

PKD OTAKU #11

THE KITCHEN SINK ISSUE

I'd be the first to admit that this issue is a grab bag, a collection of odds and ends that I've had for sometime wondering what to do with it all. Over the years I have collected a good number of PKD-related materials, mostly shorter pieces I find interesting but which have no larger context. So I'm tossing them together here. Some have appeared before in one venue or another. For instance there are pieces from a much earlier cyberpunk zine I once did called *Interference On the Brain Screen*, a phildickian title surely. Much of it originally appeared on the internet, especially on the various incarnations of the current jazzflavor list. There is an inconclusive conversation I had with Andre Welling concerning "Faith of Our Fathers" which we are still working. A good deal of this must be in the pkdlist archives but not easy to find. I thought I'd give them a home here and then eventually on Marc "Zito"s great web site. In keeping with the haphazard nature of the contents I'm foregoing the usual two-column format and getting it into your hands in a hurry.

Charles Platt: "Memories of Phil" (25 Sep 1995)

In the interview that I did with Phil Dick, published in 1980 in a book titled DREAM MAKERS, he dealt with the "drug user" question. (This was the first interview where he went public with his ideas about God, Valis, and everything...he chose me as a kind of guinea pig to try it out on. An interesting experience when a writer one deeply admires suddenly tells you he's been talking to God, and God doesn't like Richard Nixon, and God has asked Phil to do something about it.)

Anyway: the story is that Dick used amphetamines to maintain his output, as you say. Supposedly he only dropped acid once, AFTER he wrote the Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, widely regarded as a psychedelic kind of book. At some point he also did peyote, again once. His acid trip was sufficiently unpleasant, he said, that he had little incentive to try it again. (He basically experienced a vision of hell.)

I don't know what the story was between Ellison and Dick. Dick didn't seem to know, either; he claimed to be baffled by it. All Ellison would say was the usual rant he goes into about someone who has moved from the "friends" side to the "enemies" side of the Ellisonian ledger (a shift that can occur remarkably swiftly, and with disconcerting totality). Ellison warned me that Dick could not be trusted, had betrayed his friends, was a drug user, was an evil human being, and was generally despicable. Since I had heard similar Ellisonian rants about other people, I didn't pay too much attention; and indeed, Phil Dick was one of the sweetest people I ever met. Also one of the smartest. I don't think he had many enemies, which may be one reason he was so baffled by the Ellison situation.

I doubt that the use of amphetamines caused long-term hallucinatory symptoms. Kim Stanley Robinson's theory is that Phil suffered a slight stroke, long before the bigger one that ultimately killed him. This is the theory that makes the best sense to me, partly because Phil's subjective description of his "revelatory moment" is similar to the account that a stroke victim might give of the instant when the cardiovascular accident occurs. In Phil's case, however, he was predisposed to think in terms of conspiracies, and he had a far stronger imagination than most other stroke victims. VALIS seems to have been the result. Unfortunately, Phil died before Robinson came up with his theory, so I never had a chance to try Phil on it. The last time I saw him, he had just been put in charge of security at his condo, in a poor neighborhood south of LA. He was really acting out the part. "You sound like a law-and-order fanatic," I said. He replied, mock-serious: "You better watch your step! Around here, I *am* the law!"

During this visit he also told me that his "tutelary spirit" had told him that orthodox Christianity is ALL TRUE. "That's interesting," I said. "As soon as your own life goes into a more conventional, law-abiding mode, your god-voice does exactly the same thing."

He was silent for a moment. "It's very responsive to me, isn't it?" he said reflectively.

This marked the moment when I stopped taking Phil's visions even a little bit seriously. Alas, it was also the last time I saw him.

Don't know why I've ended up writing all this here; maybe because I couldn't write it before, since it brought back sad memories. Anyway, people can skip it if they're not interested.

Eric A. Johnson (19 Dec 1995)

It seems to me that in exploring PKD's fascination with fascism we are starting to drift away from the other face of PKD's fundamental duality. What is *MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE* but an exploration of what happens when someone says "Jews (and blacks and others) are not human?" What is *FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID* but an exploration of a fascist police state? What is *A SCANNER DARKLY* but an exploration of a world controlled by a narco-business? I think PKD was well aware of the "dark side" of the reality games he was caught up in.

And as Tom said in an earlier post, the thing that is so fascinating about pre-VALIS PKD is that he is constantly exploring both sides of this perpetually shifting reality/duality--ie if we can actually create reality, what happens when *the other* ends up defining reality for us? One of my favorite examples is *EYE IN THE SKY* where the tour group falls into the wacky Bevetron (or whatever that gadget is called) and they are all forced to live through each others definitions of reality. My favorite bit comes when the crabby old lady [again, a negative female stereotype] starts wishing away things she doesn't like and eventually the whole world dissolves as everything is, of course, linked to everything else.

