

MALFUNCTION OF THE DEITY

THE WORK AND THOUGHT OF PHILIP K. DICK

BY ED RUPPENTHAL

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D., University of
Leicester, November 2007

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ABSTRACT

Malfunction of the Deity: The Work and Thought of Philip K. Dick

By Ed Ruppenthal

Malfunction of the Deity examines the work and thought of the American science-fiction writer Philip K. Dick (1928 – 1982), with its critical focus on the demonstrable methodology of Dick's writings. The root of *Malfunction of the Deity* is Dick's own conception of and justification for God or for a 'Creator entity'. The thesis shows that Dick's primarily dualistic cosmological ideas, as expressed in his science-fiction and personal writings, possess as their nucleus the belief that the human world is flawed through the machinations of a malignant being or agency. This agency begins in many of his stories as a loosely ideated construct, but one which in most cases will metastasise and recreate the human world as an illusory manufactory over which evil holds sway, and against which the smaller forces of good are forced to struggle. The thesis presents Dick as a liberal philosopher and theologian whose pseudo-didactic approach draws from a variety of extant historical, sociological and especially theological sources that inform both his science-fictional and his non-fictional work. Analysis of Dick's writing and mystical thought in this thesis identifies Dick as an intellectual presence within the genre of science-fiction and more broadly within the field of American literature, and the thesis also contemporises Dick with a number of other American science-fiction authors and emphasises the contradistinctive style of his ideas and writing. A prolific author, the thesis cannot and does not investigate all of his output, but his major works – including the novels *A Scanner Darkly* (1977), *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), *Ubik* (1969) and *Valis* (1981) – are analysed in detail. The thesis broaches its subject using shifting frames of reference, an approach intended to reflect the diversity of themes explored in Dick's work.

The crux of the thesis resides in Chapter Two, a representative study of the period February to March 1974. Dick's own shorthand of '2-3-74' is used to refer to this period, during which he suffered a mental breakdown and/or underwent a series of mystical experiences that he often interpreted as divine revelation. Critics have suggested that 2-3-74 shaped and informed the themes in his post-1974 work, but part of the purpose of this thesis is in exposing the fact that those themes are explicit in Dick's earliest fiction, dating back to the 1950s, and in essence form a continuation of his propensity for restaging ideas in increasingly complex ways. This complexity requires that the thesis first broach Dick's theological ideas in their most basic terms, with the Introduction delineating the peculiar cosmological emphasis evident in Dick's work as a way of building up to Dick's experiences during 1974. In taking this approach, the thesis does not follow Dick's work chronologically. The nexus that bonds the greater part of his science-fictional output is the restaging of specific cosmological ideas, and working to a strict chronology would not be appropriate for an author whose work represents temporal distortion in both methodology and end product. Careful signposting throughout the thesis instead serves to allow the reader to tackle the subject matter as it is broached, in a practical way designed to improve the reader's understanding of Dick as an author and thinker.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible except for the close support I received from a number of individuals, remarkable in their kindness and consideration, and all of whom I owe a debt of thanks.

For offering me the opportunity to work part-time within the Department of English at the University of Leicester and thereby granting me a much-needed measure of financial security, I would like to thank the following members of staff: Professor Richard Foulkes, Dr. Mark Rawlinson, and Mrs. Sue Lloyd. I would also like to give special mention to Professor Gordon Campbell, who was kind enough to employ me for a short time as an editorial assistant on *The Review of English Studies*.

Friends that I have met during my time at the University of Leicester have been a great boon to me, providing me with their company and goodwill seemingly as I required it, and at a cost at times – I am sure – to their own responsibilities. I would therefore like to thank Dr. Scott Freer, Dr. Chris Louttit, Dr. Sam Perry, Dr. Rebecca Styler and Dr. Paula Warrington for their lasting friendship and support.

During the course of preparing this thesis I was greatly aided by a research trip to the Pollak Library at California State University, Fullerton, where Mrs. Sharon Perry provided me not only with access to the Philip K. Dick Science Fiction Collection, but with a warm welcome and with unconditional support for my endeavours. For her kind assistance and patience I would like to express special thanks.

Closer to home I would like to thank my friends Simon Cadden, Allan Faulkner, Andy Offor, Ben Redshaw, Brette Smith and Nick Yates both for our ongoing friendship and for occasional but essential trips to the pub!

I would also like to thank my family, being my mother Madeline, my father David, and my brother Neil, on whose sufferance I have completed this thesis and without whose understanding I would never have done so. It is to them that I have dedicated this thesis, with much admiration and with my love.

Finally, I wish to thank my supervisor Professor Martin Halliwell, whose attentive reading of my work allowed me to shape the thesis in a way which I hope is representative both of his patient guidance during my time at the University, and of his own singular academic expertise.

DEDICATION

For Madeline, David, and Neil

NOTE TO READERS

Out of courtesy I would like to make the reader aware that some words used in the thesis are presented with alternative spellings. For example, where the sixteenth-century German mystic Jacob Boehme is referred to, his name is often listed in other sources as Behmen or as Böhme. Within the main body of the thesis, and where a reference using an alternative spelling is not cited, I write the name as *Boehme* simply for purposes of consistency and clarity. Similarly, within the body of the thesis, I spell the word *artefact*, to which Dick refers in his cosmological writings, using U. K. English. Where the word *artifact* is used, it appears solely within cited sources as written in American English by Dick himself. Boehme's use of the word *Ungrund* is spelled as it appears in Robin Waterfield's *Jacob Boehme: Essential Readings* (1989) though Dick rendered the word as *Urgrund*.

Furthermore and again for the sake of clarity, where a source is first cited in each chapter of the thesis, I provide the reader with a footnote containing full reference details for that source. Thereafter in that chapter, I refer to some sources by giving an abbreviated title. For example: I use *Scanner* to refer to Dick's novel *A Scanner Darkly* (1977).

INTRODUCTION

Philip Kindred Dick (1928-1982) was a writer both of his time and ahead of his time. His popularity today is evidence enough that the themes he wrote about are becoming increasingly prevalent within popular culture. As Hollywood recreates his novels and short stories on film (most recently in Richard Linklater's 2006 adaptation of *A Scanner Darkly*), it also silently borrows from his ideas (for example, in Peter Weir's *The Truman Show*, 1998) and proves that the thematic means by which Dick expressed himself are now interlaced with popular culture and private thought to the extent that audiences, seeking entertainment, remain unaware of the debt that modern culture – in particular contemporary science fiction – actually owes to Dick's ideas. What Dick wrote about, in essence, was the endemic loss of rationality and the instability of perception, that being directly linked to the instability of not only the private, but the consensual world. There is however more to the work of Philip K. Dick than what Timothy Melley describes as his '[obsessive depiction of] characters attempting to assess their own sanity in situations of radical ontological uncertainty.'¹ Any reader of Dick's work would assume that Melley is quite correct to make this assertion, but his statement remains problematic. Dick's intellectual processes and 'mystical' thought are far-reaching and represent in totality an actual *abandonment* of human perception not because of a desire to project a fear of apocalypse or 'reality' breakdown upon his readers (except at a base level of entertainment), nor even to emphasise the most horrific aspects of the paranoid and/or psychotic and/or delusional mind for their own sake. Dick's thought represents rather an effort to insist that 'reality' breaks down on a consensual level because the wellspring of ontological

¹ Timothy Melley, 'Agency Panic and the Culture of Conspiracy,' *Conspiracy Nation: The Politics of Paranoia in Postwar America*, ed. Peter Knight (London: New York UP, 2002) 68.

consciousness – ‘true perception’ – resides only partly in the human world. When Dick writes of perceptual occlusion, he indicates that there exists outside the physical world a benign agency or deity that does not act, as Dick saw a darker agency operating in the human world, to confound and destroy. The ‘malfunction of the deity’ for Dick is not with that outside, almost unreachable and unknowable entity; the malfunction is with the darker agency or deity that directly governs the human world. Taking *The Truman Show* as an example, the ‘flawed god’ is the creator of the television show that controls every aspect of the protagonist’s life. Outside the protagonist’s ersatz world, in this case one physically represented as being the inside of a giant television studio, lies the ‘reality’ of human existence.

‘Reality’ for Dick was psychotropic and capable of influencing (but not always controlling) the human mind. When truth is discovered in one of Dick’s stories, even in minor form, ‘reality’ begins to unravel. There is a sense in his stories that his characters retain always a telaesthetic quality of being able to see beyond the veil of accepted consensual reality. For example in his novel *Time Out of Joint* (1959), Ragle Gumm discovers that his ‘real’ world is in fact an illusion, much of which is constructed out of language (where he at first sees for example a soft-drinks stand one moment, he later sees it disintegrate to leave only a slip of paper printed with the words ‘SOFT-DRINK STAND’).² It takes what is in effect a breakdown of a single character’s sense of what is accepted reality to get at the true, consensual reality that lies beneath.

It is the objective of this thesis to explore and simplify these themes and to analyse what they stand for and why Dick thought that they were so important. Thematically, an author and thinker can hardly broach more challenging material. As

² Philip K. Dick, *Time Out of Joint* (London: Gollancz, 2003) 40-41.

stated above, the thesis asserts that the fiction of Philip K. Dick shares an intimate link with his own mystical and cosmological thought. The link is perceptible through his non-fictional writings and is conspicuous enough that it casts doubt on the typical assumption that Dick is simply and exclusively a ‘science fiction writer’.

This Introduction is designed to convey to the reader the nature of Dick’s theological beliefs as he held them during the last eight years of his life (1974 – 1982). In particular it focuses on his essay ‘Cosmogony and Cosmology’ (1978), a piece of writing that forms a small part of what Dick came to term as his ‘Exegesis’, the greater part of which remains unpublished. In deference to previous critics and his biographer Lawrence Sutin, this sprawling journal is italicised where it is mentioned in the thesis and referred to hereafter as *Exegesis*.³ The *Exegesis* is a lengthy piece of non-fiction which Dick created in an effort to ascertain the precise meaning of the mystical vagaries that emerged from his own interpretation of eastern and western theology. Tellingly, Dick uses this term *Exegesis* in conscious preference to ‘eisegesis’. To many readers, the latter would seem more appropriate. Where *eisegesis* in its strictest sense implies the analysis of Biblical scripture using one’s own ideas – a representative assessment of what Dick sought to achieve – the term *exegesis* is critical analysis drawn solely from extant theological writing. In other words Dick interpreted his own ideas as a restating or restaging of existing theology and did not consider those ideas as being imposed upon it. To Dick’s mind, this lent the process a degree of verisimilitude and an authority that an ‘eisegesis’ might lack.

Dick’s *Exegesis* was written in the period following February and March 1974 when Dick suffered a mental collapse or breakdown as he himself acknowledged. He continued working on the *Exegesis* up until his death in 1982. A cynical view of

³ Lawrence Sutin, ed., *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) ix. Sutin here italicises when referring to the *Exegesis*.

Dick's work on the *Exegesis* would construe it as the product of a demented mind, or more sensibly as an attempt by an ailing and troubled man to make sense of his world and to instil in himself a certain amount of hope that a peaceful 'afterlife' awaited him following the trials of his corporeal existence. In fact the metaphysical conjecture evident within the *Exegesis* is likely to repel an agnostic, while a religious reader might find him or herself offended at Dick's attempts to rationalise the existence of 'good' and 'evil' as literal qualities in a human world which supposedly lies under the auspices of a benevolent Creator.

Despite this however, there is a certain amount of raw intellectual power that Dick wields effectively in the more coherent parts of the *Exegesis*, which impresses most in published excerpts such as 'Cosmogony and Cosmology'. The essay, hereafter referred to simply as 'Cosmogony', provides its readers with a revealing insight into the methodology of a serious thinker and more revealingly, into the mind of an anxious human being attempting to comprehend the implications of the inevitable prospect of his own death.

In regard to Dick's fiction and in particular his science fiction there is a sense that it holds a certain didactic quality in its occasional attempts to convey to the reader Dick's own belief system. Even to lay readers this stands out quite starkly, particularly to those who realise that Dick's later writing (especially the so-called 'Valis Trilogy' published in 1981-82) is possessed of a certain religiosity inspired to a great extent by his own experiences during his 1974 breakdown. What is not so obvious is quite how far back through Dick's writing career these attempts at 'instruction' go. Although Dick's crisis during early 1974 undoubtedly augmented his basic desire to speculate entertainingly on the nature of human reality, that desire has been apparent even in Dick's earliest fiction. This is one reason why, as outlined in

the Abstract, the thesis traces Dick's intellectual development back from his later to his earliest works and why it uses his 1974 experiences as the crux of this irregular methodology.

As Dick commented in 1977:

What I write about, I think, is belief, faith, trust . . . and the lack of all three. "A universe of cynicism and chaos," I once said about my first novel, SOLAR LOTTERY. For me, in each successive novel, the doubt – or rather lack of trust or faith – grows deeper. The split widens, that yawning gap in the earth, into which everything that matters can fall. And, in the novel, but less openly, I explore the possibilities for a rebirth of faith. The yawning gap is the question; new faith is the answer. But faith in what?⁴

The importance of Dick's question here cannot be underestimated when undertaking serious study of his work. The experiences he underwent during February and March 1974, a span of time referred to by Dick himself on numerous occasions as '2-3-74', his shorthand term for the period, did not so much pose the question as make its resolution more urgent. While Lawrence Sutin, a biographer of Philip K. Dick and the editor of *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick* (1995), urges the reader of Dick's work not to apply doctrinal labels to him as an author, there are certain aspects of Dick's personality that become obvious to the long-term reader. He is, for example, a *humanist* above all else.⁵ It is the world, or the spurious world, which is for Dick the source of evil, oppression and, as the ultimate theme for much of his writing, paranoia. His own version of humanism led to his concern that humanity suffered from a kind of amnesia insofar as human beings had forgotten their origins and more importantly forgotten how to look at the world without also being deceived by it. It was for Dick of vital importance that human beings seek to re-objectify the nature of

⁴ Daniel J.H. Levant, ed., *PKD: A Philip K. Dick Bibliography* (New York: Underwood/Miller, 1981) 154. Dick's comment appears in the 'Afterword' for the book. Sutin also reproduces it in *Shifting Realities*, xvii.

⁵ *Shifting Realities*, xxix. Sutin writes: 'Dick's viewpoints were multifold, indeterminate, and changeable; he cannot rightly be described by any "ism."' However as Dick himself observes in the 'Afterword' for the *Philip K. Dick Bibliography*: 'The redeemer exists [and] can be found [...] in the novel somewhere, at the centre of the stage or at the very edge [...]. He is implicit [and] I believe in him completely [...]. I love him [and he] will prevail. There is nothing else [because] if he is there, like a tiny father-figure, everything is all right.'

their reality, to know their place in it and to become one with God in spite of the best efforts of the world as a place of evil and cruelty. Dick could not bring himself to believe that God would be the architect of pain and suffering, and it is obvious in 'Cosmogony' that his search for answers (in that huge and rambling body of work Dick referred to as his *Exegesis*) had reached a critical moment.

It is possible and even helpful to position Dick as an American writer, but as a humanist his concerns were universalistic in transcending national issues and his cosmological writings apply globally. Essentially Dick sought to revivify humanity, to *wake it up*; he saw in humanity's future a moment when it would reach apotheosis, and in reaching that divine state, become one with God in what for Dick would then become a perfect, and 'ontologically real', world. The counterfeit, the 'irreal', would be ripped away, revealed for what it was. *Irreal* is Dick's word to describe the spurious, a technical neologism that is important if only because he chooses not to substitute it with the word 'unreal'. 'Irreal' suggests something else entirely and he thereby avoids having to define what 'unreal' means in relation to 'the real', needing only to imply that irreal is a condition of awareness. Dick himself was aware of the limitations of human perception, and saw it as a drawback, in contrast for example to an early influence on Dick, the early twentieth century gothic horror writer H.P. Lovecraft. Lovecraft interpreted human ignorance of universal 'reality' as a blessing given the universe of cosmic horror he created for his readers.

A conventional critical approach can be taken to a literary author like Lovecraft, whose principle interest was in narrative structure and imagery; but this thesis approaches Dick primarily as a thinker. Throughout the body of his fiction, it becomes apparent that Dick is not systematic in his thought. Instead he continually reshapes his ideas without altering their fundamental significance, in a way designed

to replay those ideas in different forms and thereby augment that original significance. The interplay between Dick's non-fictional cosmological thought and the span of his fiction is the critic's key to understanding Dick as a thinker. He draws from a number of different sources, finding value especially in ancient theological thought which serves to offset his often bleak view of the contemporary world and his own fictional dystopias. Dick's 'irreal' fictional worlds are constructs intended to motivate the characters in those worlds to see behind and beyond typical or traditional views of reality.

In contrast to Lovecraft then, Dick's writings explore the notion that the inability to perceive 'reality' in fact stunts human thinking and spiritual development; ignorance, in Dick's work, is not an advantage but a hindrance. Dick's own word *irreality* refers to this failure of acuity. In philosophical terms, it truly becomes impossible to define what is real without also leaving aside the question of perceptual interpretation, and how human beings see their world. *Irreality*, on the other hand, is neither real nor unreal, but something else entirely: it is a projected worldview, a deceptive cloak that by its very nature has been deliberately put in place to occlude human perception and limit human thinking. It is in other words a device placed in the human world by the design of some external agency or entity. Dick believed this because he sought a moral escape for a Creator of the universe to be regarded as humanity's benefactor, not as its jailer or tormentor. What then is the architect of Dick's irreality? What is responsible for humanity's tragedy, as Dick saw it?

If we proceed on the assumption that Dick believed in a Creator, in God, then it becomes temptingly easy to throw up an immediate response to Dick's own question of 'faith in what?', and answer it simply by saying 'faith in God'. Simply, his answer would be that faith and belief in God would be the guiding light that would, in the

end, become humanity's salvation. However this was not enough for Dick and not true to the broader parameters of his question: he is not merely asking what agency (divine or otherwise) humanity is to have faith in, but wishes to ascertain the nature of that agency. In identifying the properties of that agency, Dick thought to come closer to understanding the world.

What seems obvious is that as far as Dick understood the world up to that point, that being the consensual world which humanity (by and large) shares, it was a place where inherent defect held sway over idealistic design. The world was not only wrong, but also faulty. Rudely fashioned, the world was incapable of functioning correctly because it was riddled with flaws. An analysis of Dick's *Exegesis* is of course invited; but the reader comes to see that the *Exegesis*, which rises at times to become an authoritative and intellectual work, is itself flawed. The *Exegesis* can be read as little more than a vast collection of speculative writing that ranges in scope from unfounded theories and insights of rather dubious merit, right through to the point of becoming a definitive theological system with enough internal consistency to make it 'valid'. The *Exegesis* has never been published in full, in part because of its great length.⁶ There is also the fact that much of it was handwritten and at times virtually illegible (I reproduce a sample of it in the Conclusion). Where the *Exegesis* truly stands up as a piece of intellectual work is in those portions of it that have seen print, such as the aforementioned essay 'Cosmogony'. The essay is in a sense the culmination of Dick's previous four years of writing in the *Exegesis*, and helps to define both his mindset and his belief system. It is discussed in more detail shortly.

