of mankind."

Each of their respective endless screams are passing, in various forms of isolation, through Nature!

There is dehumanization here, both of humans and androids, that has a Kierkegaardian flavour to it, as implied by what Munch writes in his diary about "trembling with fear." As they confront their various possibilities (of Self), Deckard, Isidore and the Nexus-6 androids experience that dread which is "the dizziness of freedom," and their choices are made in fear and trembling. Or, as Kierkegaard writes, at age 24, in his diary, "I too have both the tragic and the comic in me: I am witty and the people laugh – but I cry." Note the word *cry*, an alternative title for Munch's *The Scream*.

Which it's intriguing to compare with what Phil Dick writes in a September 30, 1964 letter to Terry and Carol Carr:

"I find sorrow in humor and humor in sorrow, and not only in sorrow but in the mighty, the seriousness of life, the great weighty matters that assail us and determine our destiny..."

But I digress.

5. The second Munch painting alluded to is *Puberty*, which the Nexus-6 android Luba Luft sees in a printed catalogue at the museum:

"...a drawing of a young girl, hands clasped together, seated on the edge of a bed, an expression of bewildered wonder and new, groping awe imprinted on the face."

Subsequently, as Deckard and Resch are escorting her toward the museum elevator, Luba asks Deckard, "Buy me a reproduction of that picture I was looking at when you found me. The one of the girl sitting on the bed." Which he does, though it takes buying a whole book that includes the picture she wants.



Now, Adolf Paul, a local chronicler and contemporary of Munch's, witnessed and describes the creation of *Puberty* as:

“On the edge of the bed a naked girl was sitting. She did not look like a saint, yet there was something innocent, coy and shy in her manner – it was just these qualities which had prompted Munch to paint her, and as she sat there in the dazzling light of the brilliant spring sunshine, the shadow cast by her body played as though fatefully behind and above her.”

Without getting into the difference(s) between Phil Dick's perception of this – “an expression of bewildered wonder and new, groping awe” – and Adolf Paul's – “something innocent, coy and shy in her manner” – I'm not at all sure the obvious allusive juxtaposition is meant to be this girl and Luba Luft.

I think – my thought is – it's more so what is hinted at by a brief exchange about it later between Deckard and Resch:

“Puberty dates from 1894,” Rick said shortly. “Nothing but realism existed then; you have to take that into account.”
[Resch] “But that other one, of the man holding his ears and yelling – that wasn't representation.”

What we need to take into account is that Munch is actually considered a major Expressionist, not a Realist – Expressionism being a revolt against Naturalism and Realism. Essentially a German development, from 1900 to the mid 1920s, in which the artist's “subjective experience” is all important as they strive to depict active inner emotion rather than objective reality, Expressionists seek to use the expressive possibilities of line and color to replace beauty with dissonance and distortion, and subtle feelings with agony and intense emotion.

And according to the *Britannica*, Expressionism in literature “...was the dominant literary movement in Germany during and immediately after World War I.” In it:

“Emphasis was laid not on the outer world, which is merely sketched in and barely defined in place or time, but on the internal, on an individual's mental state...”

The term, in the novel, is closely allied to the works of James Joyce and Franz Kafka, two writers Phil Dick read and has indicated influenced him.

6. Why is Art used in conjunction with a particular Nexus-6 android in *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?*, one who is in fact an opera singer, “seemed *genuinely* alive,” yet lacks empathy?

Is Phil Dick somehow getting at whether a work's (Munch's paintings and a Nexus-6 android – both intentionally produced artefacts) artistic and aesthetic values are independent of its philosophical, political and/or moral essence and impact?

In a 1976 interview, Phil Dick states:

“I think aesthetics must be separated from morality....”

It all depends on whether you're a member of the Bourgeois – you will always say, "A good book is one which makes you a better person," and the aesthetic or artist-type will always say, "The aesthetic values are end values in themselves."

Is Rick Deckard, then, a bourgeois-type or aesthetic-type? Which is Luba Luft or Isidore?

But, my thoughts digress...