When it's not the Bevetron messing with reality, it's madness (e.g., *MARTIAN TIME-SLIP*), drugs (e.g., *THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH*), psi-powers combined with omnipresent commercialism (e.g., *UBIK*), quasi-religion (e.g., *MAZE OF DEATH*), aliens (numerous short stories and parts of novels), or a half dozen other variations of different reality "alternators." In his pre-VALIS phase, PKD never settles on any one answer. He just keeps asking the reality question again and again.

It is only post-VALIS that I think PKD starts grasping for an "ideology"--although ideology is perhaps too strong a word. But he does start trying to find a single, integrating explanation. Fortunately (and this for me is the novel VALIS' saving grace), he never finds a truly "comfortable cushion" and begins jumping from one possible solution to another (three-eyed Sirians, Russian especially satellites, religious visions, drugs, madness, etc.) in much the same way that he jumped around before VALIS.

The only time *I get uncomfortable* with PKD is when *he starts getting comfortable* and settling in (or others try to settle him in) with the all-embracing Gnostic Revelation explanation. As John so correctly pointed out, the potential links between certain elements of gnosticism and fascism should have made PKD pause and think. Because it is at this point where PKD stops shifting his realities and starts to choose a single "ideology" and thereby abandons half of his fundamental reality/duality. While I'm willing to buy the possibility that PKD may have had a Divine Revelation, I personally have absolutely no desire to fall into the Bevetron and end up with PKD the Mystic Gnostic defining reality for me. I think I would prefer the crabby old lady as at least the existential pain would be over rather quickly. Now ending up in the Bevetron with PKD the Ontologist would be another matter entirely ... it would make for an even wilder ride than reading his fiction. Anyways

Tom Dillingham: "Androids and Empathy" (2 Oct 1996)

It seems to me the whole point of the novel is that humans believe the difference between themselves and androids is that humans have empathy and can therefore understand the suffering of others, including other animals. This plays against the irony that humans have also been guilty of the kinds of destructive behavior that has destroyed most life on the planet other than human, and even human life is in serious jeopardy -- therefore calling into question the effectiveness of empathy as a survival factor. Dick then goes on to explore the possibility that the forces at work to destroy life are actually not human (because they fail in the demonstration of empathy by creating destruction rather than supporting life). This is a natural speculation for anyone who grew up with a consciousness of the Nazi holocaust and the nuclear holocaust -- if human beings

are intelligent, strong *and* empathic, then how could they have done these things? (Walter Miller explores the same questions in *Canticle for Leibowitz*, but from a Catholic perspective that allows for the existence of evil -- PKD struggles because he is not so sure of the theology as Miller is -- therefore posits Mercerism.)

In *Blade Runner*, the Voigt-Kampf test administered to the replicants supposedly records involuntary responses to images or descriptions of cruelty, and the lack of such responses is supposed to reveal the presence of a replicant. When Rachel asks Deckard if he has ever given himself the test, the issue of whether he is or is not an android or replicant is explicitly introduced. But the fundamental question is far more troubling -- it implies the possibility that even a human, especially one engaged in Deckard's profession, would fail the empathy test. That seems to me to be more fundamental and interesting than the question of whether Deckard is also a replicant with implanted memories, and more Dickian. (And the strategy Deckard uses to reveal to Rachel that she has implanted memories cold cut both ways -- either he knows the process and is confident it has not been used on him -- as we are led to believe -- or he may be another replicant who just has one more layer of information available to him. I know this has been ingeniously argued in various forums.)

Since Mercerism, in the novel, more or less ritualizes empathy (and anticipates the suffering savior in *Divine Invasion*, it seems to me that PKD, typically, has considerable ambivalence about the only remaining hope for humanity. Empathy and altruism may well be distinctive human traits, but they obviously don't do much to save us from the most ruthless cruelty and destruction.

Robert Anton Wilson: "Memories of Phil" (Jan 19, 1996)

"Phil Dick and I had a long conversation one afternoon at Santa Rosa and it was only a year later that I found out that he and I had exactly similar experiences at approximately the same time, which left both of us wondering if we'd been contacted by god, by the devil, by an extra-terrestrial from Sirius or by some evil parapsychologist working for either the CIA or the KGB, or if we had just gone temporarily crazy. Then I realized this whole long conversation was Phil's attempt to find out how crazy I was. If I was sane, there was a chance that he was sane too. But if I was crazy, that increased the probability that he was crazy. He apparently decided that I was sane enough that he could trust that he was possibly sane too, so he started publishing some of his experiences, which now are in several books: *Valis*, *The Divine Invasion*, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, *Radio Free Albemuth* and the *Exegesis*. My accounts of similar experiences are in *Cosmic Trigger* Vol. 1."

Joel Margot: "Noir in Festival" (10 Dec 1996)

Somebody on the list suggested I should write a report on the weekend we just spent in Courmayeur (Italy) interviewing KW Jeter and Norman Spinrad, at the occasion of "Noir in Festival", a five days event about noir films. The organizers added X-Files and Philip K. Dick as two side subjects. They thought that Phil Dick was a noir writer, which was one of the topics firmly discussed over the weekend.