'Cosmogony' and indeed the *Exegesis* as a whole can variously be regarded by its readers as being a fascinating and stimulating insight into the mind of a genius, or

⁶ *Shifting Realities*, xix. Sutin describes the *Exegesis* as an 'eight-thousand page' document.

as the demented raving of a person suffering from mental illness. As nobody can prove conclusively that Philip K. Dick was either ‘disturbed’ or even ‘deranged’, no matter what Dick’s own opinion of himself, Paul Williams’ advice on how the reader approaches ‘Cosmogony’ in particular is sensible and like the essay itself cautiously unfixed.⁷ He writes: ‘I suggest that the essay that follows [‘Cosmogony’] is *not* the ‘furtive act of a deranged person’ . . . and leave it to the reader to determine just what, then, it is.’⁸ No matter what the reader might personally think of the *Exegesis* (both as concept and as a piece of writing), it is not helpful to judge Dick on the basis of his having worked on it in the first place.

2-3-74 was the period that informed the greater part of the *Exegesis*, and a full discussion of Dick’s experiences during this time is undertaken in Chapter Two. It suffices for the moment to state that in this time, Dick claimed to experience visions of a quasi-divine and seemingly revelatory nature. Whether Dick’s experiences of 2-3-74 were truly ‘mystical’, as Paul Williams referred to them, or whether they were simply the result partly of substance abuse and partly of creative stress (Dick was never a wealthy man, but remained prolific in his output of writing) seems almost not to matter. The facts are that he suffered a breakdown of some kind and that during this period he believed that an inescapable ‘truth’ had been revealed to him by an outside or alien agency, or that he had otherwise been awakened to that truth. Because of that, if nothing else, the *Exegesis* became for him an important tool in his own theological analysis of the world, and was moreover a ‘healing’ device that enabled him to bring

⁷ *Shifting Realities*, xx. Mentioning that many of Dick’s readers and critics find the *Exegesis* to be the product of mental illness, Lawrence Sutin writes that the attempts of such readers to diagnose the nature of Dick’s illness are ‘doomed to be highly speculative, particularly when psychiatrists and psychologists who treated him at various times of his life themselves disagreed widely on his mental state (most placed him as neurotic in some form, and at least one found him quite normal).’ Sutin also writes here that ‘Dick himself never made up his mind whether it was God or “psychosis” or “something other” that he contacted in 2-3-74. Indeterminacy is the central characteristic of the *Exegesis*.’ Philip K. Dick (1987).

⁸ Philip K. Dick, *Cosmogony and Cosmology* (Worcester Park: Kerosina, 1987) 7. The ‘furtive act’ that Williams refers to here is taken from Dick’s novel *Valis* (1981).

some order to his own chaotic mind. 'Cosmogony' was an attempt by Dick to articulate many of these ideas into some kind of coherent philosophy. One is struck when reading 'Cosmogony' by Dick's intellectual power, but also left concerned for the restless, dissatisfied questioning of the writer. Dick's mind at this time must have been a hive of activity and he was obviously placing himself under considerable strain by continuing to write short stories and novels even as he devoted a great portion of his time and energy to the *Exegesis*.

Dick weaves together in CC a complex theology that includes elements of many different religions and philosophies. One of the first things a reader will notice is Dick's effort to promote a religious dualism in his cosmology; he essentially provides an escape route for his benevolent God being by putting him on equal footing with an elusive, evil, and opposing force which Dick called 'the dark counterplayer', or sometimes 'the blind counterplayer'.⁹ Dualism, of course, is hardly new as a theological concept and while it is easy to draw comparison between some of the viewpoints Dick exhibits in 'Cosmogony' and the philosophy of the mediaeval Cathars on that basic level, there is a rather more interesting relationship on display in terms of *empathy* with the Cathar belief system. As Dick writes: 'If you disobey the world, it will confront you as a hostile stranger, sensing you as a hostile stranger to it. So be it.'¹⁰ This is not so very far removed from the essential Cathar philosophy, which stipulates:

⁹ *Shifting Realities*, 313. In referring to his own experiences of 2-3-74, Dick wrote 'I did have the feeling that I was witnessing a cosmic two-person board game, with our world as the board, and that one side (the winning side) was benign, and the other was neither winning nor was it benign; it was just very powerful, but hindered by the fact it was blind. The good side possessed absolute wisdom, could therefore absolutely foresee the future, and could lay down moves long in advance of payoffs that the evil, blind, dark counterplayer could not anticipate.'

¹⁰ *Shifting Realities*, 303.

‘[The Cathar] should “hate this world and its works and the things which are of this world”.’¹¹ Quite how far Dick shared this empathy is a matter for him alone, but it does seem to form a major part of his cosmological thought in ‘Cosmogony’, particularly when you consider Dick’s opening (and very science fiction-like) statement in the essay itself:

As to our reality being a projected framework – it appears to be a projection by an *artifact* [Dick’s italics], a computerlike teaching machine that guides, programs, and generally controls us as we act without awareness of it within our projected world. The artifact, which I call Zebra, has “created” (actually only projected) our reality as a sort of mirror or image of its maker, so that the maker can obtain thereby an objective standpoint to comprehend its own self. In other words, the maker (called by Jakob Boehme in 1616 the Urgrund) is motivated to seek an instrument for self-awareness, self-knowledge, an objective opinion or appraisal and comprehension of the nature of itself (it is a vast living organism, intrinsically – without this mirror – without qualities or aspects, which is why it needs the empirical world as a reflection by which to “see” itself).¹² . . . The artifact is unaware that it is an artifact; it is oblivious to the existence of the Urgrund (in terms that the artifact would understand, the Urgrund is not, rather than is), and imagines itself to be God, the only real God.¹³

Much in the same way as the Catharist Satan or Lucifer is to God, Dick’s artefact of ‘Zebra’ would seem to be to the Ungrund of the mystical thinker Jacob Boehme. In fact some Cathars believed Lucifer to be the God spoken of in Genesis, who accomplished the creation of the world in six days which obviously has parallels with Dick’s theory of the ‘projected world’ as being spurious.¹⁴ Dick insists on referring to the God-usurping agency in ‘Cosmogony’, which for a Cathar would be the devil, as an ‘artefact’. By doing so, he reinforces the idea that the artefact is not

¹¹ Malcolm Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education, 2000) 78. Barber writes this while describing part of a Cathar ritual known as the *consolamentum*, the process by which would-be Catharist believers were admitted into the ‘elite’ of the Cathar Church. According to Barber, the ceremony involved the supplicant having to swear a number of different oaths based on the teachings of Christ and on the Ten Commandments. This done, the supplicant would become one of the *perfecti* (‘perfect’), and as a *perfectus*, be counted as a true Cathar and one of the ministers of the Cathar Church.

¹² Robin Waterfield, ed., *Jacob Boehme: Essential Readings* (Northamptonshire: Crucible, 1989) 26-7. What Dick refers to as the ‘Urgrund’, Robin Waterfield writes of as being the ‘Ungrund’. How various writers spell the word is probably not particularly important, but is worth mentioning. Lawrence Sutin makes no mention of Dick’s spelling of it as being incorrect. Where Dick is quoted, ‘Urgrund’ is used, but I use Waterfield’s spelling.

¹³ *Shifting Realities*, 281.

¹⁴ See *The Cathars*, 6-12.

eternal, as God or the Ungrund is; he emphasises its place as a manufactured work that to Dick is '*obviously capable of error*' [Dick's italics].¹⁵ The Cathar belief reflects this:

[The Cathars] would not accept that an omnipotent and eternal God could have been responsible for the material world; for them, this world was the work of an evil creator [... The] only release for those souls encased in the material prison of the body was through the Cathar ceremony of the *consolamentum*, which was the means by which they could return to their guardian spirits in Heaven. [Some] souls would need to transmigrate through a variety of material vessels (including animals) before entering the body of a person who understood the importance of the *consolamentum*.¹⁶

From the bare outline of the Cathar struggle as given above, the direct relationship between it and Dick's own cosmological thought is readily apparent. Belief in this dualistic system requires acceptance that the material world is a flawed and evil place, created by a likewise flawed and evil being. Dick explores themes of 'transmigration' in *Dr. Bloodmoney* (1965) and especially in *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (1982).

However, Dick himself seems to have thought that despite the presence of evil and suffering as a part of human existence, the artefact he held as being responsible for our empirical world was not in and of itself a work of evil. Merely it was 'doing the best it can considering its limitations'.¹⁷ To explain the full purpose of the artefact as Dick understood it, it is necessary to delve more deeply into his essay. He firstly calls the artefact 'Zebra'. He makes no attempt to explain this explicitly, but the name is obviously meaningful to Dick, perhaps pertaining to that animal's ability to blend into the background, unseen and camouflaged. Were humans able to perceive Zebra, we would have knowledge of it as nothing more than an artefact, and would finally

¹⁵ *Shifting Realities*, 284. Here Dick argues that it is possible to 'free' a human from control of the artifact – another reflection of Cathar philosophy.

¹⁶ *The Cathars*, 1. As described by Barber, this reflects the essential Catharist belief that the human world is a prison, which is how Dick himself viewed it.

¹⁷ *Shifting Realities*, 284.

wake up from the vast consensual delusion in which Dick envisaged all humans inhabiting, the spurious world that Zebra created.

In Dick's cosmology, the fact that the Ungrund has created Zebra to study itself is interesting. Also interesting is the fact that even though Zebra's reality is 'spurious', it is still, for Dick and for the Ungrund, a *reality*; which further goes to show that the concept of our world being 'unreal' does not make it into Dick's cosmology. It is real simply by the fact that it exists; but it is spurious, *irreal*, because it is 'malshaped'¹⁸. The Ungrund, Dick explains, allows the artefact – Zebra – to continue projecting an evolving reality, until ultimately reality becomes 'a correct analog, truly, of the Urgrund itself, at which point the disparity between the Urgrund and the projected reality is abolished – whereupon an astonishing event will occur: The artifact or demiurge will be destroyed and the Urgrund will assimilate the projected reality, transmuting it into something ontologically real – and also making the living creatures in it immortal.'¹⁹

In using the concept of the Ungrund, Dick most likely felt a philosophical kinship with the German mystic Jacob Boehme; which seems likely, as Robin Waterfield writes:

[We] know that in 1610 Boehme had an inner vision alerting him to the fact that God had given him a special revelation and calling. This was the sequel to an earlier vision when he saw the sun shining on a pewter jug and felt an inward illumination that revealed to him the secrets of hidden nature.²⁰

This must surely be similar to Dick's own experiences of 2-3-74, in result if not in methodology. Both men thought they had been granted illumination of a kind, but the steps towards attaining it appear to be very different (if we can safely assume that

¹⁸ *Shifting Realities*, p.281.

¹⁹ 'Demiurge' is used to describe the reality-projecting artefact as well. Dick refers his readers to 'Plato and the Gnostics' on p.281 of *Shifting Realities*.

²⁰ *Jacob Boehme*, 21.

Boehme had never taken LSD). Small wonder then that Dick incorporates Boehme's theology into his own cosmology; he identified both with the Boehme's own experiences as well as his mode of thought, and appropriated from Boehme this concept of 'Ungrund'. For Boehme himself, the Ungrund represented God, but in a manner not easily understood to the reader. Waterfield writes that Boehme presented God as being 'outside time and space, inaccessible to all human thought, ineffable by any human tongue'.²¹ The paradox here is that this leaves any concept of God as being inconceivable to the human mind. For Boehme, this leaves human beings with one conceptual vision of God, that of the Ungrund, which Waterfield writes is often translated into English by the word 'Abyss'. This depth of space holds a great vast *nothing*, but is not 'sterile and passive but active and fertile . . . not static perfection, but dynamic ever-increasing perfection, always becoming, not being, but still in perfectly harmonious balance.'²² This concept holds up well with Dick's own cosmology, and his view that the Ungrund is, in effect, a learning entity – a child learning about itself through its creation. Dick understood the Ungrund as Boehme described it, writing that 'It – the Urgrund – will break the power of the illusory world over us when it breaks the deterministic coercive power of the artifact over us – by annihilating the artifact; it will cancel out the artifact's being by its own nonbeing. What will remain will be a totally monistic structure, entirely alive and sentient. There will be no place, time, or condition outside the Urgrund.'²³ Here, Dick is talking about a conceptualisation of the Kingdom of God as the New Testament describes it and further delineates this when he writes:

²¹ *Jacob Boehme*, 26.

²² *Jacob Boehme*, 27.

²³ *Shifting Realities*, 283.

My most recent revelation came while contemplating a ham sandwich. I suddenly realised that the two slices of bread were identical (isomorphic) but separated from each other by the slice of ham. At once I understood by analogic thinking that one slice of bread is the macrocosmic Urgrund, and the other ourselves, and that we are the same thing – separated by the world. Once the world is removed, the two slices of bread, which is to say man and the Urgrund, become a single entity. They are not merely pressed together; they are *one entity* [Dick's italics].²⁴

Whether or not this was truly Dick's own realisation or whether he was influenced entirely by Jacob Boehme on this point is contentious, simply because Boehme's philosophy infuses Dick's cosmology to such a great extent. To the modern reader, Boehme's rhetoric seems convoluted and, ultimately, confusing; only by expending a great deal of effort can a reader come to appreciate what Boehme attempts to describe, and even then, full comprehension of it might lie some small way off. Even so, while it is easy to view Boehme's work critically given his extravagant language and the habit he has of describing things in alchemical terms, the essential arguments postulated by Boehme are strong enough to stand up on their own as a theological viewpoint. He in fact describes much the same 'fate' for humanity as Dick does, and the translator of *Notes on Signatura Rerum* (1651), J. Ellistone, describes this in his 'Preface of the Translator to the Reader':

Indeed the best treasure that a man can attain unto this world, is true knowledg [*sic*]; even the knowledge of himself: for man is the great Mystery of God, the Microcosm or the compleat Abridgement of the whole Universe: he is the *Mirandum dei opus*, God's Master-peece . . .²⁵

Ellistone here understands what Boehme and, later, Dick describes as being the relationship between humanity and God, or the Ungrund: humanity *is* the Ungrund, and is separated by a virtually impenetrable, occluding veil that requires what both Dick and Boehme might be able to describe as 'strength of character'. In confronting

²⁴ *Shifting Realities*, 302. Whether or not this 'ham sandwich revelation' is in the same league as Jacob Boehme and his pewter jug is best left to the judgment of the reader.

²⁵ Jacob Behmen, *Notes on Signatura Rerum: or the Signature of All Things*, etc. trans. J. Ellistone (London: by John Macock for Gyles Calvert, 1651).

the world, a person's mind is opened not only to new possibilities, but also to new understanding. Boehme himself writes:

The whole outward visible world with all its Being is a Signature, or figure of the inward Spiritual World; whatsoever is Internally, and howsoever its operation is, so likewise it hath its character externally; like as the Spirit of each Creature doth set forth and manifest the internal Form of its Birth by its Body, so doth the Eternal Being also.²⁶

In other words, Boehme is expressing here what Dick attempted to contemporise with his simplistic 'ham sandwich' metaphor: that God and humanity are meant to be one being, or part of the same entity. Dick also explains in 'Cosmogony' that the Ungrund is attempting to learn more of itself by 'studying' its creation as that creation evolves; humanity is analogous to the Eternal Being (the Ungrund), and it to us. Boehme goes on to write 'God must become Man, Man must become God; Heaven must become One thing with the Earth.'²⁷ For Boehme, as for Dick, this final suffusion of the world with God lay at some point in our future. It was not enough to simply accept that humanity was an aspect of the Ungrund, and leave it at that; the world could not be perfect until the criteria were met allowing humanity and God to merge into one entity, those criteria being the rejection of the spurious world (to which J. Ellistone refers to as 'loss, and dross' in his 'Preface' in *Notes on Signatura Rerum*) and the opening of the mind and (presumably) the soul to the presence of God. Dick believed, as Boehme did, that God in some form had already infiltrated the spurious human world, and was present within all humans. He writes:

Since the goal of our evolving projected reality is to reach a state in which we humans are isomorphic with the true maker, the Urgrund that fashioned the projecting artifact, there is a highly important practical situation coming closer in terms of frequency and depth:

Although not yet precisely isomorphic with the Urgrund, we can be said already to possess imperfect (but very real) fragments or fractions of the Urgrund within us. Therefore the Christian mystic saying: "What is Beyond is within." This describes the third and final period of

²⁶ *Notes on Signatura Rerum*, 77.

²⁷ *Notes on Signatura Rerum*, 107.

history, in which men will be ruled from within. Thus the Christian mystic saying, "Christ possesses *your* body, and you possess *him* as your soul."

In Hindu philosophy, the Atman within a person is identified with Brahman, the core of the universe.

The Christ or Atman is not a microform of Zebra, the computerlike reality-projecting artifact, but of the Ungrund; thus in the Hindu religion it is described (as Brahman) as lying beyond Maya, the veil of delusion (i.e. the projected seeming world).²⁸

Dick seems most comfortable when inflecting his cosmology with elements of a Christian mythos (Dick was himself an Episcopalian, and quotes extensively from the New Testament in 'Cosmogony'), but it is clear in the reading of 'Cosmogony' that his interest in theology has resulted in his gaining quite an authoritative grasp of his subject matter. Certainly he has enough broad knowledge to be able to lift pertinent 'bits' of philosophy and religion from a number of disparate sources and assemble them, with modification in the form of his own thoughts and additions, into a single cosmology. For Dick, Boehme's Ungrund was a dissimulation of God, with Christ being a manifestation of the Ungrund within our world. So for Dick, when he asks 'Faith in what?', he is in effect presenting us with a modified Christian God to believe in, one who is boundlessly powerful and good, but shackled by the trappings of one of Philip K. Dick's science fiction plots. In other words the human world is a hologram, a fake, and to reach God, enough of us as humans must experience the same degree of revelation as Boehme and Dick purported to do. Yet even this is not enough. What, exactly, is the Ungrund's motivation? And most importantly, how does it compare to Zebra, the artefact Dick claims it made and which rules us, and by some quirk, now prevents us from seeing the genuine world, from seeing God?