BOOK REVIEWS

Solar Lottery

Anthony Boucher: *Fantasy & Science Fiction* August 1955, p. 94

Philip K. Dick's SOLAR LOTTERY (Ace, 35 cents) is kept from a Grade A rating only by a tendency, in both its nicely contrasted plots, to dwindle away at the end. This first novel by one of the most interesting new magazine writers (one of F&SF's discoveries, I may add proudly) creates a strange and highly convincing and self-consistent future society, peculiarly governed by Games Theory and the principle of randomness; against this background, built up with the detail of a Heinlein and the satire of a Kornbluth, it relates a taunt melodrama of political conflict and a stirring space-quest to rediscover a lost tenth planet.

Floyd C. Gale: *Galaxy* November 1955, p. 105

Solar Lottery is something else again. It's a longer story and has ten times as much plot, so I guess it should be ten times better than its companion story [Leigh Brackett's *The Big Jump*] but...

Anyhow, it concerns a society that is founded on the monstrous descendents of our present industrial giants; a governmental setup that uses "teeps" – telepathic agents; rule-by chance succession that is determined by lottery and lots, lots more. Too much if you ask me. There's a limit to how many ideas a writer can compress into a story. After that, it's profitless squandering.

A Handful of Darkness

Anthony Boucher: *Fantasy and Science Fiction* April 1956, p. 79.

In short stories, I discover belatedly that one of 1955's best science-fantasy volumes by an American appeared only in England: Philip K. Dick's A HANDFUL OF DARKNESS (Rich & Cowan, 10s. 6d.). Readers of F&SF, which enjoyed the honor of discovering Dick, know the freshness of his concepts, his sharp sense of unfamiliar terrors, the easy naturalism of his everyday people against strange and imaginative backgrounds. Here are 15 of his stories (3 from these pages), almost all of them ranging from good to excellent and only one previously reprinted. (I don't understand why Dick has been so neglected by anthologists...including, I must confess, me.) I urge readers to order the volume through book-importers – and urge American publishers to correct the local absence of a Dick collection.

The World Jones Made

Anthony Boucher: *Fantasy & Science Fiction* August 1956, p. 108

...The Dick novel is about a) a genetic scheme for colonizing Venus, much like James Blish's *panropy*; b) the paradoxes of precognition; c) a wholly new kind of Alien Invader of earth; d) lives gone awry in a bitterly Liberish decadent society; e) the growth of a world-dominating religio-fascist hate-movement – all in 62,000 words. It's too much material (and too many influences) for the best of novelists to assimilate into one coherent story; but here and there Dick verges on brilliance in both thinking and writing.

Eye in the Sky

Anthony Boucher: *Fantasy & Science Fiction* July 1957, p. 93

Philip K. Dick's first novel SOLAR LOTTERTY (Ace, 1955; still in print 35 cents) was a very good one – I might take this opportunity to remind librarians that a hardcover edition, retitled WORLD OF CHANCE, is available from England (Rich & Cowan, 9s 6d). Now, after two hasty and disappointing efforts, Dick easily tops it with his fourth book, EYE IN THE SKY (Ace, 35 cents). This is so nicely calculated and adroitly revealed a work that I prefer to say little about its plot or even its concepts; you should read it, and its assumptions and implications should hit you unexpectedly exactly as they are planned. I hope it is enough to say that it deals with the alternate universe theme; that I have never seen that theme handled with greater technical dexterity or given more psychological meaning; that Dick has emphatically come of age as a novelist, as well as a technician; and that this may very well be the best s.f. novel even of a year which has so far produced outstanding books by Asimov, Bester and Heinlein.

The Cosmic Puppets

Anthony Boucher: *Fantasy & Science Fiction* January 1958, p. 33

Philip K. Dick's THE COSMIC PUPETS (Ace 35 cents) is from Satellite (1956) but gratifyingly in the Unknown manner. When you return to the small town of your birth and find the streets and people completely changed and an 18-year-old obit of yourself in the files of the local paper – well, it is, to say the least, an eery situation, and Mr. Dick develops it with agreeable grue and chilling hints of the cosmic battle between Good and Evil.