There were about 100 people attending, probably 90% of them from Italy itself, since the main language was Italian -which I don't speak. Twice two hours (on Saturday and Sunday morning), a round-table about Phil Dick was organized. Most of the conferences there were in Italian, excepting Maxim Jakubowski, KW Jeter, Norman Spinrad and Alan Stern who produced a short 22 minutes film in 1995 called "The Nervous Breakdown of Philip K. Dick", shown to us on Sunday.

Beside these two round-tables ("tavola rotonda" in Italian ;-), "Confessions d'un Barjo", the French film by Jerome Boivin, adapted from Phil's mainstream novel *Confessions of a Crap Artist*, was projected.

The main topics discussed were *Blade Runner*, a not-very-convincing psychoanalysis in Italian of Phil Dick and Phil in the Noir movement.

For us, the most interesting was the interviews, talks and drinks we could have, with both, KW Jeter and Norman Spinrad. I can't write here two hours of interviews, and I'm close to unable to recall all we discussed during the after-midnight drinking session on Saturday evening.

Nevertheless, I'll just include what I think was the main idea expressed and an anecdote. If you want to know more, just give me an e-ring.

Somehow Phil Dick in 1974 had a series of experiences that he interpreted the way we know, writing *Valis* and the *Divine Invasion*. The symptom of the interpretation could have been lots of totally different things: from a little vein breaking in the eye, to a pink ray sent by an alien spaceship orbiting Earth. One thing we know is that Transmigration is different. His interpretation has changed. KW said that if he was crazy during this 74-78/9 period, he was totally sane of mind later on, right to when he died. Norman agreed on that as well.

Moreover, KW told us an interesting anecdote that I think illustrates perfectly Phil's sense of humor: KW, Phil and another SF writer at that time were living in Santa Ana near LA. One evening as KW entered the latter's flat for a visit, he finds him totally shaken, shuddered, panicked. As KW asks him what had happened, the writer says "We're all gonna die, gravity will soon disappear, Phil told me." After KW got back home, he called Phil and asked him what that all was about. Phil had a very special giggle that would last for minutes that everyone who met him, said KW, was aware of. Phil just started giggling on the phone for five minutes. He managed to convince the SF writer that the Russians had just invented a means to annihilate gravity on Earth, and that we're all soon going to die, the atmosphere being sent out in deep space!

Source: pkd-list@draco.mv.com

Patrick: "THE BLURBS OF PHILIP K. DICK"

As far as I know, Phil did not write many blurbs for other people's books. Given his status in the sf world, this seems odd. Below are a few that I have found.

For John Brunner's *The Jagged Orbit*:

"This big sprawling novel with its wealth of characters grips you rapidly. It is a superb work, plotted with amazing skill, and showing a magnetic artistry much above anything Brunner has previously shown. This is a major epic, with a sparkling range of bizarre, convincing details of tomorrow, and if its climax strikes you as strongly as it did me, you'll find this book worth three times its price."

For K.W. Jeter's *Dr. Adder* also but used on the back of the hardcover edition of *Blade Runner 2: The Edge of Human* Bantam 1995. [Phil is identified in the blurb as "Philip K. Dick, author of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (the basis for the film *Blade Runner*" -- like you wouldn't already know)]:

"A truly wonderful novel that destroys once and for all your conceptions of the limitations of science fiction."

For Dennis R. Caro's *The Man in the Darksuit*:

"A sheer delight. Don't pass this one up!"

William Delaney found this one for Robert Anton Wilson's *Cosmic Trigger*:

"Wilson managed to reverse every mental polarity in me, as if I had been pulled through infinity. I was astonished and delighted."

When asked by a publisher in England to write a blurb for a collection of his own short stories, Phil proposed the following.

"These dull and uninteresting stories..."

He also remarked, "In this country someone else writes them [blurbs], usually someone who has not read the book."

Source: Various book covers and "Will the Atom Bomb Ever be Perfected..." (1966) in *The Shifting Realities of PKD*: p. 62.

Andre & Patrick: Two otaku sitting around discussing "Faith of Our Fathers"

From Andre

It strikes me that one could see *The Faith of our Fathers* as Leviathan's adoration.

The State is the Ultimate Benefactor of the People, they usually say (the Fathers).

Beyond the State is anarchy, bestiality, they preach.

Then would the drug/brain-interaction be the freedom seeker's think tools: their epistemology or political philosophy.

They agree that The Beast is ghastly.

They agree that they've seen The Beast (and not only some poor mishappen creature).

The Beast's faces are many. But The Beast mostly prefers to be the Ultimate Benefactor of the People (UBotP) because it delights in a tame and willing crowd.

Tyranny was most blatantly 'beneficial' in Soviet and "People's" Republics of late. Stalin and Kim Il Sung were even *actually* named UBotP. How 'human' was Uncle Joe, was he?

To implement that beneficiality modern tyrannies use info tech for mind vampirism - public information *is* propaganda *is* world creation according to The Gospel of The Beast, to wit:

"We, the People, are born to serve -- and get sacrificed."