There is first of all a key difference between Dick's cosmology and the philosophy of Boehme, and of the Cathars. While all saw the world as being like a prison, only the Cathars and Boehme saw it as being *a priori* evil; and while they

²⁸ *Shifting Realities*, 282.

could not prove this empirically, nor would it have occurred to them to do so.²⁹ The Catharist Church was far ahead of its time in terms of its philosophical standpoint, and it is small wonder that the Catholic Church saw to it that they were exterminated as heretics. In the High Middle Ages, in a world of cruelty and torment, could people really be blamed for starting to doubt the God of the Bible? How could a good God, an entity of boundless wisdom, mercy and compassion, possibly be the same deity that visited famine, fire, flood and plague on the world, either as written in the Old Testament, or in the Cathars' own day? The world, the Cathars decided, was unnecessarily evil; it was in fact nothing less than a creation of evil. The Cathars even went so far as to scorn certain books of the Bible, refusing to teach from those they considered to be written by Lucifer, or which they thought to be somehow tainted by a diabolic source.³⁰ Boehme, too, held that the presence of evil in the world, and in fact the world itself, was the work of the devil.³¹ It is something of a surprise, given how much of Boehme's philosophy Dick appropriates for his own cosmology in the essay 'Cosmogony', that Dick himself does not see our world as being 'evil' in and of itself. As it is certain that both Boehme and Dick saw the human relationship to the Ungrund in similar terms, it is perhaps strange that Dick does not share Boehme's viewpoint

²⁹ *Notes on Signatura Rerum*, 156. I refer here to Boehme's essentially Cathar-like beliefs: 'Yet the poor Captive hath need of deliverance.' The 'Captive' in this case clearly refers to humanity as a whole.

³⁰ *The Cathars*, 93. Barber writes: '[The Cathars] believed that the devil was the author of the Old Testament, "except these books: Job, the Psalms, the books of Solomon, of Jesus son of Sirach, of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezeckiel [*sic*], Daniel, and of the twelve prophets"'. Barber explains that one Cathar, John of Lugio, dissented from the view of his brethren and held instead that all of the patriarchs and prophets were valid, though he still believed the version of creation in the Old Testament to be the work of the devil despite the fact that he thought the book was not of 'diabolic origin', as Barber puts it. '[The Cathars] found it inconceivable,' Barber writes, 'that the God of the Old Testament, who had "caused the manifest and merciless destruction of so many men and women with all their children", could be the same as the true creator.'

³¹ *Jacob Boehme*, 206. Boehme is cited as writing the following in a letter: 'Let all earthly will go, and resign up yourself wholly and fully; let joy and sadness, comfort and conflict, be all one to you; and so shall you with Christ be *a conqueror* [Boehme's italics] over the world, devil, death and hell...'

that our world, itself, is evil.³² Of the artefact, Zebra, and our apparently spurious world, Dick writes:

The projected world of the artifact is not evil, and the artifact is not evil. However, the artifact is ruthlessly deterministic and mechanical. It cannot be appealed to. It is doing a job for ends it cannot fathom. Suffering, then . . . is due to two sources:

1. the heedless mechanistic structure of the projected reality and the artifact, where blind causal law rules;
2. what the N.T. [New Testament] calls “the birthpangs of the universe,” both in the macrocosm and the human microcosm.³³

The ‘birthpangs’ Dick is talking about here, at least as far as they pertain to his own cosmology, are the awakening of the Ungrund in humans, shortly before the Ungrund’s assimilation of the universe and, thus, our reality. Boehme, too, saw the ‘struggle to reach God’ using birth as a metaphor.³⁴ For Dick, Zebra (which for the Cathars would be the devil) is not in place to punish human beings, but assumes it has sole control of them. In this, Dick assures his readers, it is mistaken. ‘It [Zebra] is indeed the Creator of the world, but not of man. The Urgrund and man, being isomorphic, stand together in opposition to the world. This is the condition that must be achieved. Alliance is the formation of an alliance against the Urgrund. God and man belong together, pitted against the projected world.’³⁵ How this occurred in the

³² *Notes on Signatura Rerum*, 1-2. Boehme writes: ‘[The forms of Man and God will] mutually assimilate together in one form, and there is one Comprehension, one will, one Spirit, and also one Understanding.’ This is exactly the same as Philip K. Dick’s proposed ‘assimilation of the universe in its totality’ for the Ungrund, for more on which see Sutin’s *Shifting Realities*, 283.

³³ *Shifting Realities*, 283.

³⁴ *Jacob Boehme*, 28. Robin Waterfield writes: ‘Boehme in one of his letters says: “The more man reaches out to God, groans and struggles to reach Him, the more he departs from his aim and must start again at the beginning”. He likens the struggle to the pangs of a woman giving birth, since the birth of the new man – the birth of God in us – is always accompanied by terror and anguish.’

³⁵ *Shifting Realities*, 290. Following on 291, Dick also writes a five-point list for his readers as a kind of theological teaching tool in the style of an ‘instruction manual’. These five points are 1) We must recognise the existence of the artifact [Zebra]; 2) We must recognise the spuriousness of the empirical world, generated by the artifact; 3) We must grasp the fact that the artifact has by its world-projecting power enslaved us; 4) We must recognise the fact that the artifact, although enslaving us in a counterfeit world, is teaching us [and thereby the Ungrund learns from it also]; 5) We must finally come to the point where we disobey our teacher – perhaps the most difficult moment in life, inasmuch as that teacher says, “I will destroy you if you disobey me, and I would be morally right to do so, since I am your Creator.” These five points could be bastardised to make quite a good plot for a movie; for example, *The Matrix* (1999).

first place, with God essentially wishing to learn about Himself and now suffering (through humanity's suffering) at the hands of His own creation, is unclear; but Dick writes 'had there been a better way the Urgrund certainly would have employed it'.³⁶ 'The artifact', Dick also writes, 'does not comprehend what risk it is running in the inflicting of unmerited suffering on living creatures. It imagines them all to be at its mercy and without recourse. In this it is wrong, absolutely wrong. Buried here [...] there exists [...] the Urgrund with all the power and wisdom that implies. The artifact is treading on dangerous ground; it is coming closer and closer to awakening its own maker.'³⁷ Thus, Dick is saying, the artifact is unknowingly working on behalf of the Ungrund; it only seems to be in opposition to it. If we are to discover the true nature of our world for ourselves, Dick suggests that we must 'disobey our teacher [Zebra] and that 'each of us must do this alone'.³⁸

There are now answers as to what constitutes the difference between what for Dick is a 'spurious' world (and what for Boehme and the Cathars is an 'evil' world). Dick's artefact of 'Zebra' or 'Valis', analogous to the Lucifer of the Cathars or the materialistic worldliness scorned by Boehme and representing Mammon, is the agency responsible for visiting pain upon human beings. There are also answers as to what the motivations of the Ungrund really are: it seeks to redeem human beings and to merge with them, in order to create a better or even perfect state of existence. In accepting Dick's cosmological ideas as they stand in his essay 'Cosmogony' as being a true facsimile of metaphysical matters as they stand today, and without demanding empirical proof of those matters, readers can accept the following:

1) The world is spurious and completely fake. It is an insidiously clever but intrinsically flawed creation. It is the work of a machine-like entity with function but

³⁶ *Shifting Realities*, 287

³⁷ *Shifting Realities*, 304.

³⁸ *Shifting Realities*, 291.

not conscience. The accumulation of worldly goods, status and material is therefore a waste of time. The world separates human beings from God.

2) God exists within human beings, but they have been cut off from knowing Him as a real, omnipotent entity. Humans cannot know God without becoming God, which necessitates the assimilation of the world and everything in it by the Ungrund. The world as it is now is projected by Zebra and occludes human perception, crippling any sense of teleesthesia we might otherwise possess as sentient creatures. It thus renders humans largely unable to act to speed the process of assimilation into a new and perfect world, though Dick suggests we might do so by individualistic action in confronting the world and attempting to see through the delusion for what it is.

3) The universe as humans know it will be destroyed by the Ungrund when it awakens, knowing itself, having studied itself through Zebra and humanity. The world will be ripped away, replaced by a perfect world, and living creatures within the universe will become immortal, having entered the Kingdom of God.

At this point, something should now be made clear to the reader: Philip K. Dick does not trust machines that masquerade as being 'something else'. The closest facsimile of Zebra, as Dick presents it in 'Cosmogony', is not really 'Valis' at all, but 'The Great C' from the title of Dick's 1953 short story³⁹. In it, the Great C, the last computer in a post-apocalyptic world, answers questions put to it by nearby villagers once every year, villagers left ignorant by their dearth of worldly knowledge following a cataclysmic event known as 'the Smash'. Every year the Great C, to the consternation of the villagers, answers the question correctly. The price for the answer is the sacrifice of the village's representative, the one responsible for asking these 'great questions'; the hapless individual is routinely dissolved in a vat of hydrochloric

³⁹ Philip K. Dick, *Beyond Lies the Wub: The Collected Stories of Philip K. Dick, Volume 1* (London: Millennium, 1999) 309-20.

acid and ‘digested’ by the Great C, which converts the organic matter into energy on which it continues to function. Interestingly, the fact that the humans are reduced to a primitive level of existence and live in small communities is viewed by Dick as a regressive step. Taken in context with his cosmological ideas, a reader might interpret the presentation of the human society in ‘The Great C’ as a literal take on the artefact ruling over the material world, further removing humanity from any contact with its true Creator. In this sense, the isolated village living in the shadow of the spiteful machine becomes a microcosmic study of the human condition that Dick presents in his cosmology.

The story remains comical in aspect but retains a sinister quality for its representation of a machine that plays God (much like a more deadly version of the various spiteful, semi-autonomous home appliances that Joe Chip has to contend with in the novel *Ubik*, written in 1969). This dire aspect of godhead is how Dick presents Zebra – a machine that literally thinks it is God, because it cannot conceive of the Ungrund, and is arrogant enough to presume that there is no higher power than itself. Perhaps as Dick believed it is not evil *per se* but it causes a great deal of pain and suffering on its own account, as in its ignorance, it visits disaster on those human beings it has under its control. Of course, had the machine a conscience, it might be able to justify its actions: The Great C, for example, as a semi-autonomous intellect, is simply trying to survive in a barren post-apocalyptic world; likewise, Zebra, in Dick’s cosmology, is actually working alongside the Ungrund – though, admittedly, in ignorance.

Of machines in general, Dick wrote a telling note in 1978 regarding a short story of his called ‘The Last of the Masters’ (1954), in which another post-apocalyptic

society is ‘governed’ by a group of individuals known as the Anarchist League.⁴⁰ The League is in place to prevent the establishment of a new society that could lead to downfall, but a robot named Bors – a benign, humanoid but (importantly) obviously mechanical being is maintained by a group of humans who are using Bors’ immense programmed knowledge to craft a new, presumably pre-war society. Bors, rusting, ancient and crippled, is destroyed by essentially well-meaning League members, and the tale is essentially moral in context. This is fully explained in the conclusion, but for the moment, it suffices to say that Bors, a broken down robot who alone out of a community of ignorant human charges has the technological know-how to maintain an advanced civilisation, is a broken god. Not only is Bors broken, but he suffers as well; and like Christ, he is effectively a martyr to his own cause.

In regard to this last point, a reader might believe that Dick feels some degree of sympathy for the artefact Zebra itself, as an entity that suffers, as the humans under its control, through its own ignorance. But Zebra has no concept of suffering, precisely because it is ignorant. The point however leads to an important aspect of Dick’s writing, in fiction and non-fiction: In Dick’s cosmology, he made Zebra a machine for a reason. It allowed him to do the following:

1) Create an ‘escape route’ for God, allowing God to be, cleared of guilt and blame at creating a cruel and debatably ‘evil’ world, much as the Cathars did.

2) Create in Zebra a basic ambiguity, preventing it from being called either ‘evil’ or ‘good’. Evil, then, is a result of Zebra’s ignorance and arrogance. Zebra is our teacher – like Bors. It is also, to some extent, a helper in that it teaches us, and (more importantly) in that it works (unknown to itself of course) alongside the

⁴⁰ Philip K. Dick, *The Father-Thing: The Collected Stories of Philip K. Dick, Volume 3* (London: Millennium, 1999) 75-110.

Ungrund without its knowledge. It is also, however, devilish in its infliction of random pain and suffering, and Dick suggests that ‘Those persons on whom the artifact, through its projected world, heaps pleasure and rewards are less likely to take a stance against it and its world. They are not highly motivated to disobey it. But those who are punished by the artifact, on whom pain and suffering are inflicted – those persons would be motivated to ask ultimately questions as to the nature of the entity ruling their lives.’⁴¹

The ambiguity Dick creates in the artefact of Zebra also allows him to keep CC (and the *Exegesis* as a whole) ambiguous, keeping as its vital quality the most obvious trait Lawrence Sutin suggested it possessed, that of ‘indeterminacy’. It is in part due to this quality that the thesis analyses Dick’s work through a variety of critical filters. Theological, historical, cultural and sociological concerns are of paramount importance to the thesis in giving treatment to Dick’s work, and it is this that gives rise to the use of a system of shifting referential frames to divide the chapters. The juxtaposition of these various perspectives is the only effective way of doing justice to Dick’s complex and often bewildering worlds.

It has not been the purpose of this introduction to go into detail of Dick’s philosophy as it applies to his novels, but to provide the reader with a critical anchor to Dick’s cosmological and theological beliefs. The intention of the introduction is also to emphasise the extent to which Dick thought of himself as both an entertainer and as a *teacher*; or, more grandiosely perhaps, as a prophet. Clearly, he was like many before him uncomfortable with the world and sought meaning without fully

⁴¹ *Shifting Realities*, 291-2.

understanding it. Lawrence Sutin presents an entry in the *Exegesis* as part of his introduction for *Shifting Realities*:

I am a fictionalizing philosopher, not a novelist; my novel & story-writing ability is employed as a means to formulate my perception. The core of my writing is not art but *truth* [Dick's italics]. Thus what I tell is the truth, yet I can do nothing to alleviate it, either by deed or explanation. Yet this seems somehow to help a certain kind of sensitive troubled person, for whom I speak. I think I understand the common ingredient in those whom my writing helps: they cannot or will not blunt their own intimations about the irrational, mysterious nature of reality, &, for them, my corpus of writing is one long ratiocination regarding this inexplicable reality, an integration & presentation, analysis & response & personal history.⁴²

I here posit that what Dick is arguing we have faith in is not necessarily God, but 'minor man', as he 'asserts himself in all his hasty, sweaty strength'.⁴³ God does exist for Philip K. Dick, and features prominently in the cosmology as he presents it in 'Cosmogony and Cosmology'; but Dick is first and foremost concerned with human beings, and as defined by their own place in the universe and not necessarily national, ethnic or cultural boundaries, although he does explore individual differences to a limited extent. His novels are about people; in the above quotation from *Shifting Realities*, Dick has realised that his writing can 'help a certain kind of sensitive troubled person'. He was aware, was always so presumably, that in finding the voice to question the very nature of reality, one asks fundamental and almost primeval questions that do not merely invite answers, but which *require* them. Dick ends CC with this in reference to his experiences of 2-3-74:

What more could I ask from an Ultimate Vision of Absolute Total Reality? What more do I need to know? The score reads: Evil zero; Good infinity. Let me stop there, satisfied; the final tally is explicit.⁴⁴

⁴² *Shifting Realities*, xvii.

⁴³ *Philip K. Dick Bibliography*, 154.

⁴⁴ *Shifting Realities*, 313.

Dick's optimistic appraisal of the cosmology he describes is touching, but it did not provide him with the answers he required and he continued to write on the *Exegesis* until his death in March 1982. Dick occasionally suffered from bouts of low self-esteem during which he would label himself as a 'schizophrenic', 'psychopathic' or simply 'nuts' in his personal writings, but it is unclear whether he truly believed that of himself or whether – in a sense – he was amplifying his own perceived role and perhaps affecting a degree of 'eccentricity'. Such deliberation on Dick's part seems unlikely given the unique style that invests his writing in his essays and novels, and a more probable supposition is that such comments arose from Dick's frustration with his own limited perception as a human being and specifically with his failure to voluntarily bypass the occlusion of the visual world to get at the 'real truth', to the proper (and for Dick, elusive and unattainable) nature of reality – whatever that might be. It would seem in his writing that on several occasions Dick found himself to be on the brink of a discovery, or more properly, on the brink of a kind of divine revelation that would supplement and enhance his experiences of 2-3-74, and permit him a kind of ultimate divine knowledge that would at once satisfy his own curiosity and cause him to feel justified in the eyes of humanity. What Dick found (or thought he found) and almost as quickly lost again through his breakdown, he simply sought to find again in his writing, and there is a grand passion and flair in his philosophical work that informs much of his fictional, and especially science-fictional, output.

Ultimately the question Dick asks in his 'Afterword' as presented in *PKD* can be answered not solely with 'faith in humanity', and not solely with 'faith in God'; but one or the other, or perhaps both, could be taken in tandem with 'faith in the future'. Dick was a humanist, and admitted as much; he asks his readers to have faith in themselves, which is exactly what Boehme was trying to describe in his philosophy.

By having faith in ourselves, we have faith in God, because according to both Boehme and Dick, the Ungrund or God exists as a part of ourselves, and we as a part of it.

In looking to the future in Dick's cosmology, humans can look forward to enjoying immortality in what will ultimately become a perfect world. In Dick's *irreal* world however, what is not so clear is just how effective faith alone is as the only means of defence against an invisible, insidious and basically (whether conscious of it or not) oppressive pseudo-universe. If it was a doctrine he was trying to teach, then another question arises, and like the previous one, it *requires* rather than merits an answer: Why did Dick choose science fiction as the means by which to express himself? Why use a fictional genre to communicate what he saw as being 'truth'? In order to address these questions and to define Philip K. Dick as a thinker, the thesis is divided into chapters which deal with one particular aspect of Dick's thought.

Chapter One ('Two Worlds, Two Gods') leads directly on from this Introduction and builds into an analysis of the dualist mechanics of Dick's thought as they appear in his fiction. Gnosticism, Manichaeism and Taoism are shown to inform Dick's mystical thought as framed in Dick's novel *The Man in the High Castle* (1962). The specific historical and sociological issues prevalent in the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s are reflected in this novel, which is essentially a story of an 'alternate world' in which the Axis powers triumphed in World War II. The United States are divided into two territories: one under the control of Nazi Germany, the other under the control of Imperial Japan. Characters within the novel grasp at the hidden truth of their world, that being – as in the 'real' world – that the Allies defeated the Axis powers.

Chapter Two ('2-3-74') deals directly with Dick's moment of breakdown or supposed mystical experiences during February and March 1974, and in many ways forms the crux of the thesis. In analysing the 'revelations' of this period as they occurred to Dick, the chapter refers back to themes of dualism discussed here in the Introduction and in Chapter One. The reader is then better equipped to understand Chapter Two, which is informed not only by Lawrence Sutin's biographical observations of Dick, but by Dick's own letters. This chapter draws primarily from material researched at California State University, Fullerton, which serves to provide the reader with a more intimate representation of Dick as an author and thinker.