The Variable Man

Anthony Boucher: *Fantasy & Science Fiction* February 1958, p. 109

...The Dick book contains the title novella and 5 novelets (one previously anthologized). It seems probable that the medium length is least suited to Dick's talents: both his short stories (which have been collected in England but not here) and his full length novels are more individual and impressive. But though there are awkwardnesses and confusions in these fairly-long stories, you'll also find fertile ingenuity and a striking power in the use of evocative symbols.

Time Out of Joint

P. Schuyler Miller: *Astounding Science Fiction* January 1960, p. 174

I shouldn't have to tell any "faithful reader" of today's science fiction that Philip K. Dick is developing into one of the most original talents in our field. He may not be in it long: this first hard-cover book is jacketed as "a novel of menace" – which it is. It also happens to be good, hard-shell science fiction, handled with consummate skill, so that an unsuspecting mystery reader may just find himself trapped before he realizes he is reading "that stuff."

You are introduced to Ragle Gumm, living with his sister and brother-in-law in a smallish town, and living off his winnings in an interminable newspaper contest, in which he is the invariable winner. This odd pattern of life grows a little odder; the reader begins to spot small contradictions and discrepancies that the characters seem to miss; and finally Ragle develops the growing conviction that he is somehow the center and *raison d'être* of a colossal piece of play-acting – as though the entire cast of De Mille's "Ten Commandments" has been rehearsed to convince one insignificant extra that he *is* an Egyptian laborer.

Now Ragle Gumm tries to break out of his barless cage, only to be deftly turned back again and again. Of course he does get out, and he does find out what is happening, but not until the beginning of the last chapter, when he sits down to read his own biography in *Time*.

It's a grand job of writing.

There once was a science-fiction writer named Philip K. Dick, and he ruled, if you didn't know. And before he died of a stroke in a Santa Ana mental-asylum-type place, he wrote a final novel set in a seemingly normal Orange County that concealed unspeakably incomprehensible evil beneath its sunny streets. We can relate (and not just because of the whole Nixon thing—and not just because of the Santa Ana mental asylum thing, either) because High School Pop Punk is the sound of the streets around here—granted, only certain streets, like nice big wide ones with functioning streetlights and well-maintained lawns—and, well, it's kind of evil, in a beige sort of fashion.

Chris Ziegler "Hello, Norman! Phildickian High School Punk" *OC Weekly* December 21 - 27, 2001

"Future imperfect: Minority Report--the Story and the Film--Misses the Mark" by James Parker.

***The American Prospect* August 12, 2002**

The claim Philip K Dick, California nutcase and sci-fi seer, holds on our imagination is a particular one. Dick's signature as a writer is a sort of pre-epileptic hum or aura, an intimation of fast-approaching crisis. Something dislocates, something accelerates, a wire touches another wire and we know--quivering--that we have to fit ourselves for a lasting ontological derangement. Quality control was never Dick's problem (capable, in his speed-gobbling prime, of writing up to 30 short stories a year, he barely had time to look over his shoulder at the exhaust cloud of output in his wake). But it is ours, and nearly 50 years after it was written, "The Minority Report," Dick's short story, makes for very shaky reading. Soft-boiled, snatching at clichés ("Witwer is making hay, hand over fist," bellows one character unbelievably. "He's got the whole country screaming for your blood!"), it gives off the special low-rent musk of poorly paid hackwork, of a writer selling out for very few readers.

Dick, of course, could sell out a thousand times over and still be original (one of the advantages of lifelong mental instability): No disgrace could quite annul his gift, the long sparks snapping off his bald dome and into the future, and so "The Minority Report" can't help but exceed its modest ambitions. To begin with, there is the

Precrime unit, a police department that prevents crimes before they occur. Interesting, but really just a minor Orwellian twist of an idea--until we meet Precrime's secret weapon, the precognitives or "precogs." Like Jorge Luis Borges' "Funes, the Memorious," the precogs sit in a darkness that is cerebrally charged and brilliant. But unlike Funes--whose powers of recall are so paralyzingly complete that it takes him a whole day to remember a whole day--the precogs are at the mercy of the future. They see it all coming, and it's much too much for them.