Because it's motto has been "Apocalypse Now" way too often.

FOOF is the most Lovecraftian of PKD's stories: The (near) unspeakable sight, the hopeless dread, the unfathomable alien overlord. Man lived most of his existence without state-herding. It cropped up like a disease only about 10,000 years ago.

State is a virus from Outer Space.

From Patrick

So about "Adoration of Leviathan" and FOOF (unfortunate acronym don't you think?), I'm still thinking about it but I have some notes I've made so far:

Ultimate Benefactor = the State – but did the existence of the State generate U.B. – or did U.B. generate the State? What would Phil think?

The title "Faith of Our Fathers" – what does it mean? The hymn's lyrics do not appear to elucidate the story so is it the hymn's title alone that is important?

Is the State a false god? Yes! Is U.B.? Good question. He's certainly a god. Is he false because he hides his true nature? Is he God? Or only Death? Not positive but I don't believe any culture considers Death to be a god as such. There are gods *of the dead* (Pluto).

N.B. it is young people who are seeking to uncover the truth. What's his name, Chien, has to be bribed and blackmailed to participate. He just wants to be left alone. So does the title refer to the young cadres rejection of the faith of their fathers? Okay, the legless peddler is older. Jesus! Is he supposed to represent Phil?

FOOF is certainly Lovecraftian – except the U.B. takes the time to directly communicate with Chien, something HPL's Old Ones would not bother doing. Does this “humanize” the U.B.? What about his remark that “there are worse things than me”?

Considerations for understanding FOOF:

Date written, 1966, a period of political and social tumult in the USA and the "New Wave" in science fiction. What was going on in Phil's life during composition?

Venue – *Dangerous Visions* the most advanced SF anthology ever (much more “dangerous” than, say, *Semiotext(e) SF*) and edited by Harlan Ellison with whom Phil has a troubled relationship

FOOF is overtly political

Does anything in the “Afterword” that Phil penned tell us anything about the story? And what about the endnote to the story in the short story collection where Phil remarks that FOOF was the cause of his later troubles? And references in the *Exegesis*? (Not much about FOOF in the letters as I recall.)

From Andre

>*Ultimate Benefactor = the State - but did the existence of the State generate U.B. - or did U.B. generate the State? What would Phil think?*

The UB is the latest mask of the State (Leviathan). It hides its ugly face (the face of evil) behind a sphere of sticky goodness and optimism. The state asks not only for your tax and duty but for your soul and spirit. The UB is a mind-vampire.

>*The title "Faith of Our Fathers" - what does it mean?*

Idolatry of the State is the faith of our fathers.

>*Is the State a false god? Yes! Is U.B.? Good question? He's certainly a god. Kim Il-Sung has been such a trash-god.*

>*Okay, the legless peddler is older. Jesus! Is he supposed to represent Phil?*

That's a good idea.

>*FOOF is certainly Lovecraftian - except the U.B. takes the time to directly communicate with Chien, something HPL's Old Ones would not bother doing. Does this "humanize" the U.B.? What about his remark that "there are worse things than me"?*

It's like the justification for the rebel's traitor in Matrix. When the truth is that you are living in a nightmare world and are subjugated by insurmountable evil forces than you might well cherish the lie: Joining the UB's virtual reality. Take the cover for the real thing (for the sight of what's hidden behind the cover would make you go screaming mad; how HPL).

FOOF is really the story these two could have written together.

>*FOOF is overtly political*

It's mystico-political. With a strong Stalinist flavor.

>Does anything in the "Afterword" that Phil penned (both versions) tell us anything about the story?

Hey, I have to reread that.

>And what about the end note to the story in the short story collection where Phil remarks that FOOF was the cause of his later troubles?

Did he? FOOF troubled the spooks? Ho hum..

See, there is research to do.

From Patrick

FOOF CLUES

"I don't advocate any of the ideas in "Faith of Our Fathers"; I don't, for example, claim that the Iron Curtain countries will win the cold war – or morally ought to. One theme in the story, however, seems compelling to me, in view of recent experiments with hallucinogenic drugs: the theological experience, which so many who have taken LSD have reported. This appears to me to be a true new frontier; to a certain extent the religious experience can now be scientifically studied...and, what is more, may be viewed as part hallucination but containing other, real components. God, as a topic in science fiction, when it appears at all, used to be treated polemically, as in "Out of the Silent Planet." But I prefer to treat it as intellectually exciting. What if, through psychedelic drugs, the religious experience becomes commonplace in the life of intellectuals? The old atheism, which seemed to many of us – including me – valid in terms of our experiences, or rather lack of our experiences, would have to step momentarily aside. Science fiction, always probing what is about to be thought, become, must eventually tackle without preconceptions a future neo-mystical society in which theology constitutes a major force as in the medieval period. This is not necessarily a backward step, because now these beliefs can be tested – forced to put up or shut up. I, myself, have no real beliefs about God; only my experience that He is present...subjectively, of course; but the inner realm is real too. And in a science fiction story one projects what has been a personal inner experience into a milieu; it becomes socially shared, hence discussable. The last word, however, on the subject of God may have already been said: in A.D. 840 by John Scotus Erigena at the court of the Frankish king Charles the Bald. "We do not know what God is. God Himself does not know what He is because He is not anything. Literally God is *not*, because He transcends being." Such a penetrating – and Zen – mystical view, arrived at so long ago, will be hard to top; in my own experience with psychedelic drugs I have had precious tiny illumination compared with Erigena."