Chapter Three ('Entropy Tends to Go Up') is a representative study of the themes of entropy and decay that appear in much of Dick's work. *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965) and *Ubik* (1969) are the primary novels used in discussion of these themes, which ultimately refer back to the Introduction and Chapter Two.

The discussion in Chapter Four ('Identity and the Hidden World') leads directly on from Chapter Three and functions as a study of identity crisis as it appears in Dick's work, and as it represents both entropy and a 'gateway' to understanding the true nature of the world; that being the 'hidden truth' that Dick sought to expose in his fiction and his non-fiction writing. The chapter forms a framework wherein two of Dick's novels are discussed: *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* (1974) and *A Scanner Darkly* (1977).

Chapter Five ('Encryption and Holography') leads on from the discussion of identity in the preceding chapter, and also refers the reader back to Chapter Two. Here, Dick's cosmological ideas regarding the material world as being a projected 'hologram' are examined in more detail. The chapter frames a discussion of the novels *Dr. Bloodmoney* (1965) and *Eye in the Sky* (1957), and serves to highlight

themes which appear in Dick's post-1974 thought and fiction. The idea of 'projected reality' is supported in this chapter by current cosmological theories as imagined by Stephen Hawking.

Dick's theory of an artefact that 'projects' the ersatz human world invites analysis of Dick's treatment of machines, and of 'androids' in particular. This leads into Chapter Six ('Machine Worlds'), which examines two of Dick's novels: *The Penultimate Truth* (1964) and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968). A discussion of his short story 'Second Variety' (1952) is also provided. The chapter provides the reader with a deeper understanding of Dick's concept of the 'artificial' as it applies to the worlds he imagined, to his own cosmological ideas, and to the characters he created. It follows on from themes of identity crisis discussed in Chapter Four, relates Dick's cosmological ideas to Cartesian philosophy, and provides the necessary groundwork for the reader to engage with the Conclusion of the thesis.

The Conclusion leads directly on from the preceding two chapters, and ultimately presents and analyses Dick's idea of the 'Creator deity' as a continually malfunctioning machine, opening with a discussion of the short story 'Last of the Masters' (1954). It serves to bind Dick's cosmological ideas together, presenting the reader with a new way of interpreting the human world according to Dick's own mystical thought and allowing the reader to view Dick in a new light, as one of the twentieth century's greatest thinkers.

CHAPTER ONE: TWO WORLDS, TWO GODS

Building directly on the Introduction, this Chapter serves as a more thorough examination of theological dualism in Dick's work, beginning with a discussion of *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), which Dick wrote in part by consulting the *I Ching*, the Taoist Book of Changes.¹ The novel postulates a world in which the Allies lost the Second World War; the novel is set in a United States that has been separated into two governmental districts, one under Nazi Germany (eastern states) and the other under Imperial Japan (western states), with the characters of the novel for the most part residing in the Japanese-ruled western states. This separation occurred, in the world of the novel, in 1947. The social and cultural fusion described in the novel, between especially the Americans and the Japanese, mirrors the more fundamental union of religious and mystical ideas held by the two groups. Characters in the novel frequently rely on the use of the *I Ching*, or *Book of Changes*, a Chinese work that they consult in order to presage the consequences of decisions they make or to predict the likely outcome of events as they unfold. The *I Ching*, also referred to as the 'oracle', stands in the novel as a counterpoint to the fictional book written by one of the characters, Hawthorne Abendsen. This second, fictional book, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, posits an alternative history for the characters of *High Castle* in much the same way as *High Castle* itself does for the reader.

Grasshopper delineates the world as it might have been if the Allies had won the Second World War, which is of course the 'reality' of our own world. Abendsen's writing in *Grasshopper* evokes an unmistakable ring of truth, as if the world depicted

¹ Emmanuel Carrère, *I Am Alive and You Are Dead: A Journey Into the Mind of Philip K. Dick*, trans. Timothy Bent (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005) 60. Carrère writes: 'To someone who was always [asking] ultimate questions [...] the *I Ching* must have seemed like a gift from the gods.'

in *High Castle* as experienced by the characters is entirely ersatz. The fact that *Grasshopper* is fictional, and the *I Ching* is an extant work in the 'real world', brings challenging questions to the fore in the mind of the reader. Foremost amongst these is whether or not the *I Ching*, in the fake world of *High Castle*, holds any real worth. As Frank Frink observes in *High Castle*, as he inspects a forgery of an antique Colt revolver, 'the fakes [...] undermine the value of the real'.² In an ersatz world, the mystical properties of the *I Ching* would seem to possess little value. While the *I Ching* can prognosticate forthcoming events, those events are not truly real; so that in fact *Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, which offers a fundamentally different world to the characters of *High Castle*, becomes the more important work for those characters, as revealed at the end of the novel.

This fact does not discourage the characters struck by the events depicted in *Grasshopper* from debating the relevance and import of those events however, nor from debating the very nature of the book, which strikes many of the novel's characters – even those opposed to it – as being an important work. There are plenty of examples of this: Wyndham-Matson and his mistress Rita talking at length about the process of *Grasshopper*'s alternative history in positing the Allies as victors of the war is one of them.³ Later, Paul Kasoura, speaking to his wife Betty and to Robert Childan, talks about *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* as a fan of science fiction; he assigns it no more importance than any other fictional work. Dick, through Betty and Paul Kasoura, offers a somewhat sardonic appraisal of *The Man in the High Castle* itself as the scene unfolds:

Rising, [Robert Childan] went to pick [*The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*] up [...] "A mystery? Excuse my abysmal ignorance." He turned the pages.

"Not a mystery," Paul said. "On contrary, interesting form of fiction possible within genre of science fiction."

² Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (London: Roc, 1965) 51.

³ *High Castle*, 67-71.

“Oh no,” Betty disagreed. “No science in it. Not set in future. Science fiction deals with future, in particular future where science has advanced over now. Book fits neither premise.”

“But,” Paul said, “it deals with an alternate present. Many well-known science fiction novels of that sort.” To Robert he explained, “Pardon my insistence in this, but as my wife knows, I was for a long time a science fiction enthusiast. I began that hobby early in my life; I was merely twelve. It was during the early days of the war.”

“I see,” Robert Childan said, with politeness.⁴

The passage is interesting for two reasons: it firstly demarcates, through Paul Kasoura’s comment (‘interesting form of fiction’ etc.) the very nature of both *Grasshopper* and *High Castle* itself. Secondly it helps to define Childan’s character: he is a Caucasian American who tries too hard to impress his Japanese hosts and can think only of the opportunity that reading the book will give him for increasing his status (as he sees it) with the Kasouras. Childan, when invited to borrow *Grasshopper*, does so knowing that this will mean he will meet with the Japanese couple again in the near future. Childan also wants to read it because at the same time as wishing to increase his status, he dislikes Japanese rule and is angered by the fact that they won the war; he believes that reading the book is his ‘patriotic duty’ and this after thinking to himself that the Japanese themselves are an inferior race.⁵

Throughout the novel, characters attempt to find a sense of self-worth to enforce the reality of their world, through subtly different but related means. For example in Childan’s case, this self-worth eventually comes from his marketing of handmade American jewellery, of which ultimately he becomes very proud; this discovery is profound but mundane. For Nobusuke Tagomi however, the handling of that same jewellery leads to a mystical event in which he actually experiences for a short time the ‘true’ world, in which the Allies won the Second World War. Frank Frink, who with Ed McCarthy makes the jewellery, simply finds worth in the crafting of the pieces, to the extent that his new profession becomes for him a way to win back his estranged wife. Frink’s wife Juliana is the only character to see a palpable truth in the

⁴ *High Castle*, 109.

⁵ *High Castle*, 112-113.

writing of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, and it is she who eventually resolves to meet with its author, Hawthorne Abendsen, which she accomplishes at the end of *High Castle*. All of these characters have in common their reliance upon the *I Ching*. The *Book of Changes* not only informs their individual worlds by guiding their decisions, but also serves as a clue in regard to the nature of the shared world of the novel: that world has been changed, in some dark distant time, and it has changed in such a way that nobody remembers the change, so that the true world remains hidden from all but a few (Tagomi, Juliana Frink and Hawthorne Abendsen).

Reliance on the *I Ching* is taken for granted by many of the novel's characters, but some seek to justify it or to denounce it. Frank Frink is full of praise for the work, admires its five thousand year history and refers to it as 'that superb cosmology – and science – codified before Europe had even learned to do long division'.⁶ To Frink the book is a form of strength, cultural and spiritual, that is perfect in its antiquity. To Tagomi however, the book represents a kind of weakness, as he explains to Mr. Baynes (who is actually Rudolf Wegener, a German double agent working for Heydrich and against Goebbels): "We are absurd [...] because we live by a five-thousand-year-old book".⁷ He acknowledges the book as having a life of its own however and compares it to the Christian Bible, imbued with spirit. The book guides if not creates destiny for critical decisions that the novel's characters take. In much the same way, Wyndham-Matson, in firing Frank Frink from his job at the start of *High Castle*, sets Frink onto his path of jewellery-making from which Frink regains his sense of hope, of self-worth. Frink himself compares Wyndham-Matson to something which in mediaeval angelology would be the nine orders of spiritual

⁶ *High Castle*, 20.

⁷ *High Castle*, 72.

beings, referring to him as 'a power. A throne'.⁸ He does this at first ironically, out of bitterness; but actually Wyndham-Matson's decision ultimately helps Frink.

Fate and destiny form the core of the novel and its characters are largely powerless against that force. As in Dick's own cosmological and mystical thought, there are two distinct worlds which the characters inhabit, or (through reading *Grasshopper*) at least experience at some level. *High Castle* itself represents the world of Dick's 'Black Iron Prison', the seeming and evil world, which in the novel is dominated by the victorious Axis powers in the aftermath of the Second World War. The 'saviour' in the novel is represented by Hawthorne Abendsen who fulfils a similar role to that played by Glen Runciter, Ella Runciter or Joe Chip in *Ubik*, and *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* takes on a religious significance as a sacred text because of the route it provides to seeing through the veil of occlusion to the truth beneath. Like the *I Ching*, *Grasshopper* has a life of its own because it describes the living, true world; it transforms the still-life world of *High Castle* into a mutable, translucent form so that it can be seen through like glass:

Mad dream, Mr Tagomi thought. Must wake up [...] Whole vista has smoky, tomb-world cast. Smell of burning. Dim grey buildings, sidewalk, peculiar harsh tempo in people [...] Cars like brutal big crushers, all unfamiliar in shape. He avoided seeing them; kept his eyes straight ahead. Distortion of my optic perception of particularly sinister nature. A disturbance affecting my sense of space. Horizon twisted out of line. Like lethal astigmatism striking without warning.⁹

To Tagomi, the ideal world of Robert Childan seems like a schizophrenic nightmare, and there are parallels in Tagomi's thoughts with the way in which the character Manfred perceives his world in the later novel *Martian Time-Slip* (1964). Tagomi in actuality is frightened because the 'true world' as revealed to him through the piece of jewellery is unfamiliar and entirely alien, just as Manfred perceives his world. Tagomi blames his eyes for this vision, thinking that the lenses are damaged or

⁸ *High Castle*, 14.

⁹ *High Castle*, 223.

misshapen, but what he is seeing is the world in which the Allies won the Second World War; deep-down he knows this, and keeps his gaze fixed, hoping that the horrible scene will simply disappear.

The true world, as Tagomi perceives it through his vision, is not itself a heavenly or divine place; to Tagomi it is sinister and represents a place of decay. But he also comes to acknowledge it as truth, and sees the true world through ‘mists’; he compares it to St Paul’s ‘seen through glass darkly’ metaphor.¹⁰ Tagomi’s vision is merely truth: he does not see, per se, into a divine realm, and the truth he sees is that there is a veil of occlusion cast in front of the true world. But the means Tagomi uses to perceive this vision, seeing in a piece of Frink and McCarthy’s jewellery a spiritual worth, is interesting; it mirrors the alleged experience of Jacob Boehme when Boehme experienced a revelation while watching sunlight glint on a tankard. When Tagomi sees this same phenomenon in the sunlight glinting from the piece of jewellery, the light seems – to Tagomi – to be the spirit of the jewellery itself.

Presented below as an extract is one of the most important parts of *High Castle*, which sheds light not only on Tagomi’s predicament in the changed and seeming world, but also on Dick’s own cosmological thought and ideas. The extract represents a critical moment for Tagomi and he remains the only character in *High Castle* to experience the true world empirically. This is the moment where Tagomi, in inspecting the handmade jewellery purchased from Robert Childan, tries to find nirvana and instead finds truth; which to Dick is really one and the same:

If I shake [the jewellery] violently, like old recalcitrant watch. He did so, up and down. Or like dice in critical game. Awaken the deity inside. Peradventure he sleepeth [...] What is clue of truth that confronts me in this object?

Yield, he told the silver triangle. Cough up arcane secret.

Metal is from the earth, he thought as he scrutinized. From below: from that realm which is the lowest, the most dense. Land of trolls and caves, dank, always dark. Yin world, in its most melancholy aspect. World of corpses, decay and collapse. Of faeces [...] The daemonic world of the immutable; the time-that-was.

¹⁰ *High Castle*, 224-5.

And yet, in the sunlight, the silver triangle glittered. It reflected light. Not dank or dark object at all [but] pulsing with life. The high realm, aspect of yang: empyrean, ethereal.

Which are you? he asked the silver squiggle. Dark dead yin or brilliant living yang?

Body of yin, soul of yang. Metal and fire unified. The outer and inner; microcosmos in my palm.

What is the space which this speaks of? Vertical ascent. To heaven. Of time? Into the light-world of the mutable. Yes, this thing has disgorged its spirit: light. And my attention is fixed; I can't look away. Spellbound by mesmerising shimmering surface which I can no longer control. No longer free to dismiss.

Now talk to me, he told it. Now that you have snared me. I want to hear your voice issuing from the blinding clear white light [...] I am ready to face without terror. Notice I do not blench [...] I must not shrink from the clear white light, for if I do, I will once more enter the cycle of birth and death, never knowing freedom, never obtaining release. The veil of maya will fall once more if I –

The light disappeared. He held the dull silver triangle only. Shadow had cut off the sun; Mr Tagomi glanced up.

Tall, blue-suited policeman standing by his bench, smiling.

'Eh?' Mr Tagomi said, startled.

'I was just watching you work that puzzle.' The policeman started on along the path [...]

Mr Tagomi thought, Spoiled. My chance at nirvana. Gone. Interrupted by that white barbarian Neanderthal *yank* [Dick's italics]. That sub-human supposing I worked a child's puerile toy.

Rising from the bench he took a few steps unsteadily. Must calm down. Dreadful low-class jingoistic racist invectives, unworthy of me.

He reached periphery of park [...]

God, what is that? He stopped, gaped at hideous misshapen thing on skyline. Like nightmare of roller coaster suspended, blotting out view. Enormous construction of metal and cement in air.¹¹

The extract opens shortly after Tagomi has personally fought off German secret police thugs who attacked his offices, in an attempt to hide evidence of a Nazi plan to destroy Japan. Distraught at having taken lives, Tagomi searches for redemption and in a meeting with Robert Childan sees redemption embodied in the jewellery that Childan has decided to sell on behalf of Frank Frink and Ed McCarthy. Tagomi's journey goes through three stages: first, a symbolic conception (his motivation to find redemption, seen in a piece of handmade American jewellery); second, metaphysical and cosmological speculation as to the workings of the jewellery (despite Tagomi's refutation, it *is* a puzzle he is working); and, finally, physical transference or transcendence to the true world (the moment at which the policeman's shadow falls across the jewellery).

¹¹ *High Castle*, 219-222.

In the first place there is the symbolic significance of the piece of jewellery itself, described as being a ‘small silver triangle ornamented with hollow drops. Black beneath, bright and light-filled above’.¹² Tagomi does not choose this piece; Childan, himself changed through an encounter with Paul Kasoura, chooses the piece. The jewellery represents the two worlds of *High Castle*: the static and prison-like world the characters inhabit, and the truth, embodied by light. As an emblem for yin and yang, it emphasises Dick’s own dualistic ideas as they borrow from Gnostic belief.¹³ Central to this cosmology is Jacob Boehme’s idea of the apotheosis of humanity, the achieving of totality with God, or the Ungrund, at which point the world becomes truly real. In the above extract, Tagomi talks about ‘the time-that-was’. What Dick is referring to here, though he doesn’t state this explicitly in the novel, is Manichaeism. According to Samuel N.C. Lieu, there are three distinct phases (which he terms the ‘Three Moments’) in the Manichaean cosmology: The Former Time, The Present Time, and The Future Time.¹⁴ The Former Time, or as Tagomi calls it ‘the time-that-was’, is a time of perfect opposites: Light and Darkness, which in Mani’s cosmological play are represented as being at war.

Lieu indicates that the kingdom of Darkness is static and evil, without life: ‘a lunar landscape: cut up by deep gulfs, abysses, pits [and] smothered by smoke, the ‘poison of death’’.¹⁵ Thus, the kingdom of Darkness, as Tagomi observes the constituents of the jewellery piece (that being metals) is unchanging, lifeless and evil; a prison. In the ‘Present Moment’, which encompasses human life as we know it, the Darkness invaded the Light; and this state of affairs continues today, with the

¹² *High Castle*, 216.

¹³ Lawrence Sutin, ed., *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 334-5. Presented there is an entry from the *Exegesis* made in 1978; the cosmological theory laid down there which Dick writes has ‘no fault in it’ represents the cosmology of *High Castle*. This is detailed later in the chapter.

¹⁴ Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism* (Oxford: Alden Press, 1985) 8.

¹⁵ *Manichaeism*, 10.

Kingdom of Light attempting to redeem and rescue the trapped entities who belong to Light but who are trapped for the moment in Darkness. In other words, Manichaeism cosmology resembles Gnostic and Cathar cosmology: the world is evil, and it is a prison, in which saviours in various guises occasionally break into in order to illuminate human beings as to the nature of their predicament. Human beings in this cosmology are actually born of demons; they have only a small spark of Light within them, and it is that spark which must be liberated. Liberation comes through enlightenment: through gnosis. Manichaeism believed that the universe was created as a place of refinement for the elements of Light which had become sullied with Darkness, or as Lieu states, a 'hospital'.¹⁶

In the Future Moment of the Manichaeism cosmology, most Light will be liberated; what will remain in the world of matter will be mainly composed of Darkness. This will presage a final war of Light against Darkness in which Jesus will return as the world's judge. As in Christian thought, sinners will be cast into hell but the enlightened will be transfigured into angels and become part of the Kingdom of Light. The world will end and Light and Darkness will once again be two disparate entities.¹⁷ Everything in the Kingdom of Light is a part of that kingdom; in much the same way as Jacob Boehme argued that humans would one day become part of the Ungrund in totality. This will be, as Lieu states, 'an eschatological event'.¹⁸ Apotheosis for the entire human race creates the true, 'ontologically real' world that Dick sought in his writing.