The precogs are horribly sapient ninnies. Their heads are bulbous, their bodies are wasted and they are strapped into high-backed chairs, wearing helmets of cruel circuitry. As visions assault them, computers coldly sort through their reactive hoots and drivelings to generate information on upcoming crimes. The precogs are unquestionably a model for a certain portion of Dick's own consciousness--for that part of him that was almost immobilized by an onrush of wacky data, alternate futures, parallel worlds, time-slips, symmetries and cosmic puns. Having introduced the precogs, however, the story hurries away from them and into a numbing whirl of double agents and fights on airplanes and husky-voiced women with "incredibly tiny" pistols. Addicted to complication, Dick blows it this time and buries his insight. It would be hard to charge Steven Spielberg with an addiction to complication. From the unstoppable truck (*Duel*) to the man-hungry Great White (*Jaws*), through the ancient little spaceman with the searching infant face and the illuminated fingertip (*E.T.*), and even up to Indiana Jones' hat, Spielberg's famous emblems have a basic, authentic power. "Boop-boop," sings the Vegas-like UFO in *Close Encounters* , descending on cushions of wonder. Spielberg knows awe.

His last film, *A.I.* , was actually a little awe-heavy, a little too ready to drop its jaw and resonate with mythic intuitions. (I remember in particular some weeping stone lions, massively significant and primally grand, having no effect on me at all.) So is he the man to make a movie out of "The Minority Report"? Unlike Dick, he has known great success. He has felt important. What happens when these two breeds of fantasy--the one vindicated and well-fed, the other addled and marginal, one hand in the jar of pills--collide?

True to form, Spielberg immediately homes in on the precogs. "Murder ...," breathes a floating face as broken images stretch and flutter around it like the surface of perturbed water--a pair of scissors, a woman screaming, the line "You know how blind I am without them," dazedly repeated. No longer belted into their high-backed chairs, Spielberg's precogs (simultaneously more human and more divine than Dick's) are suspended in a radiant pool and tended devotedly by a herbivorous young man in surfer shorts. They have names: Agatha, Dashiell and Arthur (Christie, Hammett and Conan Doyle, I presume). Utterly pale, naked, shaven-headed, deprived even of eyebrows, the precogs are eerie in the extreme. Upstairs in Precrime is Chief John Anderton, no longer a sweating pre-retiree but a superfit, darkly intense man of action played by that thespian steam shovel, Tom Cruise. While the precogs hang uneasily in their soup of omniscience, Anderton reviews with a policeman's eye the psychic matter that comes bubbling up, giving it a name and a place so that the field team can get to work. Anderton is a man possessed--always a good thing for a Cruise character--tormented by the abduction and presumed murder of his only son a short time before Precrime was established. Sorting the raw information, Anderton sees his own name come up. According to the precogs, in 36 hours he will murder a man he doesn't even know. He's being set up. He bolts.

As sci-fi buffs know, nothing dates quite like the future: Whole decades have been ironized, comically, by their apprehensions of human destiny. Dick's future, though, was never too far off. It stayed close by and grimly vivid, like a skunk in the backyard. Its citizens still drove cars, lived in crummy apartments and listened to Linda Ronstadt. They had oddly boring names. Spielberg is faithful to this: The urban environment of *Minority Report* is only a slight exaggeration or amplification of our own. The hyperdeveloped gadgets that surround Cruise--the singing and dancing cereal box, the advertising billboards that laserscan your eyes and then hail you by name--are ominously unastounding, to the point where we might expect to see them in a few short years. And human nature hasn't changed a bit: Anderton, a hollow man since he lost his son, locks the door, does drugs and watches holographic home movies while the rain comes down. (This most Dickian scene is in fact the pure invention of Spielberg's writers.) And as the cereal boxes and billboards grow louder, brighter and more assaultive, as the general din of consumerism is turned up, something drains away--the colors of *Minority Report* are rinsed and metallic, its edges woozy with threat. Life has contracted and gone sour.