(Afterword to "Faith of Our Fathers" in the first edition of *Dangerous Vision* 1966)

"Claudia, this stuff could change our world. And I'm beginning to think that it is true. For me it has become a series of inner revelations night after night."

"God is head of the Communist Party. He is evil. You see him not when you take psychomimetic drugs, but when you don't. As long as you're spaced out on LSD and other psychedelics it's okay; you see standard reality; it's when you sober up that you see this awful clacking, clanking horror which is God."

(Letter to Claudia Krenz, July 15, 1974.)

"...In any case I wish you to add the following addition to my "Afterword" which appears on galley page 203 (to the story "Faith of Our Fathers"):

In his introduction to "Faith of Our Fathers" Harlan gives the misleading impression that my story was written under the influence of LSD. This is not so. About all a person can write while on LSD, I have found, is his own short and involuntary obituary. What *did* influence this story was my desire to produce the most frightening vision I could imagine. Sometimes I think I did too well. I'm just glad this vision isn't true."

(Letter to Olga Vezeris [at Signet Books] November 13, 1974)

"My 3-74 experiences are an outgrowth of my Palmer Eldrich experience of over ten years earlier. "Faith of Our Fathers" shows this, too...."

(*Exegesis* 1975 p. 21))

"'Faith of Our Fathers': The title is that of an old hymn. I think, with this story, I managed to offend everybody, which seemed at the time to be a good idea, but which I have regretted since. Communism, drugs, sex, God – I put it all together and its been my impression since that when the roof fell in on me years later, this story was in some eerie way involved."

("Afterthoughts By The Author" *The Best of Philip K. Dick* (1977))

"I thought, 'What's the most dangerous idea I can think of?' God is head of the Communist party, and He's evil.... I put drugs, sex, Communism and God into one story, and I've always thought that's why my house was hit.... The whole point was to offend people."

Unpublished interview with Hazel Pierce, October 7, 1981 in the *PKDS Newsletter* # 29

From Andre

In a way this stuff resonates with my thinking. Of course I hit on "the State" and for Phil it's "Communism" (which I regard as an especially mind-vampiristic variety of said Leviathan).

But "Communism, drugs, sex, God" – where's the *sex* in FOOF? (I must have over-read it)

"As long as you're spaced out on LSD and other psychedelics it's okay; you see standard reality; it's when you sober up that you see this awful clacking, clanking horror which is God."

The taking LSD *in this story* is comparable to absorbing standards reality facilitators like the tube, newspapers, etc. Sobering up (taking anti-psychomimetic) is comparable to opening up for the normally bleak world-view of fringe/alternative media.

>"...the theological experience, which so many who have taken LSD have reported. This appears to me to be a true new frontier; to a certain extent the religious experience can now be scientifically studied..."

That could be a reference to the much publicized "Good Friday Experiment" in 1962. Tim Leary was part of the academical team but they used Psilocybin and Theology students.

http://www.csp.org/practices/entheogens/docs/young-good_friday.html

>"As long as you're spaced out on LSD and other psychedelics it's okay; you see standard reality; it's when you sober up that you see this awful clacking, clanking horror which is God."

That's like in Lem's 'Futurological Congress': As long as you take the ubiquitous mind-warping drugs you see standard reality; it is only when you avoid this all-pervading normality drugs (TV is King!) that you see this awful clacking, clanking horror which is the world.

I'll think about it later.

Trying to Make a Living in the Science Fiction Biz

A royalty statement to Phil from Doubleday & Company dated 4/30/68 reflecting sales of DO ANROIDS DREAM for the previous 6 months provides the following figures.

Domestic sales: 1,664 copies
Canada: 65 copies
Export: 4 copies

This garnered Phil a total of \$671.38 cents in royalties: \$657.28 for domestic sales, \$12.84 for Canada and \$1.26 for export. It appears that Phil had been paid an advance of \$1,250.00 for DADOES on 10/18/66 leaving him with an "unearned balance" of \$578.62 -- which I take to mean he hadn't begun to earn any money on the book yet. But DADOES was only published in March 1968 so the novel hasn't been on the market very long. Reviews in the science fiction press first appear in August (*Fantasy & Science Fiction*) and September (*Analog*).

In the same six months period ending 4/30/68 16 copies of NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR were returned to Doubleday for credit resulting in a loss of royalties of \$6.32 -- leaving an "unearned balance" of \$41.53. And he still had an unearned balance of 10 cents for THREE STIGMATA.