The shape of the jewellery that Tagomi has acquired may in itself have some occult symbolic significance for Dick: perhaps it represents something that Dick always felt was an important religious or mystical symbol. During 2-3-74, Dick

¹⁶ *Manichaeism*, 14.

¹⁷ *Manichaeism*, 21-2.

¹⁸ *Manichaeism*, 21.

believed he saw a vision of God, represented as an eye in a triangle.¹⁹ As Peter Knight points out in *Conspiracy Nation* (2002), the symbol of the eye in the triangle is the basis for the various conspiracy theories surrounding the Web of the Masonic dollar bill, some sincere and others, albeit unintentionally, rather amusing.²⁰ The eye in the pyramid supposedly represents the dominion of the world's 'elite' over the masses; a hierogram of the secret society of the Illuminati, formed in Germany in the late 18th century, consisting of a disembodied, all-seeing eye as the apex of a pyramid. The pyramid represents the mass population; the eye represents humanity's 'secret chiefs'. The Illuminati in this context are represented by – especially – the domination of the world by Nazi Germany, a much more aggressive country in peacetime than Dick envisages the Japanese. It was perhaps Dick's intention to link control of the world by the Illuminati with the oppressive government of the Nazis, both of which originated from the same country.

As an item made from passive yin matter in the seeming prison world, the triangular piece of jewellery being handled by Tagomi perhaps represents oppression. The piece was made by Frank Frink, a Jew, who himself fears persecution. As Tagomi speculates however, the light reflected by the jewellery shows that it possesses a spirit or life of its own, so imbued by its creator. No occult eye opens up in the jewellery of course, and the shining light that seems to Tagomi to be an outpouring of the piece's soul is a yang symbol of freedom: it is the conversion of an artefact that represents dominion into something that represents ultimate liberty, the breaking through of Mani's cosmological Light into Darkness. The vision of God which Dick later saw, Light peering out of and into Darkness, is an inversion of the alleged Illuminati hierogram, which represents not divine will but human tyranny. In

¹⁹ Lawrence Sutin, *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (New York: Harmony Books, 1989) 264.

²⁰ Peter Knight, ed., *Conspiracy Nation: The Politics of Paranoia in Postwar America* (London: New York UP, 2002) 2, 6.

this sense, the piece of jewellery is an approximation or representation of God as He manifests in our dark prison world.

That Dick took such symbolism seriously in his own cosmological thought is not in doubt: sketches of various religious and mystical symbols as well as representations of hexagrams taken from the *I Ching* litter his work in the *Exegesis*. As discussed previously in the Introduction, there is great significance in the fact that Dick chose the name 'exegesis'. Dick rejected any fiction in his cosmology. To him, what he wrote was truth, as he states in one of his entries for the *Exegesis*.²¹

According to John Allegro, this is truth in the sense that the Essenes saw it: '[It] has to be remembered that the Essene exegete considered himself as inspired by the spirit of prophecy as the original writer, and thus had been granted no less a divine authority for his interpretation'.²²

Dick, like Jacob Boehme, asserted that humanity had to *wake up*; it had to do this in order to achieve apotheosis with the Ungrund. What is revealed to Tagomi in the way of truth comes from his actions in concentrating on and manipulating the silver triangle. He thinks while shaking the piece of jewellery violently: 'Awaken the deity inside. Peradventure he sleepeth'. Something wakes up in Tagomi in order for him to perceive the true world; or Manichaeic Light, awakened by his call, reveals the truth of the world to him. This process of waking was sometimes referred to by Dick as *anamnesis*, the recollection of lost memories.²³ As humanity wakes up so too does the good, true God, of whom humanity is part.

²¹ *Shifting Realities*, xvii. "The core of my writing is not art but *truth* [Dick's italics]."

²² John M. Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Myth* (Newton Abbot: Westbridge Books, 1979) 47.

²³ *Shifting Realities*, 333.

In the world of *High Castle*, the two contrasting realities (the evil, Nazi-controlled world and the true world in which the Nazis were defeated) are likewise represented by two contrasting figures: Abendsen who represents truth, and Goebbels, who in the novel becomes the Reichs Chancellor of Germany, and who represents the dark, seeming world. Goebbels, formerly Hitler's propaganda chief, is the perfect agent to better characterise the physiognomy of the false world. In the Manichaeic cosmology, Abendsen represents an Aeon of the Kingdom of Light whereas Goebbels is an evil archon, a manifestation or avatar of the Prince of Darkness.²⁴

Tagomi rightly recognises the world of *High Castle* as being *maya*, which in Hinduism equates to the concept of the visible world being only illusion. Robert Childan for his part recognises the seeds of dualism and especially Manichaeism in Taoist thought while considering the *I Ching*: 'What would it be like, he wondered, to really know the Tao? *The Tao is that which first lets in the light, then the dark* [Dick's italics]. Occasions the interplay of the two primal forces so that there is always renewal'.²⁵ The principle behind Taoism is the philosophical understanding of one's place in the universe, in order to achieve practical and spiritual harmony in that universe. Perfect harmony is the joining together of opposites (yin and yang), which is what Dick, through Childan, alludes to in the above quote. It also mirrors, on a basic level, the principles of religious dualism and thus the connection between Taoism and dualist theological systems like, in particular, Manichaeism are profound. As Dick himself borrowed heavily from eastern theological ideas later in life, his own cosmology took a shape which resembles the creation mythology of Manichaeism very closely. The following extract is from a 1978 entry in the *Exegesis*:

²⁴ *Manichaeism*, 9-10.

²⁵ *High Castle*, 106.

[We] are here voluntarily [...] Why? To infuse the divine into the lowest strata of creation in order to halt its decomposing – the sinking of its lower realm. This points to a primordial crisis in creation in the total macrocosm (hexagram 12). The yin form two (dark, deterministic) part was splitting away from light or yang or form one. In conventional terms, heaven (upper realm) and earth (lower realm) were separating [...] (this can be viewed as the *Godhead* [Dick's italics] itself falling apart, into its yang and yin two halves, with the lower form universe as God expressed physically in time and space). The solution was for the divine (yang, light, form one) to follow the lower realm down, permeating it and thus reuniting the cosmos into one totality. To do this, elements [...] of light advanced (descended) into the dark kingdom, the immutable prison world; upon doing so they shed (and knew they would shed) their bright nature, memory, identity, faculties, and powers, and fell under the dominion of the delusion that the dark kingdom is real (which when severed from the upper realm is not; i.e. the world we presently live in doesn't exist). There they have lived as prisoners of the master magician, lord of the dark realm who poses as the creator (and who may not know of the light god, the true creator, his other half).²⁶

The major difference between this cosmology and Manichaeism is that in Dick's cosmology, the light or yang side *voluntarily* descended into the dark yin world in order to halt the decomposition of the world. In Manichaeism, this combining of the two opposites was as a result of an attack made by Darkness upon Light, rather than being the result of an altruistic mission by Light to save creation. In Manichaeism, creation (i.e. the universe) was founded in order to heal and refine Light, and to finally separate it from Darkness; creation is a by-product or process of the war between Light and Darkness. Light in Dick's cosmology invaded Darkness out of a wish to preserve creation; but in Manichaeism, Darkness invaded Light because it envied it and wished to pervert it. Dick goes on in this *Exegesis* entry to say that the 'light god' has left 'subtle clues' whereby the divine elements or sparks can regain their powers, faculties and memories and leave the lower, ersatz realm to rejoin with the light god. The light god, regaining power, seeks to annex the dark yin realm which then becomes whole and healed, the yin side restored to its proper (passive) state. Reality, as Dick writes, is restored. Dick was convinced that by 'overlying' his

²⁶ *Shifting Realities*, 333-4.

cosmology with Taoist principles, he was producing something ‘novel and pleasing’ and something that made absolute sense to him.²⁷

The relationship between this cosmological idea and *High Castle* is of course obvious: Tagomi does not reach his nirvana because all he is being shown is the ‘real’ vs. the ‘irreal’. He has not yet seen heaven; the Godhead (the Ungrund) has not yet achieved total anamnesis, and it has not yet been fully restored. Both worlds (the world of *High Castle* and the world of *Grasshopper*) have their flaws. Tagomi sees the darkness in the aftermath of the Allied victory, just as he sees it in the aftermath of the Axis victory in his own ‘reality’ or space. It is enough, as far as Dick is concerned, to expose the truth; to show Tagomi that what he experiences as ‘reality’ is in fact illusion: it is ersatz. And on some other level, the world of *Grasshopper*, too, is ersatz (it does not precisely parallel our own ‘real’ historical events for example). The exposition of a fake world is enough of a revelation for Dick to make to *High Castle*’s characters; the exposition takes the form of ‘subtle clues’ (as in Childan’s reappraisal of handcrafted artefacts, made real by the imbued spirit of their creators) or overt ones, as when Tagomi actually sees through the fake world to the true world behind.

One of the more complex aspects of *The Man in the High Castle* is the particular way in which characters relate to one another in regard to spiritual, social and political matters. The *I Ching* in particular is in the novel a staple of life in the western United States, and to use it is to practice Taoism. However, it is not religion that the novel questions but faith (which must after all be regarded as separate entities); and as in all of Dick’s novels, truth. Those characters that practice Taoism by employing the *I Ching* in its oracular role are part of the same homogenous, homeostatic social group, despite their individual differences in deportment and persona. It is the way in which

²⁷ *Shifting Realities*, 335.

they find their faith (in diverse ways) or lose it (like Tagomi) that defines them as characters. The political climate, particularly as the Japanese have arranged matters of governance, is a framework that Dick employs in the novel to sanction the proliferation of the *I Ching* and Taoism. By contrast, the Nazis try to seek out and destroy Hawthorne Abendsen and his book and Dick portrays them accordingly as a mad and monstrous government. The Nazi government allows for no individual freedoms, and therefore it does not allow for faith. The madness of the Nazi regime is highlighted in *High Castle* because despite the socialist rhetoric of Nazi government, that government ultimately allows for no homogeneity and rather enforces hegemony. As Tagomi thinks, dealing with the Nazis as a sane group is pointless: ‘We cannot enter the monstrous schizophrenic morass of Nazi internecine intrigue; our minds cannot adapt’.²⁸ The Nazi idiom is part of the veil of occlusion which lies across the post-war world in the novel; it hides deeper horror and represents decay and entropy, an anti-life state in which human beings that exist as supporters of that state support a form of madness. The very fact that Dick has – and probably quite realistically – divided the novel’s world into two power groups under Germany and Japan is, on face value, another expression of the dualist (Taoist) theme he works into the novel on deeper levels.

The relationships between *High Castle*’s characters help to emphasise the dualist cosmology that Dick sets up in the novel through the revelations that the characters experience in encountering one another. The interplay between Robert Childan and Paul Kasoura is especially interesting because their relationship develops as a rocky friendship which flounders badly (Childan trying to impress Paul Kasoura and failing) before, ultimately, forcing both to reappraise one another’s standpoint.

²⁸ *High Castle*, 184.

Paul Kasoura is the catalyst that prompts Childan to finding renewed worth and value in the 'Edfrank' jewellery; and in turn Childan, through the jewellery, is able to reveal to Tagomi the true world.

Robert Childan is the owner of 'American Artistic Handcrafts Inc', a shop that specialises in selling antique (in many cases tacky) American memorabilia, especially to the occupying Japanese who appear to enjoy collecting it. His character is flawed: basically racist, hyperactive and arrogant, he is only occasionally capable of showing insight. His turbulent friendship with the Kasouras – Paul and Betty, a young Japanese couple – begins after the two of them visit his store. A week later he is invited to join the couple for dinner. He is determined to impress them both, but his nervousness works against him and he finds himself in a political argument with Paul Kasoura. Childan is revealed to deeply admire the various Nazi leaders ('Doctor Goebbels A-one Nazi speaker'); he dismisses Paul Kasoura's insistence that Hermann Göring has 'questionable sexual mores' by telling him, 'Lies'.²⁹ Betty Kasoura saves the situation and Childan is left to feel ashamed: 'What a dreadful beginning he had made. In a foolish and loud manner he had argued politics; he had been rude in his disagreeing, and only the adroit tact of his host had sufficed to save the evening. How much I have to learn [...] They're so graceful and polite. And I – the white barbarian. It is true.'³⁰ This leads onto the discussion of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* which in turn leads to a discussion of what would have happened had the Allies won the Second World War. Childan assures the Kasouras that things would have been far worse had that been the case, citing as his example the fact that 'Communism would rule everywhere'.³¹ Again he fails to impress the Kasouras with his Nazi-like comments; and then he comes to believe that he, and all white Americans, and the

²⁹ *High Castle*, 108.

³⁰ *High Castle*, 108.

³¹ *High Castle*, 112.

Kasouras – all Japanese – are completely incompatible, their cultures mutually exclusive. His fear of them is what keeps him speaking his mind and his true opinions, but his thoughts are revealing:

Face facts. I'm trying to pretend that these Japanese and I are alike. But observe: even when I burst out as to my gratification that they won the war, that my nation lost – there's still no common ground. What words mean to me is sharp contrast *vis-à-vis* them. Their brains are different. Souls likewise [...] Pilfer customs right and left [...] But nobody fooled, I can tell you; me least of all.

Only the white races endowed with creativity [...] Think how it would have been had we won! Would have crushed them out of existence [...]

What they say is true: your powers of imitation are immense [...] you could paste together out of tin and rice paper a complete artificial America. Rice-paper Mom in the kitchen, rice-paper Dad reading the newspaper. Rice-paper pup at his feet. Everything.³²

Childan's thoughts here are explicitly racist, and they lead up to his observation – as noted earlier – that he has a 'patriotic duty' to read *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. His thoughts here are in fact representative of the dogmatic political views of Nazi Germany. Childan also notes at this point that 'even the *I Ching* [is borrowed from the Chinese] from way back when'. His thoughts are vituperative to this extent because he is essentially upset that the Japanese rule over him. Childan would much prefer, as indicated by his approbation of Goebbels, to be ruled over by Germans – by fellow Caucasians.

Childan's wish to impress the Kasouras has nothing to do with wishing to sustain them or their customs or culture, but is simply a ploy he has to advance his own station; his respect for them is completely non-existent and the Kasouras doubtless read this in his defence of the Nazis. Later however, Childan hatches a different scheme – to seduce Betty Kasoura, whom he lusts after, away from her husband, a scheme which is doomed to failure from the start. In attempting this, Childan sends a piece of Edfrank jewellery, most of which he has conned out of Ed McCarthy, to Paul Kasoura, intending for him to take it to Betty as a gift. As Childan

³² *High Castle*, 112-3.

observes, his pretext is ‘airtight’: ‘Compliments of myself personally, in order to obtain high-place reaction’.³³ Paul sees through it and refuses to pass the gift along, and he then humiliates Childan by advising him to sell the jewellery as ‘good luck charms’.³⁴ It seems to be Paul’s intention to make Childan see the worth of the jewellery, which eventually he does:

“Paul, I . . . am humiliated.”
The room reeled.
“Why so, Robert?” Tones of concern, but detached. Above involvement. [...]
“The men who made this,” Childan said, “are American proud artists. Myself included. To suggest trashy good-luck charms therefore insults us and I ask for apology.”
Incredible prolonged silence.
Paul surveyed him. One eyebrow lifted slightly and his thin lips twitched. A smile?
“I demand,” Childan said [...]
Paul said, “Forgive my arrogant imposition.” He held out his hand.
“All right.” Robert Childan said.
They shook hands.³⁵

Childan, who previously had seen the jewellery only as a way of making money, and secondly as a way to try and seduce Betty Kasoura, in this moment reappraises what the jewellery means, to him and to the Americans who made it, Frank Frink and Ed McCarthy. Thereafter his character changes; he discerns the ‘reality’ of the jewellery and its importance; the objects take on a religious significance for Childan.³⁶ Tagomi, seeing this in Childan, discerns in the man an ability to find ‘a Way’ – a reference to Tao – and envies this.³⁷ He buys a piece of jewellery which Childan selects for him, and shortly afterwards endures the experience of seeing beyond his false world to the real one. The jewellery, despite being of the false world, a yin object, is revealed as a gateway to truth, through its yang aspect of spirit. The yin nature of the pieces in physical, non-spiritual form is earlier reinforced when Dick describes the pieces that Frank Frink and Ed McCarthy have made. For example:

³³ *High Castle*, 146.

³⁴ *High Castle*, 174.

³⁵ *High Castle*, 178-9.

³⁶ *High Castle*, 216.

³⁷ *High Castle*, 218.

‘Cuff bracelets made of brass, copper, bronze and even hot-forged black iron’.³⁸ The fact that black iron is used is Dick’s reference to what he calls in the *Exegesis* the ‘Black Iron Prison’ and the ‘seeming, immutable world’.

The relationships of the characters in *High Castle* define their experience of the spiritual meaning they derive from their lives and from objects – but only ‘real’ objects that have a life or spirit of their own: the *I Ching*, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* or the Edfrank jewellery. In all cases the nature of the world of *High Castle* is emphasised in terms of its dualistic cosmology. In the most important case, Robert Childan switches his allegiance from the dark, false god to the true, good god; no longer preoccupied with the base things of the lower realm, he gains a form of spiritual cleansing, which Tagomi notices immediately – in Childan’s physical deportment (he is no longer shrill and hyperactive), and then in his finding of ‘a Way’. For Tagomi, who has earlier realised that evil pervades in the false world, or at least so far as he is able to discern it (‘There is evil! It’s actual, like cement’.³⁹), his own redemption – finding ‘a Way’ – comes in a different form. He signs the release papers for Frank Frink, whom the German authorities have discovered is a Jew, and then urges Hugo Reiss – the Reichs Consul of San Francisco whom Tagomi knows was behind the attack on the Japanese offices – to ‘repent’.⁴⁰ This is all too much for Tagomi however and he suffers a heart attack.⁴¹

Tagomi in many ways represents the attitudes held by Dick himself, especially in his final years, post-2-3-74 and leading up to his death in 1982: Tagomi, though subject to a mystical experience perceived as divine revelation, does not gain the

³⁸ *High Castle*, 129.

³⁹ *High Castle*, 97.

⁴⁰ *High Castle*, 229.