As a direct parallel, law enforcement enjoys a golden age of abundance and superbity: the wandlike "sick sticks" that induce instant nausea, the scuttling metal spiders that twitter as they read your eyeballs--this is the

security state *in excelsis*. In the grand old noir style, as cop becomes fugitive, as Anderton becomes a pariah, he experiences the oppressive weight of the very machinery he used to run. Precrime is, of course, a totalitarian notion: We must not think bad thoughts! And yet *Minority Report* seems to be straining for a subtle differentiation between the second sight of the precogs and the all-seeing eye of the state. Subtle, but crucial--these are different types of knowledge, with different consequences. The precogs are metaphysically hooked up, part of the fabric of things: The Precrime officers have scanners that reduce humans to pockets of heat ("We got a warm body on the fourth floor!"). The officers do not interpret, only enforce. The precogs--artificially maintained, splayed before the bad dreams of the universe--are the state's true victims. The motif of vision, and its loss, recurs. "Can you see?" begs the precog Agatha (an amazing performance by Samantha Morton), rearing from her oracular water to grab the freaked-out Anderton. And Anderton himself, going back into Precrime headquarters to settle the score, will need a new pair of eyes--literally.

Minority Report fairly tears along, absorbing at every level until its last half-hour, at which point various compacted strata of plot begin to crush the life out of it. Whatever happened to simplicity? To a good idea, directly done? A not-great story remains a not-great story, of course; no amount of wizardry will change that, and Dick's failures become Spielberg's. Max von Sydow, monstrously distinguished, his face like a sun-warmed tombstone, presides over a knotted conspiracy to safeguard the future of Precrime at Anderton's expense. Anderton, in a last-minute fit of Spielbergian sentimentality, reunites with his estranged wife and timidly strokes her burgeoning belly. What survives all this, what follows you out into the street, is the movie's tone--at once frightened and sardonic, and as grimly aware of the impending dilemma, the awful surfeit of knowing, as it is of its own inability to deal with it. And that is very, very Philip K. Dick.

THE 50-MINUTE HOUR NEWS REPORT By Perry Kinman

"-- Jim, Jack, Joe, whatever." The infamous newsclown giggled uncontrollably. Even his own jokes set him off sometimes. "An so I say's 'When else would the Blue Cephalopod Man sporificate. Not back on Titan. No way!' An the vague blur just stood there, scratching his --" A loud bell clanged suddenly. Lights flashed. The newsclown jumped sending his famous flaming fur flying. His eyes wide. He grabbed the 'pape that had just shot out of a slot and unrolled it. "Uh-oh! News!" He adjusted his wig on halfway. "This just in. There was a massive 80,000 flapple piledown on the LA-Luna route. Debris flying in all directions. A sales robot got into a guidebeam router and shorted it out. In the 8 seconds it took to get a new one online, mayhem ruled." The newsclown stopped reading and scowled. A few seconds began to divide like cells. The newsclown looked up. "How many times do I have to say this? Robots need to be encoded with ethics. They can change their own fuzzy logic to suit their aims anytime. Circumvent laws at the drop of a skin." The mood. The air. The newsclown had changed himself. From Mr. Smiley into Mr. Serious. The newsclown rattled the 'pape menacingly at the camera. "Look at this," he spat out. "This is what happens! How many Sim's and Androids and Nexus' and Nanny's and constructs have to die before we do something about it? Huh?!" The newsclown stared hard into the camera eye. Unblinking. "Oh, yeah. Humans too. Even them, too."

PKD OTAKU is intended to be an ol' fashioned fanzine, and sometimes serconzine, devoted to an ongoing conversation about the fiction and non-fiction of Philip K. Dick. It's edited and published, irregularly, by Patrick Clark, P.O. Box 2761, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102, USA. Individual issues are \$2.00, or by prior arrangement: for written or art contributions, letters of comment, traded publications and/or review copies. For further info, please email me at: pclark@jjhill.org.