(Source: royalty statement amongst the PKD papers at Bowling Green State University)

Some secondary source material for PKD from "The Tuesday Dose"

My favorite story about Ace's title-changes has to do with another Phil Dick book which he called *Cantata 140*. It concerned, among other things, a warehouse in orbit around Earth. When I saw the memo that said the title had been changed to *The Crack in Space*, I rushed into Don's office and explained the double-entendre to him (he'd intended the title to refer to a leakage between dimensions in the novel). Don said, "Oh, well. No one will notice." - Terry Carr

(Source: from an interview with Terry Carr in *Speaking of Science Fiction: The Paul Walker Interviews*; Luna Publications: 1978 p. 207)

As soon as the girls and I had returned to Point Reyes, Phil moved in with us, bringing his possessions with him. I noticed that his clothes, cheap to begin with, were old and shapeless. Phil didn't care about visual appearances or household objects at all. The only things he treasured were his Royal Electric typewriter, his Magnavox record player, his books and records and his set of the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Among his favorite books were *A Crock of Gold* by James Stevens and *Miss Lonelyhearts* by Nathaniel West. His library included complete files of *Astounding Science Fiction*, *Amazing Science Fiction* and *Fantasy and Science Fiction* magazines. He had a large collection of H.P. Lovecraft stories and novels and other

horror tales. He also had a collection of literary works, and at the time was especially interested in the works of such writers as Camus, Kafka, Beckett and Ionesco.

-Anne Dick

(Source: Anne R. Dick, "The Good Days" *Firsts* Oct. 1994, p. 33.)

And of course I read Philip K. Dick with bemused interest. Essentially most of what he says is true, and curiously enough much of what is said in opposition is also true. To attempt to go through it and pick nits in disagreement would take more pages and more documentation than it could be worth, and everything said could in turn be rebutted. The way I feel about it now is that having lived in the USA of 1945 -1964, none of us are in a position to criticize where the question of individual guilt is concerned.

However, personally I am numbered among those who found Man in the High Castle irritating, outmoded, and sick. Whatever its merits as literature, it was a totally wrong choice for a Hugo. It is questionable by what definition or standard it could be called science-fiction. Dick has written some great science fiction stories, but this wasn't among them.

-Donald A. Wollheim [Phil's editor at Ace Books] responding to "Naziism and The High Castle"

(Source: *Niekas* no. 10 (Dec. 1964), p.5.)

"There are some writers who can get away with experimenting, and Philip K. Dick is one of them. But I don't see him as being an avant garde writer. At Ace Books, where we did a good many of his earliest works, people liked them. And Ace was a great company for putting out hack fiction, you know."

Donald Wollheim

(Source: Charles Platt, "Donald A. Wollheim." *The Patchin Review* no. 5 (October-December 1982): p. 31.)

Philip Dick lives, with his wife and children, in "a Campbell-Wong glass-sided house in the country north of San Francisco with a library of Jung and Zen Buddhism, cherry plum trees and central black-iron open fireplace, a passion for local fish and game, Paul Tillich and science fiction." Mr. Dick is the author of a number of science fiction stories and novels, and his novel, *Eye in the Sky*, was selected by *Fantasy and Science Fiction Magazine* as one of the best fifty science fiction works of it's decade.

Source: the dust jacket of the Putnam edition of *The Man in the High Castle*, 1962.

LP: How did Dick change after the Exegesis, as they call it, this sort of religious experience - or perhaps a pre-stroke condition.

TP: It mainly focused his areas of research. Before that, his areas of research would have included paramilitary groups in the hills outside of the Bay Area, the CIA... After this, he was very specifically thinking about early Christianity, Gnostic, Coptic, pre-Socratic...all those... He was very big on the Nag Hammadi manuscripts, the ones that were found in Egypt in the 40s. So I think the main effect of the pink light experience was focusing him on that.

FK: On texts?

TP: Yeah. Trying to explain what happened to him. Because something did happen to him in March '74, and the rest of his life he was trying to hold up one explanation after another to see which would fit. Sometimes it was "acid flashback." And he would say, "No that doesn't work." Sometimes it would be going crazy. And that wouldn't work. Ultimately, I think most of the explanations were: God spoke to him. Which, if I had to put money on one square or the other, I'd put my money on that one. Valis, of course, is an explanation of that. The trouble is, it was an explanation as of one -

LP: Snapshot.

TP: - two week period, exactly. A month later I asked him, "Do you still think that thing in Valis is the explanation?" "No, I don't think that anymore." I'd think, "Jesus, too bad you can't write Valis once a year, Phil." [laughter]

(Source: Fiona Kelleghan and Lawrence Person, "Raising Spirits: An Interview With Tim Powers." *Nova Express* Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2001): p. 4.)

Phil had come to know Pike through this connection and wanted to write a novel about Pike's spiritual odyssey. Somehow, perhaps because he felt he was irrevocably typed as an SF writer, Phil had gotten it into his head that the only way he could get such a novel published was to tart it up with a lot of thriller-cum-SF paraphernalia involving CIA plots, alien invasions, and the usual razzmatazz.