⁴¹ *High Castle*, 231.

answers he seeks. He does not find ‘a Way’ in the Taoist sense, and this is the cost of being the compassionate, empathetic character that he is.

Juliana Frink’s quest, once she meets Joe Cinnadella (a double agent and assassin who plans to kill Hawthorne Abendsen), reads *Grasshopper* and decides to meet with Abendsen himself to discern whether or not the world the story relates is true. Joe is using Juliana to gain access to the ‘High Castle’ of Abendsen, which is actually a house in Wyoming. Discovering Joe’s duplicity, Juliana kills him by slitting his throat with a razor.⁴² She then uses the *I Ching* to determine her course of action, and interprets its advice as requiring her to go and warn Abendsen of further assassination attempts. At the same time of course, she can get her question answered regarding the truth – or falsehood – of the world represented by *Grasshopper*. When at last Juliana meets Abendsen, the two of them consult the *I Ching* in order to determine the answer to this question. Like Tagomi, the two of them draw the Inner Truth hexagram. Unlike Tagomi, they find their answer as to the schizophrenic nature of their world:

“It’s Chung Fu,” Juliana said. “Inner Truth.” [...] Raising his head, Hawthorne scrutinized her. He had an almost savage expression. “It means, does it, that my book is true?”
“Yes,” she said.
With anger he said, “Germany and Japan lost the war?”
“Yes.”
Hawthorne, then, closed the two volumes and rose to his feet; he said nothing.
“Even you don’t face it,” Juliana said.
For a time he considered. His gaze had become empty, Juliana saw. Turned inward, she realized. Preoccupied, by himself . . . and then his eyes became clear again; he grunted, started.
“I’m not sure of anything,” he said.
“Believe,” Juliana said.
He shook his head no.
“Can’t you?” she said. “Are you sure?”⁴³

Regarding this moment in the novel, Lawrence Sutin writes: ‘the revelation of truth – that the Allies prevailed in World War II – does nothing to dispel the characters’

⁴² *High Castle*, 205.

⁴³ *High Castle*, 247.

foreboding [...] Truth alone, it seems, is not enough to liberate the soul'.⁴⁴ Like the character Abendsen, Dick purportedly used the *I Ching* to develop the plot of *High Castle*; but the final chapter, according to Sutin, frustrated him: and in a 1976 interview he said of the *I Ching*: 'It is a liar. It speaks with forked tongue'.⁴⁵

Whatever the level of cathartic effect the conclusion of *High Castle* has on its readers, the consequences for the novel's characters are of paramount importance as they inform and communicate Dick's dualist and Taoist cosmology. The first and foremost question this chapter sought to answer was whether or not, in the seeming world of *High Castle*, the *I Ching* held any worth to those who consulted it, because of the ersatz world in which it was based. In fact, because of the 'living spirit' the book possesses, like *Grasshopper*, the book has illimitable value as a spiritual guide to the characters in *High Castle*. The *I Ching* is capable of discerning truth and thus it becomes one of the 'subtle clues' towards gaining ontological enlightenment that Dick refers to in the 1978 *Exegesis* entry detailed earlier in the chapter. There is also good reason as to why Dick liked that particular *Exegesis* entry so much: his apparently flawless cosmology with its 'Taoist overlay'. As Lieu explains in

Manichaeism:

On balance, the evidence seems to suggest that Mani was made an honorary member of the Taoist pantheon by the Taoists themselves in their endeavour to show that Taoism lay at the root of both Buddhism and Manichaeism [...] The Manichaeans, who were always conscious of the foreign origins of their religions, accepted the honorary Chinese citizenship bestowed on Mani with open arms. As the Buddhists became more hostile to Manichaeism because of Mani's claim to be a Buddha, if not *the* [Lieu's italics] Buddha, the Manichaeans strengthened their ties with Taoism. Taoism was less hierarchically structured than Buddhism and placed less emphasis on internal discipline. It therefore provided the Manichaeans with more room for refuge.⁴⁶

In other words, the marrying of Gnostic dualism, which so closely resembles Manichaean dualism, with Taoism was not something 'novel' as Dick wrote in his

⁴⁴ *A Life*, 116-7.

⁴⁵ *A Life*, 116.

⁴⁶ *Manichaeism*, 216.

1978 *Exegesis* entry; ‘pleasing’, perhaps, but unfortunately for Dick, not a new idea. The philosophy of Taoism allows for a lot of latitude and interpretation when it comes to incorporating dualistic themes; the yin and yang opposites exemplified by Manichaeism’s ‘Darkness’ and ‘Light’ sit very well with Taoist philosophy, which is about finding, as Tagomi puts it, a ‘Way’ – Tao – to live in spiritual and practical harmony with the universe. That harmony is communicated well by the principles of conflicting elements of Light and Darkness. No matter how many angles Dick’s own cosmological theories seemed to cover, they were always quite as fantastic as the Manichaeic creation mythology itself, and sometimes just as complicated.

Perhaps ultimately Dick came to realise this. His ‘novel and pleasing’ cosmological idea, which was nevertheless at the core of *The Man in the High Castle*, is not so comprehensive that it can cover all eventualities as to explain away the conundrum of human existence. This is explicit in the novel: Mr Tagomi dies as the novel itself ends – with uncertainty.

CHAPTER TWO: 2-3-74

As discussed in the Introduction, Chapter Two will develop to give the reader a deeper understanding of Philip K. Dick as both an author and thinker. For that reason it concentrates on the period February and March 1974, during which Dick suffered a moment of breakdown or mystical revelation. The complex nature of Dick's manifold cosmological and theological ideas necessitated the preceding discussion, in Chapter One, of Dick's use of dualistic cosmology in his work and thought. With the Introduction and Chapter One forming the basis for the reader to engage rationally with the ideas presented here, discussion and analysis of Dick's thought during- and post-2-3-74 proceeds by drawing from material researched at California State University, Fullerton in June 2006. It also refers to a biographical work: Lawrence Sutin's *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (1989). In order to contextualise Dick's theological observations and the biographical material I draw upon here, this chapter will engage with his so-called 'Valis Trilogy', being the final novels that Dick produced before his death in March 1982. The trilogy comprises *Valis* (1981), *The Divine Invasion* (1981) and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (1982). Arguably these three novels are not representative of Dick at the height of his creative powers which the author of this thesis would place in the 1960s; but they do offer insight into his meditative engagement with his experiences and this is as essential to understanding Dick as a thinker as any other factor.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to discuss every aspect of Dick's mystical beliefs as they link to 2-3-74, nor is it intended to justify those beliefs to the reader. The fact that this period influenced Dick's concurrent and subsequent fiction is not in dispute in this chapter. What is of prime importance here is the way in which certain of Dick's experiences and observations during this period emphasise his significance

as an intellectual, and in this sole regard, Chapter Two forms the crux of the thesis. Before embarking upon a discussion of 2-3-74, it also bears mentioning at this point that the key to the argument of this thesis requires of its reader a degree of tolerance for the temporal latitude evident in Dick's work and thought: in later chapters the thesis will discuss how Dick's pre-2-3-74 ideas developed to shape 2-3-74 itself.

'2-3-74' is the shorthand sometimes used by Dick and his biographers to refer to February and March 1974, and to the events and experiences – all of them, to Dick, significant – which encompassed that span of time. While Dick himself felt 2-3-74 to be one of the most important events to have occurred in his life, the multifarious and sometimes bizarre observations that it provoked diminished the output of his fiction, in both scale and scope. Much of the reason for this was the extent to which Dick agonised over the 'revelations' he was privy to. His observations he wrote down in his *Exegesis*, a sprawling morass of cosmological ideas that rose on occasion to provide him with moments of actual intellectual power (as in his 1978 essay 'Cosmogony and Cosmology'). 2-3-74 served to 'prove' or to 'confirm' certain truths about the nature of the universe that had occurred to Dick in the past. Ultimately however, what Dick proved was that no human mind, extant or otherwise, had the ability to untangle the vast theological queries with which humanity has struggled over thousands of years. In writing down the *Exegesis*, Dick was attempting to encapsulate, contemporise and extrapolate from existing theological and philosophical ideas. He borrowed from existing cosmologies and then modified them with his own ideas, which were constantly changing. Some readers may justifiably argue that Dick did not realise that he had already wrestled with these ideas since he began writing fiction in the 1950s, and that those ideas form much of the body of his science-fictional output. More probably, Dick simply sought to objectify what he had presented to his readers

previously only in fictional form from the subjective worlds populated by his own characters. This objectification also became part of the theme for his post-2-3-74 fiction, and indicates the direction – to some critics unwelcome – that all of his fiction would have taken had he survived the strokes he suffered in 1982 and had continued to write.

An ideal starting point for this discussion is Dick's novel *The Divine Invasion* (1981). Unlike Dick's earlier works, the science-fictional elements of *The Divine Invasion* serve only as dressing for a theologically-driven plot that employs Judaeo-Christian and Greek mythology and borrows from Plato, the Gnostic (especially Cathar) tradition and from Jacob Boehme. This is a more open acknowledgement in many ways of Dick's own beliefs in the Christian God. Prior to this, Dick had often been content to represent deities, however much they were based on contemporary or historical religions, less overtly. For example, the messianic character of Wilbur Mercer in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) and the Christ-like figure of Glen Runciter in *Ubik* (1969) are covert in nature and the narrative of both novels is stronger for it. By contrast in *The Divine Invasion*, Dick writes dialogue for Yahweh, which is how he chooses to name God, quite casually. The God that Dick writes for in *The Divine Invasion* is a familiar blend of benevolence and Old Testament vengeance, the troublesome theological dichotomy with which Dick struggled in his private life.

In the novel, Herb Asher is a colonist on an extraterrestrial world. The nature of life there means that he has little human contact, and he essentially stays sane with his music collection – specifically songs by a singer called Linda Fox. When Asher at first refuses to help Rybys Rommey, a dying woman who lives in her own nearby 'dome' on their airless world, he is visited by Yahweh. This representation of the Christian God burns his Linda Fox tapes to Asher's dismay, then restores them on the

condition that Asher helps her. It transpires that Rybys is pregnant with Yahweh's child, Emmanuel, the novel's representation of Christ (Asher and Rommey represent Joseph and Mary). The novel's title comes from Yahweh's instruction that Emmanuel return to Earth, a place of evil under the rule of the satanic auspices of Belial. Asher is helped by Elias, actually the prophet Elijah; and the amnesiac Emmanuel has a strange companion of his own age, a girl called Zina.

Zina is an interesting if strange character who represents Sophia, or divine wisdom, and she is present because Dick was convinced that his own 'anima' or female aspect was prevalent during his 2-3-74 experiences. This anima he sometimes identified as being his fraternal twin sister Jane, who had died just over a month after they were born. According to Lawrence Sutin, the death of Dick's sister was a 'trauma' that 'remained the central event of Phil's psychic life'. Sutin adds that Dick's 'torment' involved a 'fascination with resolving dualist (twin-poled) dilemmas – SF/mainstream, real/fake [and] human/android'.¹ In a letter to Claudia Krenz Bush, a correspondent writing her thesis on Dick's work, Dick wrote of a dream or vision in which a woman (he calls her the 'spirit' or 'sibyl' when quoting her apparent powers of teleesthesia) speaks to him. She shows him the 'book or books of wisdom' and claims that she is showing him truths he would otherwise know nothing about. 'It is as if the Sibylline Books of Rome were not all destroyed in the fire', Dick writes, alluding then to the fact that the sibyl seems to live on in his mind or soul.²

While Zina represents the 'anima' of Emmanuel in *The Divine Invasion*, the novel also adopts a background dualist cosmology. Despite the 'Christian' clothing that the novel's divine protagonists adopt, the acknowledgement of the Earth as being a place of evil under an evil ruler reflects Gnostic and especially Cathar religious

¹ Lawrence Sutin, *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (New York: Harmony Books, 1989) 12.

² Philip K. Dick, letter to Claudia Krenz Bush, 14 July 1974, Philip K. Dick Science Fiction Collection, Pollak Lib., California State University, Fullerton.

thought. The Cathars were discussed in the Introduction, but their essential beliefs bear repeating here: '[The Cathars] followed a pre-Christian dualist doctrine, probably influenced by eastern sects. They proclaimed the total separation of spirit and physical matter, the first being created by God and the second by the devil. The world and all it contained was therefore irretrievably evil'.³ The cosmology here adopted by Dick for use in the novel also reflects the mystical beliefs of Jacob Boehme, also previously discussed in the Introduction.

Mention of eastern influence on Dick's cosmology as it appears in *The Divine Invasion* and to some extent through the whole 'Valis Trilogy' leads on to another important point that Dick mentions in his aforementioned letter to Claudia Krenz Bush. Dick writes about the death of the former Bishop James Pike, upon whom the character of Timothy Archer is based in the novel *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. Dick's observations about 'Jim' are revealing, and significant to the discussion developing here:

It is possible that when [Bishop James Pike] was in England with John Allegro (who had the task of translating them) he came across some of the New Testament versions of the writings of the sibyl and got involved with that. [In late March] I found myself preoccupied with certain religious beliefs and attitude foreign to me: [...] most interestingly the interplay in the eternal game between the Light God and the Master of the Lie, which is the underlying structure of reality. This is from Iran, and Jim had gotten deeply involved with it, which is heresy; it is Zoroastrianism. [He] and Allegro [reached] the reluctant conclusion that Christianity was not a Jewish heresy as always believed but a Zoroastrian one. [...] This was one reason [why Pike] resigned as Bishop.⁴

Dick's commentary here to his correspondent is extremely interesting for a number of disparate reasons. In the broader context of the letter he implies that James Pike was contacting him during March 1974, something he fictionalises later on when he wrote *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. In the novel Timothy Archer (a dissimulation of Pike) dies and is later revealed through a process of 'transmigration' as being present in the body of Bill Lundborg. That Dick's own experiences, however

³ Elizabeth Hallam, ed., *Chronicles of the Age of Chivalry* (London: Greenwich Editions, 2002) 65.

⁴ Philip K. Dick, letter to Claudia Krenz Bush, 14 July 1974.

they are quantified, directly influenced his fiction is beyond doubt. However the major factor here is that Dick himself felt that James Pike had contacted him through mystical means and thereby placed ‘certain religious beliefs and attitude’ in his mind or soul. Dick goes on to write however that the religious thoughts that came to him through mystical means were ‘foreign’. This is an exaggeration on Dick’s part: as early as 1953 he had written *The Cosmic Puppets*, published in 1957, which featured Zoroastrianism as its specific theme. In the novel, more fantasy than science fiction, the character Ted Barton finds that the town in which he lives is the battleground between the Zoroastrian God of Light, Ormazd, and his opposite number Ahriman. Ormazd defeats Ahriman and the world of Ted Barton essentially reverts to ‘normal’.⁵ In summing up the novel in the appendix presented in *Divine Invasions*, Lawrence Sutin observes that the character of Mary – revealed in fact as Ormazd’s daughter Armaiti – prefigures the appearance of the female divinities Zina (in *The Divine Invasion*) and Sophia (in *Valis*).⁶ Dick omits this truth in the letter in order to emphasise his point to Bush (that being the significance of the apparent mystical contact with James Pike). Dick knew as well as any of his readers how much eastern theology had influenced his creative output over the preceding years, his Hugo Award-winning *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), with its Taoist dualism, being the obvious novel to mention.

The Cosmic Puppets is thematically close to *The Divine Invasion*. The dualist struggle of Yahweh against Belial is Zoroastrian in spirit, the Christian ‘dressing’ for the novel being representative of the fact that Dick in essence agreed with the alleged admission by Pike and John Allegro that Christianity derived from Zoroastrianism rather than Judaism. For Dick, dualism in religion was of extreme importance not

⁵ Philip K. Dick, *The Cosmic Puppets* (London: Gollancz, 2006) 125-132.

⁶ Sutin, *Divine Invasions*, 292.

only as a storytelling device in his fiction, but as a means of justifying the presence of evil in the world. It was vital to Dick that 'good' should overcome 'evil', because the metaphysical alternative frightened him. In a much earlier letter written to the editor of the fanzine *Riverside Quarterly*, Leland Sapiro, he responds to a question about his novel *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965). The novel ends darkly, with Eldritch in essence 'possessing' every living person, turning each into a facsimile of himself – a tyrannical triumph over individual freedom. But to Sapiro, Dick writes that the memorandum written by the character Leo Bulero which appears before the body of the text in *Three Stigmata* occurs after Bulero returns from Mars having encountered Eldritch. This memo is as Dick points out 'written in Leo's style' and to Sapiro he is keen to point out that Palmer Eldritch does not win in the end, and that the other characters eventually 'go on being themselves'.⁷ *Three Stigmata* is of course another novel that uses religious dualism as its motif, with Eldritch as the force of ultimate evil.

2-3-74 is difficult to sum up as an event or even as a series of events. Dick believed that he was contacted by an outside agency or more than one agency; and his theories regarding this ranged from believing he had been targeted by a Soviet ESP experiment to being contacted by an alien being or deity, and of course to being contacted by James Pike. Dick believed that 2-3-74 influenced or coerced him into writing the way he did in the final years of his life, but the truth is that his own interests (in particular in the area of theological dualism) foreshadowed 2-3-74. The way in which he interpreted his experiences was certainly shaped by his own ideas. For him to write that such concepts were 'foreign' to him, implying that he was ignorant of non-western religious belief systems, is not true. Nothing that occurred in

⁷ Philip K. Dick, letter to Leland Sapiro, 18 December 1967, Philip K. Dick Science Fiction Collection, Pollak Lib., California State University, Fullerton.

Dick's life during and after 2-3-74 was coincidence; every experience he had, mystical or mundane, was somehow connected in his mind to the overwhelming 'truth' that lay always out of reach but as he saw it, within his grasp. In his 14 July 1974 letter to Bush, Dick writes that up until 'March of [1974]' he was 'blind, literally' and that his 'eyes [were] occluded'.

In his post-2-3-74 fiction, Dick directly relates his experiences or revelations to his characters. For example, in *The Divine Invasion*, Herb Asher speaks with Elias and tells him that Satan (Belial) is causing people to see a 'fake' universe. 'It's a way of seeing the real world,' Asher says. 'An occluded, dreamlike way.'⁸ The nature of the physical and spiritual contact Asher has with Yahweh and Emmanuel salves Asher of doubts and in essence reaffirms (even creates) his faith. Dick himself yearned for such an experience, but claimed instead to receive cryptic visions and dreams that brought only fragments of revelation.