"Jeez, Phil," I told him, "you've got a great story here, you don't need all that crap. Why don't you just tell it straight?"

"You think I could get it published?"

I told him I thought he could, and he decided to discuss the matter with Russell Galen, his agent and friend, whom he really trusted. Galen concurred, encouraged Phil to go ahead, and the result was *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, which I believe is one of Phil's three or four best novels, and a return to the level of *The Man in the High Castle*, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich*, and *Ubik*, after too many years of floundering around with lesser works. Certainly it is far superior to *Valis* or *The Divine Invasion*, utterly coherent, totally controlled, spiritually lucid, and filled with loving clarity.

(Source: Norman Spinrad, "The Transmogrification of Philip K. Dick" in *Science Fiction in the Real World*; Southern Illinois University Press, 1990: p. 200.)

Roland C. Wagner: "HPL and PKD"

Here's an oddity. *Crypt of Cthulhu* #103 contains an "alternative history" obituary of H.P. Lovecraft that is utterly fascinating. In this scenario, Lovecraft survives his cancer and lives to the ripe old age of 101, finally dying in 1991. In his later years he turns to science fiction full time and becomes well known in the field. The obituary is full of fascinating "what if" details (he wins the Hugo in 1965, for example) including his feuds with Robert Heinlein and L. Ron Hubbard. In 1950 Lovecraft writes a scathing review of Hubbard's "Dianetics: The Evolution of a Science" entitled "Diuretics: The Devolution of a Fiction." The Hubbard dispute alienates John W. Campbell, up to then Lovecraft's most influential supporter – and editor of *Astounding Science Fiction* where the bulk of Lovecraft's fiction had been published. Picking up the story at this point we read the following:

Campbell's reaction was even worse. As soon as he read Lovecraft's scathing attack, he sent him back all his stories and told him not to bother to submit any more. But Lovecraft got a lot of positive mail, winning the support of several of his fellow writers, among whom a young Philip K. Dick. Lovecraft started to correspond with him, and did so until Dick's untimely death in March 1982. "Voices Green and Purple,"* the story they wrote together a few years later, is one of the strangest artifacts of the history of the history of science fiction, as it features creatures that live on several reality planes and Reality Worms burrowing between probabilities.

[There is even a footnote.] *In *Amazing Stories*, May 1954. Reprinted in *The Collected Stories of Philip K. Dick*, Volume II, Underwood-Miller, 1987.

Source: Roland C. Wagner, "H.P.L. (1890-1991)" [translated by Jean-Daniel Breque]. *Crypt of Cthulhu* no. 103 (Hallowmas 1999): p. 20.

My favorite Deckard theory:

A friend of mine recently posted an interesting question... is Deckard, the main character in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, an android. I was puzzled by this, seeing as Dick never really answered his own question. I'm not too sure he is, but I'm tempted to say so. **I think that basically everyone in the society that Dick created was an android, they were all under the control of this Mercer figure.** But I'd like to know what some other older readers think. I'm only in the ninth grade, and this was the first Philip K. Dick novel I read, so I'm not sure what I should be expecting. Dante, October 26, 1998

Source: pkd@lists.best.com

Patrick: Choosy about your candy?

The whole question of translating Phil appears from time to time within the group and a chance remark by one of our French colleagues led me to wonder how two of Phil's most famous terms are dealt with in foreign language editions. I refer to those most Phildickian of drugs from Palmer Eldrich, CAN-D and CHEW-Z. I emailed a number of folks from the group about the matter and, if no one minds, I'll share the results here with everyone.

First, I ought to explain to those to whom English is not their first language that both terms are phonetic expressions of actual English words. CAN-D = "candy" and CHEW-Z = "choosy". I took it for granted that everyone understood this but some of my correspondents thought CHEW-Z didn't really mean anything at all. In addition to their phonetic meaning both terms contain additional suggestions: "can" = the encapsulated life of the Martian colonist in their burrows AND in the make-believe world of Perky Pat Layouts; "chew" = being ground up between the steel teeth of Palmer Eldrich. I always wondered in CAN-D wasn't suppose to remind of us "Candide", too. Phil must have had a lot of fun thinking these up. But while puns, slang, colloquialisms and homonyms make sense to native speakers they must leave many translators shaking their heads in confusion.

The Germans and the Italians are pretty strict in this matter. They use CAN-D and CHEW-Z, even though the terms don't mean anything in their respective languages, literally or phonetically. At least one Spanish edition uses CAN-M. In Japanese they use the phonetic script (Katakana) for "Can" and then add the Roman letter "D" and render the word "KyanD". CHEW-Z, by the same manner, becomes "ChuuZ". In Russian the process is the same, though using the Cyrillic alphabet, and the results are "Ken-di (also "K-D" and "Key-D" depending on the edition) and "Chuing-Zet". Again, these words mean nothing at all in Russian; the translators in each case were faithfully rendering Phil's own terms directly into their language.

Ah, but the French see things differently -- or hear things differently. The translation there tries to match Phil's sense of humor. So CAN-D becomes D-LISS = "delice" ("delight" in English). CHEW-Z becomes K-PRISS = "caprice" ("caprice" in English, too: "an impulsive change of mind" or "a sudden, unpredictable change or action"). While neither is an actual translation of Phil's own terms they do suggest what Phil was getting at with his own choice of names and the playfulness of the words themselves. Plus, we get the added pun of seeing the name of one of the androids from DADOES.

Thanks to Yves, Perry, Andre, Eric, Sue, Gerardo and Vittorio for all the information.

Patrick: "Phil as Precog"

In 1981 Phil wrote a set of predictions for *The Book of Projections*. Here they are:

1983

The Soviet Union will develop an operational particle-beam accelerator, making missile attack against that country impossible. At the same time the U.S.S.R. will deploy this weapon as a satellite killer. The U.S. will turn, then, to nerve gas.

1984

The U.S. will perfect a system by which hydrogen, stored in metal hydrides, will serve as a fuel source, eliminating a need for oil.

1985

By or before this date there will be a titanic nuclear accident either in the U.S.S.R. or in the U.S., resulting in shutting down all nuclear power plants.

1986

Such satellites as HEAO-2 will uncover vast, unsuspected high energy phenomenon in the universe, indicating that there is sufficient mass to collapse the universe back when it has reached its expansion limit.

1989

The U.S. and the Soviet Union will agree to set up one vast metacomputer as a central source for information available to the entire world; this will be essential due to the huge amount of information coming into existence.

1993

An artificial life form will be created in a lab, probably in the U.S.S.R., thus reducing our interest in locating life forms on other planets.

1995

Computer use by ordinary citizens (already available in 1980) will transform the public from passive viewers of TV into mentally alert, highly trained, information-processing experts.

1997

The first closed-dome colonies will be successfully established on Luna and Mars. Through DNA modification, quasi-mutant humans will be created who can survive under non-Terran conditions, i.e., alien environments.

1998

The Soviet Union will test a propulsion drive that moves a starship at the velocity of light; a pilot ship will set out for Proxima Centaurus, soon to be followed by an American ship.

2000

An alien virus, brought back by an interplanetary ship, will decimate the population of Earth, but leave the colonies on Luna and Mars intact.

2010

Using tachyons (particles that move backward in time) as a carrier, the Soviet Union will attempt to alter the past with scientific information.

Well, what should we make of this? As an example of "pre-cognition" it doesn't inspire much confidence. Obviously Phil was reading something on the order of *Science Digest* back then and assigning dates to ideas that struck his fancy. I don't think the Soviets invented a particle-beam accelerator though I do remember

mention of the subject in the popular press. Same with the hydrogen-as-fuel idea, though maybe the oil companies suppressed that. Chernobyl was in 1986, only a year after Phil's predicted nuclear accident but instead of being mothballed the nukes are still out there today pumping electricity and leaking death.

Curious that Phil chose 1989 as the year the U.S. and the Soviets would set up a *Forbin Project*-style supercomputer. Instead it became the year the Soviet Union fell apart and began hustling for obsolete American PCs. If we are fairly broad-minded about what constitutes "artificial life," I imagine some biotech firm did crank out a life form in 1983. I think Phil probably had more in mind than a new strain of bug-resistant strawberries. And all the Net-geeks can pat themselves on the back for being online well before 1995. Still, we may have to wait before we put "passive viewers of TV" on the endangered list, let alone the emergence of "a mentally alert, highly trained, information-processing experts" public. After 1995 the predictions become increasingly implausible. In fact they resemble generic plot elements from Phil's early novels. The events of 1997 could be a paragraph lifted straight from *The World Jones Made*.

Considering what "actually" happened, Phil's faith in the continuation of the Soviet Union is almost touching. How solid and powerful it must have appeared in 1981. It's hard to appreciate that in these post-Triumph of Capitalism times. On the other hand, Phil shared that belief with the Pentagon, the Reagan White House, and the common folk of what he once called "WestHem" so let's not fault him too much.

Looking back it appears that Phil was way off base with most of his predictions. Phil-as-Precog doesn't look like a viable option. Unless... Unless the future did turn out exactly as Phil said it would. And in 2010 a still-functioning Soviet Union sent scientific information back through time to try to prevent the decimation of Earth by an alien plague. But instead of reaching the scientific community it missed its target and instead arrived in the year 1981 in the head of a science fiction writer living in California. And as a direct result, history was radically altered to the extent that the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989. Makes you wonder what will happen in the "next" 2010 when whoever is running the show tries it again.

["Phil As Precog" originally appeared under the title "I See a Pink Light Beam in Your Future" in *Interference On the Brain Screen* #3 around 1996. This version is slightly re-written.]

PKD OTAKU is devoted to an ongoing conversation about the fiction and non-fiction of Philip K. Dick. It's edited and published 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. "*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." (Thanks Steve McGraw) PKD Otaku is also available online at www.SINNsitiv.de/pkd-otaku Thanks to Marc "Zito" for his generosity and technical expertise.