According to Lawrence Sutin, the catalyst for the onset of Dick's experiences was the pain (and perhaps resulting chemical treatment) from suffering with an impacted wisdom tooth in February 1974 when he answered his door to collect a prescription painkiller, a condition for which he had already undergone surgery (and for which he had been administered sodium pentothal, which he admitted may have affected his perception).⁹ When he answered the door he encountered a 'lovely darkhaired young woman' and was mesmerised by the necklace she wore – a golden fish sign that the woman explains was used by 'early Christians'. Dick claimed that this reawakened ancient, latent memories in a sequence he re-presented in *Valis*. In the novel and as his alter ego 'Horselover Fat' (a transliteration of his own name) he

⁸ Philip K. Dick, *The Divine Invasion* (London: Voyager, 1996) 198-9.

⁹ Sutin, *Divine Invasions*, 210.

is struck by the importance of the symbol (for Dick, seeing it had nothing to do with coincidence):

Instantly, Fat experienced a flashback. He remembered – just for a half-second. Remembered ancient Rome and himself; as an early Christian; the entire ancient world and his furtive frightened life as a secret Christian hunted by the Roman authorities burst over his mind [...] and then he was back in California 1974 accepting the little white bag of pain pills.¹⁰

Whether this experience was truly the beginning of his apparently revelatory experiences in February and March 1974 is a contentious point. During the 1960s, Dick had associated himself and his beliefs, albeit briefly, with Christian doctrine after experiencing a vision of ‘evil’ that became the character Palmer Eldritch in the 1965 novel. In a 1969 letter to Bruce R. Gillespie, science fiction critic and editor of the Australian fanzine *SF Commentary*, Dick outlined the specifics to his correspondent:

The Palmer Eldritch book came out of an actual mystical experience, lasting almost a month, in which I saw [Dick’s underline] the face of evil hovering over the landscape, and the three stigmata were aspects of him that I saw – I mean objectively, literally – in particular the slotted, empty eyes. It was a true trip, before I had seen any LSD, much less taken any. In an effort to help myself I became a convert to the Anglo-Catholic Church, but their teachings do not include that of a real, active, evil power who has control – or near control – of the earth we live on. [Joining the Church] didn’t help, and I wandered away.¹¹

This excerpt is revealing, because whatever the physical cause of his ‘trip’ at this time, if any, this ‘mystical’ vision prefigures the later 2-3-74 visions and what he referred to in writing to Bush in his 14 July 1974 letter as his ‘strange inner trip’. His admission that the teachings of his church did not help him is simply because, even at this stage, his own cosmological beliefs are explicitly based in Gnostic dualism. Arguably Dick simply suffered from an overactive imagination, and the sheer output of his fiction during the 1960s might suggest that he was physically exhausted. The ‘Eldritch vision’ is important as it frames Dick’s ideas of a malfunctioning deity. This vision represents his fear that humanity exists in the grip of evil, and his ongoing

¹⁰ Philip K. Dick, *Valis* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991) 108.

¹¹ Philip K. Dick, letter to Bruce R. Gillespie, 8 June 1969.

theological quest – which really started when he first began writing – to make sense of the ‘wrongness’ he felt was present in the world, and to find or contact the ‘good’ or positive force necessary to counteract it. *Three Stigmata* is one of Dick’s darkest novels because its characters constantly teeter on the brink of madness and the world is malleable and plastic, subject to the whims of the mad and evil Eldritch deity.

Dick’s choice of name for that particular character is even more revealing. He asks Bush at one point to look the word up and attributes it to H. P. Lovecraft, and in his letter to Bruce Gillespie he writes: ‘Maybe H. P. Lovecraft affected me too much; I read his stories as they came out in *Weird Tales* years ago [during the 1930s].’ Lovecraft’s stories, heavy with archaic language such as the word ‘eldritch’, which simply means ‘otherworldly’, always featured a hopeless battle between defenceless humanity and mad gods or monsters that resided in the fathomless depths of outer space, some of which – like the eponymous creature from his short story ‘The Call of Cthulhu’ (1926) – had become trapped on the Earth, ready to rise again and dominate all life. This famous story of Lovecraft’s began with an ominous tone almost in the mode of an epitaph for the weak minds of humankind, as quoted by Donald R. Burleson in his essay ‘On Lovecraft’s Themes: Touching the Glass’ in *An Epicure in the Terrible* (1991): ‘The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far.’¹²

The nightmare of Lovecraft’s stories was in the uncaring nature of his monsters and dark gods. They were evil only in that humanity could not understand them or guess their motives, and the destruction they could wreak upon the human world was generally accidental. Lovecraft’s narratives frequently feature characters that, having

¹² Donald R. Burleson, ‘On Lovecraft’s Themes: Touching the Glass’, *An Epicure in the Terrible*, ed. David Schultz and S. T. Joshi (London: Associated UP, 1991) 141.

experienced the horrifying reality of their universe, become insane. Dick's own nightmare gave his monsters a malicious and purposeful agenda, but in aspect he was quite correct in surmising that Lovecraft, whose horror stories he used to read to his children, was an influence on him. Lovecraft, like Dick after him, was also a troubled individual.

Malfunction of deities, inherently evil or otherwise, forms the root of Dick's fiction and the basis for much of his theological theory. The 'teaching artefact' that Dick named 'Zebra' as discussed in the Introduction has its avatars or representations in Dick's post-2-3-74 fiction. Zebra is present in the character of Timothy Archer in *Transmigration*, in the character who seeks for the truth; and it is more literally present as VALIS, the Vast Active Living Intelligence System, in Dick's eponymous novel. In *The Divine Invasion*, the being analogous to Zebra is the girl 'Zina', whose purpose it is to reawaken the amnesiac Emmanuel (in the novel, he has brain damage). Zina is the female aspect of God as Dick writes, and represents the Judaic Torah, or Law of God. Zina was created by God and is part of God, and the novel resolves itself by reuniting the two sundered aspects of the godhead: Yahweh (the Lord of Hosts, who becomes incarnate as a young, brain-damaged boy named Emmanuel) and Zina. The nature of Yahweh is sincerity, and vengeance; the nature of Zina is play and mischief, and yet they are both the same being. There is, as has been discussed, a basic ambiguity in Zebra, but this Dick puts down to 'constructive misbehaviour' on the part of the artefact. In this latest version of Dick's evolving cosmology then, the Ungrund of Jacob Boehme is isomorphic with humanity, but it is also the sundered half of the artefact, Zebra. Had Dick ever settled on a final, static cosmology of course, he would have finished writing the *Exegesis* long before he died in 1982.

Whatever the explanation, if any, for the bizarre phenomena Dick claimed to experience during 2-3-74, this troubled time affected him deeply. He felt, even if he had broached this subject matter before in his own fiction, that new ‘truths’ had been granted to him by way of divine revelation. Dick’s strange recollection of a past life as an ‘early Christian’ is representative of his theories regarding ‘anamnesis’, the reversal of the condition of amnesia. He felt that there was an aspect of the divine within him, as the Cathars believed. Dick began to speculate that he was actually two people: Philip Dick himself, and an ancient person that he named usually as ‘Thomas’. Thomas, according to Dick, was a first-century Christian.¹³ Dick, of course, was not exactly new to the concept of identity crisis, as demonstrated in numerous novels and short stories, though none better than the 1977 *A Scanner Darkly*, which he had originally written in 1973 and modified following his 2-3-74 experiences. It is in *Valis* however that Dick speculates as to what the ramifications of leading this ‘simultaneous existence’ might be, representing himself as two characters in the following excerpt (‘Phil’ and his alter ego, Horselover Fat):

Fat himself expressed it very well to me [Dick’s character of Phil] in early 1975 when he first began to confide in me [...]

“Thomas,” Fat told me, “is smarter than I am, and he knows more than I do. Of the two of us, Thomas is the master personality.” He considered that good; woe unto someone who has an evil or stupid other-personality in his head!

I said, “You mean once you were Thomas. You’re a reincarnation of him and you remembered him and his –”

“No, he’s living now. Living in ancient Rome *now*. And he is not me. Reincarnation has nothing to do with it.”

“*But your body*,” I said.

Fat stared at me, nodding. “Right. It means my body is either in two space-time continua simultaneously, *or else my body is nowhere at all*.”¹⁴

Fat, Dick then goes on to say concerning this particular revelation, ‘had scared the shit out of me’. This, one of many strange scenes where Philip K. Dick talks to himself in the novel, plays out both as a self-deprecating joke and as an exposé of

¹³ Sutin, *Divine Invasions*, 211.

¹⁴ Dick, *Valis*, 109.

Dick's state of mind, providing an insight into the kinds of metaphysical questions – to most readers nonsensical ones – that came to plague him. Lawrence Sutin writes that 'Phil never settled on a name for the new, dual consciousness within him [Sutin means in regard to finding a label capable of describing Dick as Philip K.

Dick/Thomas]. However, the term Dick most frequently used was 'homoplasmate' – a bonding of a human and an information-rich 'plasmate' life form.¹⁵ It is justifiable to judge that the concept of seeing beyond the veil of what human minds take to be reality as given by empirical perception was not exactly new to Dick (he writes of the personal private world – the unique 'idios kosmos' – as being separate from the shared human world or 'koinos kosmos' in his aforementioned letter to Gillespie, attributing the terms to 'European existential psychologists'). His obvious passion for (or unhealthy addiction to) Lovecraft's work indicates that qualities of human perception fascinated him.

The above extract from *Valis*, in which Horselover Fat speculates that his body exists in two places at once or not at all, is an idea that Dick had previously employed in his fiction. He had explored the concept of 'layered' time or space to horrific or occasionally humorous effect before, notably in *Martian Time-Slip* (1963), *The Man In The High Castle* (1965) and *Ubik* (1969). For a man with great creative powers, Dick could quite easily imagine the consequences of such a thing happening to him in his 'real' life. To Dick at this point, various time periods were not only coterminous and linked by history or 'flashback', but actually coexistent as far as he could tell. He could see that clearly but apparently no-one else could. Quite apart from the impression of schizophrenic identity crisis gained from thinking he was 'Thomas', it is plain that he felt as if he did not belong to the world in the truest sense.

¹⁵ Sutin, *Divine Invasions*, 211.

In his 1977 novel *A Scanner Darkly*, Dick explores identity crisis more fully, and it is worth mentioning as the book underwent a major rewrite in 1975 after having originally written it in 1973, following his experiences of 2-3-74. In it can be read Dick's own confusion over his 'true' identity, as the protagonist Bob Arctor – actually a policeman posing as a drug-user to expose the dealers of a narcotic called Substance D (Death) – agonises over his own sense of self. Arctor is also a policeman (codenamed 'Fred'), who reports to his superiors and interacts with his colleagues only when dressed in his scramble suit, a bit of science fiction disguise paraphernalia that disguises the wearer's identity. The suit is a thin membrane worn over the body, onto which is projected a myriad of shifting holographic images, a montage of randomly selected facial features and body types which ensures that Fred's colleagues and superiors remain incapable of discerning his identity by sight and by sound (the suit also disguises Arctor's voice). The scramble suit therefore allows him to keep his undercover job (spying on his housemates by means of a recording scanner – and thereby spying on himself as Bob Arctor) completely safe by way of a 'double blind' control system. This, the reader soon discovers, has its drawbacks; Arctor becomes addicted to Substance D and over time develops two distinctive personalities – one for Arctor, one for Fred. Eventually, as his brain becomes irrevocably damaged because of the narcotic, he is completely unable to distinguish which of his two identities is real. His scramble-suited superior, 'Hank', decides to extricate Fred from the hellish assignment but by then it is too late. When Hank deduces by logic that Fred, of all the drug-using housemates, is actually Bob Arctor, Fred himself is rudely shocked: "I'm who? . . . I'm Bob Arctor?"¹⁶ Even earlier in the novel, before his mind breaks down

¹⁶ Philip K. Dick, *A Scanner Darkly* (London: Millennium, 1999) 181. See also Chapter Four for a further discussion of this.

completely, Bob – as Fred – has a mild panic attack one night while driving with his friend Ernie Luckman and the psychotic Jim Barris (Barris being the reason that Hank wanted Arctor’s house watched in the first place):

To himself, Bob Arctor thought, *How many Bob Arctors are there?* A weird and fucked-up thought. Two that I can think of, he thought. The one called Fred, who will be watching the other one, called Bob. The same person. Or is it? Is Fred actually the same as Bob? Does anybody know? I would know, if anyone did, because I’m the only person in the world that knows that Fred is Bob Arctor. *But*, he thought, *who am I? Which of them is me?*¹⁷

In the above excerpt, foreshadowing Horselover Fat’s conversation with himself as Phil in the later *Valis*, is an allusion to the multilayered world in which Dick theorised he lived. When Arctor asks himself ‘is Fred the same as Bob?’, he has failed to grasp the same truth that Horselover Fat and Phil cannot grasp until much later – that ‘they’ are the same person, actually a shared mind rather than a shared body. In essence, the Christian ‘Thomas’ personality, if it could be said to exist as an entity, was also a shared mind in Dick’s alleged experience of a past world. The relationship Bob Arctor has with Fred is much the same as Dick’s was with Thomas. As in *Valis*, Dick referred to Thomas as ‘the master personality’, and his own emergent confusion over the matter was represented in *Scanner* by the Arctor/Fred conundrum. Of all the crises Dick wrote about in his fiction, the most harrowing are those moments of utter bewilderment provoked by a character losing cognition – involuntarily and usually through an innovative series of observations that Dick tortured himself with – of their true self. Dick later returned to the theme in *Transmigration* (when the schizophrenic Bill Lundborg claims he shares Timothy Archer’s soul or mind) and he had of course cultivated the idea, with horrendous implications for his characters, in the nightmarish *Three Stigmata*.

¹⁷ Dick, *Scanner*, 74 -5.

In discussing 2-3-74, it becomes apparent that many elements in Dick's experiences seem absurd or even foolish. Other phenomena are not so easily explained, despite Dick's own skill for hyperbole. Lawrence Sutin warns that 'Phil was neither credulous nor a fool [... He] knew full well just how his experiences would seem to others.'¹⁸ The greatest challenge to the cynic comes when considering those of Dick's visions and experiences giving rise to what one might think of as being strange coincidences, coincidences that helped Dick to justify his theory that information was being fired at him by some external agency (which would prove to him that it wasn't manufactured fantasy, and thereby prove that he himself wasn't 'psychotic'). As examples, the prediction of the death of his cat four days before it occurred; and rather more alarmingly, exhibiting a more constructive type of omniscience after an episode where he was hit by 'that strange strawberry ice cream pink' light. The light informed him that his son Christopher had a previously undetected birth defect (an inguinal hernia) and should be scheduled for surgery. Dick writes: 'This turns out to be true.'¹⁹ Following this comment in Sutin's biography of Dick is a study of the claim that the same pink light had earlier 'instructed' Dick how to 'administer the Eucharist to son Christopher according to the rites of the early Christians', and Dick was convinced of its divine properties and value as a source of spiritual education.

However the reader views Dick's experiences of 2-3-74, and despite Dick's occasional insistence on writing his experiences off as being the delusions of a madman, it is obvious that he felt he experienced *something* during that time, whether it was truly divine contact or vivid fantasy. That something had such a profound impact on him that he spent his remaining years desperately trying to get to the truth

¹⁸ Sutin, *Divine Invasions*, 221.

¹⁹ Sutin, *Divine Invasions*, 225.

behind his visions and encounters. The *Exegesis* is the physical manifestation of this attempt, and so too is *Valis* and its two ‘companion’ novels. Of those three novels, the one closest in mode to Dick’s 1978 essay ‘Cosmogony and Cosmology’ is *The Divine Invasion*. The novel forms a direct parallel with the cosmological ideas Dick presents in *Cosmogony*. The godhead (Boehme’s Ungrund, or ‘Urgrund’ as Dick wrote the word) has been sundered from its creation and seeks to achieve anamnesis: to remember what it has forgotten. It is only through Zebra and the projected, seeming world that this process can be achieved and the world can finally become ‘real’ as discussed in the Introduction. The ‘artefact’ is finally revealed to be part of the godhead – part of the Ungrund itself, and a representation of the female aspect of God. Throughout the novel, Zebra (this time in the guise of a young girl called Zina) plays games with the sundered godhead, tricking it into believing that Zina is other than she is. These apparently puerile games are part of her effort to cause God as Emmanuel to remember who he is. God as the boy, Emmanuel, is literally forced to guess as to what Zina really is; and as in Dick’s real life theological speculation, Emmanuel at first comes to find that the answer is exasperatingly elusive:

‘I know,’ he [Emmanuel] said, ‘what your name means.’
 ‘Zina?’ she said. ‘It’s just a name.’
 ‘It is the Rumanian word for [fairy].’
 ‘Yes, Zina means *fairy*.’
 ‘You are not Holy Wisdom,’ he said, ‘you are Diana, the fairy queen.’²⁰

Emmanuel says this because he knows that the world is spurious, and nothing more than a fantasy construct. But later, he makes another guess while embroiled in Zina’s ‘fairy realm’, and is again forced to reappraise Zina’s – or the artefact Zebra’s – nature, when he names her as the ‘Adversary’. She admits this, but it is not the truth;

²⁰ Dick, *The Divine Invasion*, 138.

and Emmanuel realises that her ‘paradox and contradictions’ are part of her mischievous nature and ‘desire to play’. As Dick’s own mystical experiences of 2-3-74 had apparently bestowed miraculous intelligence on him via beams of pink light, so he identifies the intelligence-projecting ‘artefact’, Zina, with that light. She tells Emmanuel that ‘when that pink light is seen, I am near.’²¹

Only with this statement does Zina’s association with Zebra and with ‘Valis’ become explicitly clear. At this point in the novel, Dick’s cosmological ideas come straight to the fore, and the relationship to Dick’s 2-3-74 experiences and what has gone before in *Valis* are implicit, right down to God’s amnesia, physically manifest in Emmanuel by brain damage suffered while in his mother’s womb. Dick argued in *CC* that the Ungrund was isomorphic with humanity, separated from it by the spurious world generated by the artefact, by Zebra; and in *TDI*, Dick makes it clear that while Zebra exists to ‘wake God up’ and to remind him of all he has forgotten, an evil agency – Dick’s dark counterplayer – is taking advantage of God’s evident weakness, infusing the spurious, holographic world with evil and hate, to twist it into his own possession, and out of God’s. The concept of God being made to guess as to what he is in order to save the world and humanity is disturbing; but Emmanuel comes to realise that for all Zina’s trickery and shrewd debate, her behaviour is designed to achieve but one goal: to force him to ‘wake up’. Emmanuel, shocked at discovering the truth, tells her that she is tricking him so that he wakes.²²

Not until the end of the novel is Zina truly revealed, by her own admission, as the Judaic Torah – the Law of God – and that aspect of the godhead, in Dick’s cosmology, that he has forgotten. And there is a good reason why the artefact, Torah or Zebra, is female: the fact, discussed earlier in the chapter, that Dick had a twin

²¹ Dick, *The Divine Invasion*, 165.

²² Dick, *The Divine Invasion*, 183.

sister, Jane, who died in early 1929. As Dick wrote in 1979, while trying to ascertain the nature of Zebra in his own life: '[The Valis mind] is female [...] It is my twin sister Jane [...] The other psyche I carry inside me is that of my dead sister.'²³ It might seem here as if Dick's speculation roams into the risible miasma of occultism; but one has to consider his sense of displacement, and his sense that Valis (which, as mentioned earlier, Dick sometimes called the 'AI' Voice, or Mind) gave him instructions, like a spirit guide. As Zina says to Emmanuel in *The Divine Invasion*, 'You will have to trust me; you will trust your guide as Dante trusted his guide, through the realms, up and up.'²⁴ It is this theme that Dick explores most thoroughly in *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, and with it, once again, the idea of identity crisis implicit in the fiction. *Transmigration* is important for several reasons. Its protagonist is not Timothy Archer himself, but his daughter-in-law, Angel Archer, and everything is written from her perspective. Dick was thrilled with his portrayal of Angel, as he thought her the first warm, compassionate female protagonist he had ever written into his fiction (excepting the portrayal of Linda Fox, the omnipresent galactic rock singer and Herb Asher's eventual saviour and spiritual guide or 'Beside Helper', in *The Divine Invasion*).²⁵ Like parts of *Valis*, *Transmigration* is very much a fictionalised version of apparently real-life events, and an understanding of Pike's relationship to Dick is important to understanding Dick's belief in the 'post mortem' world in which he thought his sister resided.

The tragedy of *Transmigration* is Timothy Archer's fall from the grace of God in seeking to find answers, which begins in the novel with his sleeping with Kirsten Lundborg. By increments, Archer loses faith not only in the church but in the way Christianity is represented in the modern world, yet embraces what one might

²³ Sutin, *Divine Invasions*, 231.

²⁴ Dick, *The Divine Invasion*, 164.

²⁵ Sutin, *Divine Invasions*, 277.

consider a more spurious philosophy – that of occultism and giving credence to psychic phenomena – with gusto. James Pike, like Timothy Archer, eventually resigns his post as bishop shortly after a trial for heresy (which was, in both life and novel, duly dismissed).²⁶ Both Pike and Archer travelled to Israel to investigate the historical Jesus, and both died in the desert; Pike had a crisis of faith, as Archer does in the novel, in that Jesus might not have been ‘original’ in his teachings, and that he might have been part of a larger sect or at least picked up their ideas. This, along with the idea that Dick felt he was contacted by the spirit of Pike, has been discussed earlier in the chapter but bears repetition here. In the novel, it is Bill Lundborg (the character closest to Dick himself) who becomes, so he feels, ‘cross-bonded’ with the soul of Timothy Archer. But, because Bill Lundborg is schizophrenic, nobody believes him and Angel is left doubting the truth of the matter. And while she admires and respects Timothy, she is aware, too, of his failings in his quest for Holy Wisdom, akin to Lucifer’s desire to know (or to be like) God; and akin also to Dick’s desire to know God, accusing him of being ‘like Satan’ in his quest for wisdom, which he admits to.²⁷

The similarity between the real-life Jim Pike and Dick himself is clear. Both sought for something that would reaffirm their faith, and both died before they found it. No wonder then, that during the turbulent period of his visions and religious ‘theophanies’, Dick found it likely that Jim had bonded with him from ‘the other side’, much as he felt his twin sister Jane had done. But again, Dick is rebuking himself here; for he, in his guise as Horselover Fat in *Valis*, had done much the same thing to his own friends in that he ‘swept [them] along with him’. If one now contemplates the plight that Dick himself faced with all these apparently alternate personas and psyches floating around inside his head (or soul), it is clear that

²⁶ Sutin, *Divine Invasions*, 151.

²⁷ Philip K. Dick, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (London: Vintage Books, 1991) 228.

confusion reigned within him: Jane, his dead twin sister; Pike; Thomas, the first-century Christian; Horselover Fat, the side of him that wrote the *Exegesis* – and the side he most frequently rebuked and criticised; and Dick himself, the lonely and (by the time of *Transmigration*'s writing) dying writer. He was Bob Arctor/Fred and more besides. Dick saw the folly in his own spiritual quest and in Pike's, just as Angel saw it in Tim Archer's in *Transmigration*, and in delegating the spirit of Timothy Archer to Bill Lundborg, was perhaps castigating himself for being insane.

The reality of Dick's 2-3-74 experiences, if such a term can be applied to them, was that they were indicative not necessarily of a unique set of circumstances, but that they were shaped, or at least framed, by Dick's own creative vision in the years leading up to 1974. His own theological and cosmological musings, his battle, as he might have seen it, with insanity, and his appreciation or love for the bizarre or unusual, abundant in Lovecraft's fiction, caused him to experience something which he was not prepared for. Whatever the true nature of the apparently mystical events which variously tormented or guided Dick in 1974, those events confirmed what he had been writing about all along, that being the malfunction of a benign deity or the malicious attacks (or malicious malfunction) of its evil counterpart.

2-3-74 was the precursor of the force of entropy – which he termed in his 1969 letter to Bruce Gillespie 'the form destroyer' – which through his exhaustive efforts to catalogue his ideas and order his chaotic thoughts arguably brought about his early death. Entropy was not a new toy in Dick's fiction, and he had successfully employed it as a means of advertising the presence of an evil or otherwise failing deity in *Ubik* (1969). It is the theme of *entropy* in Dick's work that the thesis turns to next.

CHAPTER THREE: ENTROPY TENDS TO GO UP

Significantly, Dick himself wrote in his *Exegesis* that the novels *Eye in the Sky* (1957), *Time Out of Joint* (1959), *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), *Ubik* (1969) and *A Maze of Death* (1970) were ‘the same novel written over and over again.’¹ Dick points out that the reason he restages this idea so many times is simply because he believed that the idea of ‘private hallucination’ was false, and that ‘joint hallucination’ was ‘his topic, including false memories.’² Christopher Palmer writes that entropy is an ‘active, encroaching force’ in Dick’s work, and that this strains the logic of the narrative (although he admits that logic ‘*is* [Palmer’s italics] strained’ in Dick’s fiction.³ Entropy represents what is evil in Dick’s fictional worlds just as it represented evil in his own thought. The fact that he restaged its ‘progress’ in five of his novels emphasises its significance.

In describing ‘entropy’, Paul Horwich writes:

We want to know why entropy tends to go up – why, in other words, highly ordered states decay but do not spontaneously evolve. This sort of asymmetry is commonly said to be, or to result from, the “arrow of time”. But perhaps it has nothing at all to do with time. Perhaps time itself is perfectly symmetric, and increasing entropy is caused by cosmological conditions that do not bear on the nature of time itself.⁴

Horwich’s speculation that ‘cosmological conditions’ influence the encroachment of entropy is one that Dick himself expressed and understood. There is an underlying, deep-rooted and metaphysical reason for things to decay, and only the human mind, through reaching some benign force outside the bounds of the decaying world, can defeat it. Nowhere is the theme so clear than in Dick’s novel *Ubik* (1969).

¹ Lawrence Sutin, *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (New York: Harmony Books, 1989) 95.

² *A Life*, 96.

³ Christopher Palmer, *Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2003) 60.

⁴ Paul Horwich, *Asymmetries in Time: Problems in the Philosophy of Science* (London: MIT Press, 1987) 3.

In the novel, the protagonist Joe Chip struggles through a world which seems to bear the hallmarks of what the philosopher Paul Horwich might call ‘asymmetry in time’: the world which Chip inhabits appears to run forward in terms of cause and effect in the same way as our ‘real world’, but objects regress through earlier forms (television becomes a wireless set; the can of Ubik becomes a dubious alchemical unguent) as time runs backwards. At the same time the process of physical human decay is accelerated. People in the novel begin to lose mass and turn to dust, much like Jason Taverner’s vision of Alys Buckman’s desiccated corpse in *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said* (1974), discussed more fully in the next chapter. Joe Chip’s quest is to find the elusive Ubik to restore reality; but in Chip’s world, Ubik is at the same time everywhere (as its name connotes) and nowhere.

Chip’s situation is unique however. *Ubik* begins stolidly and Dick establishes the novel in fairly standard ‘pot-boiler’ fashion; the usual motifs that tell the reader that what they are reading is science fiction are introduced straightaway, such as the existence of telepaths and the mention of the ‘Sol System’ as denoting an interplanetary human culture. At the point where Dick begins to develop the story and introduce signs of decay as the first portents of the novel’s unreal world, Joe Chip and his company of telepaths and ‘inertials’ (counter-telepaths) arrive on Luna (the Moon); and it is there, after an assassination attempt, that Joe Chip’s world – or at least his perception of it – begins to fall apart.⁵ As the novel progresses the reality for each character becomes steadily more mutable and the question of whether or not the characters really know which of their alternate worlds is truly real is not resolved at the end of the novel. Dick as narrator posits two truths throughout the novel: the world of Joe Chip, in which he is living through a kind of mental safari while

⁵ Philip K. Dick, *Ubik* (London: Millennium, 2000) 72.

suspended in a cryogenic chamber, is a spurious world and the world of Glen Runciter, in which he tries to contact Joe Chip in half-life, is real. This theory begins to break down however. Runciter, as he manifests god-like in various guises in Chip's world, appears to offer contradictory information at times, and by the novel's end, Runciter himself is confused as to what is really happening; he is shaken as his perception of events changes, and as he struggles for the first time to re-imagine his own role in the novel's world. Adding to the strangeness is the phenomenon in the half-life world of Runciter's funeral. Runciter, whom the reader through Joe Chip's perception is known to be alive and well, is nevertheless televised in the half-life world being buried. Runciter in the half-life world is not present as a conscious being, and yet he still manages to break the established laws of that world as he communicates with Chip through television adverts and cryptic graffiti. Runciter, the 'living' being, is reduced to the status of a poltergeist – he is no more 'real' in these manifestations than the half-life world itself, yet the physical signs of his interaction with the irreal world are irrefutable and incontrovertible. To Chip and the other inertials in other words, Runciter's various manifestations are real enough.

Entropy is introduced as a primary theme in *Ubik* immediately in the form of the curious psychic talent of Patricia Conley, a girl able to undo the laws of causality and change the past merely by thinking about it. The example Conley gives of her talent first appearing was when she was a child and broke a vase belonging to her parents. She found herself in trouble but found the next day that the vase was intact and her parents were oblivious that things had ever been otherwise. It becomes clear that Conley's talent has ominous implications, and that despite being able to bring an order of semblance back to chaos by 'fixing' things, it is more in line with the theme of decay and degradation that Dick introduces after the apparent assassination of Glen

Runciter. Conley displays a malicious streak that Chip sees immediately, and he labels her as ‘dangerous’; her talent for ‘fixing’ becomes representative of the way things should *not* be as she meddles in the lives of others, getting pleasure from watching them struggle in her sadistic games. What seems at first to be a force capable of reversing entropy, or a force in broad terms for ‘good’ is abused by Conley; it accelerates the process of decay instead. The decay of perishable goods in the half-life world (cigarettes, milk and so on), and the rather more alarming regression of objects into ‘prior forms’ – so that for example a television becomes an old AM radio set – is blamed initially on Conley. Ultimately though, Conley finds herself powerless and the reader learns that it is another person in half-life, a boy named Jory, who is responsible for creating the strange half-life world and responsible for not being able to maintain it: the decay is a sign that he cannot preserve his world.⁶ Some of Dick’s own sensibilities are expressed directly through Joe Chip when it comes to observation of objects, especially the ‘homeostatic’ machines that, imbued with artificial intelligence, make life miserable for the novel’s characters – and in particular for Chip. Every object in the half-life world of the novel regresses to a prior form with the exception, seemingly, of machines which demand money for their services. Chip notices for example that the door on his apartment still charges five cents for using it and Dick cannot resist the opportunity to make the joke.⁷

Writing in *Terminal Identity*, Scott Bukatman warns: ‘While Dick may evidence a profound suspicion of technology, it must be remembered that the technological societies of his fiction are overwhelmingly capitalistic and largely fascistic. It is less

⁶ *Ubik*, 139. Joe Chip describes the regression of his television into an AM radio as that of a “discarded ancient philosophy”: a version of Plato’s ‘idea objects’, in which a given object carries with it the latent and invisible forms of all the objects which predate it.

⁷ *Ubik*, 143. Chip realises that the toll door has an “innate stubbornness” to it and so will not regress.

technology per se than the mythifying uses to which it is directed by the forces of an instrumental reason that serve as the targets of Dick's satire'.⁸ This claim is true for example in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965). The novel opens with Barney Mayerson consulting a computerised psychiatrist, Dr. Smile.⁹ Smile's job is to ensure Mayerson stays under stress (which is measured in units termed 'Freuds'). If he can handle too many Freuds of stress and passes his UN mental exam, Mayerson will be drafted to a colony world by the UN and a girl called Roni Fugate will get his job as a 'precog' – somebody who can visualise the future and make predictions based on those visions. Certainly in *Ubik* as well, the political structure of the novel's world makes that world fascistic: Glen Runciter's organisation of inertials exists only to interfere with telepaths who might otherwise invade somebody's privacy by reading their minds, and Runciter's organisation plays on this angle in advertising its business in order to frighten people into using the inertials. Joe Chip's apartment door, charging money as it does, is symptomatic of the capitalistic society that Bukatman delineates but the reader feels that it is there as a joke in and of itself: similarly, Joe Chip's threat to sue his door, and the angry lecture he delivers to a recalcitrant coffee machine.¹⁰

The placement of these machines in *Ubik* also serves to highlight the commercial themes of the novel in regard to *Ubik* as a product, and *Ubik* itself is advertised in the half-life world not by a capitalist or fascist agency but by an individual human – Glen Runciter – who does so in order to liberate Chip and the others from their decaying world. If however the reader views elements like the toll doors as being indicative of the fascistic society in which Chip and the others live, it

⁸ Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (London: Duke UP, 1993) 53.

⁹ Philip K. Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (New York: Vintage, 1991) 3-4.

¹⁰ *Ubik*, 28 and 87.

is interesting then to note that those machines, whether through ‘innate stubbornness’ or not, remain unchanged in the half-life world as they do in the ‘real’ world. This gives more evidence to support the twist at the end of the novel, in which Glen Runciter is revealed to have died after all, so that the reader is left unable to decipher which of the worlds that the novel presents is truly ‘real’: it becomes more difficult to separate ‘apparent fact’ from the spurious, which is of course Dick’s aim. However even the machines are subject to some degree of entropy, like the coffee machine at which Chip rants, after it delivers spoiled ‘ancient’ coffee, or the machines which regress so that they do not accept modern coinage.

Dick’s cosmological idea of universal player and dark counterplayer becomes apparent as the novel progresses: Runciter is the good entity, apparently the key to acquiring Ubik, a substance that translates as being salvation in an aerosol spray form, and the substance by which decay can be reversed and the world can be made ‘ontologically real’; Jory is the dark counterplayer, the twisted boy who literally eats other half-lifers in order to gain energy and preserve his brain, which even suspended in half-life begins otherwise to slowly die. The parallel of light and dark is transferred onto the novel’s female characters, each one representing the anima of their male counterparts: Ella Runciter, Glen Runciter’s long-dead wife, is the real key to salvation in Chip’s world and counterpart to Glen Runciter, but Patricia Conley acts, at least at first, as being an aspect or agent of Jory. These themes foreshadow the cosmological ideas that Dick was presumably working through or at least formulating, at the time and which he expressed in the post-2-3-74 *Exegesis*, and entropy plays a central part in Dick’s ideas. The dark counterplayer, like Satan, desires ultimately to destroy.

‘Entropy’ at its most basic is a physical process by which a system of matter undergoes thermodynamic change. Physicists and cosmologists often speculate on what will eventually happen to the Universe, and its ultimate fate according to some is believed to be entropy death, or ‘heat death’.¹¹ In this model, the Universe keeps expanding without limit, until the stars burn themselves out. An alternative hypothesis is the ‘big crunch’ theory whereby, eventually, gravity will compel matter in the Universe to contract until it reaches a critical mass which would produce another ‘big bang’, which would hypothetically recreate the Universe. Current thinking however favours the entropy death as being the ultimate fate for the Universe.

The events of *Ubik* express this entropy death on a human level as it applies to the characters in the novel and it is perhaps because of its human perspective that the theme of decay takes on such a nightmarish aspect. It is after all one thing to speculate upon the nature of the end of the universe, and another to live through it: the fears of the novel’s characters worsen their ordeal in the malfunctioning world. There is of course, in Chip’s own interpretation of events, speculation as to what actually is happening so that it becomes a struggle for him to apply any one concrete theory to his experience, or otherwise find a physical paradigm by which he can properly assimilate every event and process in his world. Chip does not have the luxury of taking a detached view of events and his ability to think objectively is stymied – his own body, half-life projection or otherwise, is threatening to disintegrate. His own life, real or imagined, is threatened and thus his quest for answers becomes a race against time, culminating in panic and horror. Chip has to live through the confusion of the experience himself. No ‘malfunction’ is implied in the process of entropy itself, which is a natural process; but *Ubik* describes a form of accelerated entropy that

¹¹ Michio Kaku, *Hyperspace: A Scientific Odyssey through the 10th Dimension* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994) 304.

breaks known physical laws – and which therefore causes consternation to the characters of the novel, who cease to understand their world and thus come to fear it.

If puzzlement and fear on the part of *Ubik*'s characters form the core of the novel insofar as those feelings are expressed, the real nightmare does not begin until the characters themselves begin to physically decay: Joe is a witness to the process when Al Hammond, another of Runciter's inertials, starts feeling cold and sick before his body loses its integrity and collapses.¹² This is another feature of the entropy death as Michio Kaku envisages it: as matter ages and becomes ancient, the protons and neutrons within it will, eventually, dissolve into smaller particles so that any intelligent life undergoing such a nightmare would have to find a way of building and then inhabiting new bodies made from energy, electrons and neutrinos.¹³ Such a process clearly is almost incomprehensible for our civilisation as it stands at present, and would require fantastic technology to implement. To Joe Chip, it quickly becomes clear in *Ubik* that the only way of restoring both himself and his world is through the eponymous product advertised in the chapter headings throughout the novel. When Chip threatens to submit to decay and disintegration, he is rescued just in time by Runciter, who sprays Chip with the Ubik. The effect of the spray is to restore Chip completely, and Dick compares it to the 'sun's energy', as particles of light.¹⁴ The infusion of this energy is what holds Chip physically together, a representation not only of the building of a 'new body' as imagined by Kaku in *Hyperspace* but also a reflection of religious and spiritual creation myths. *Ubik* the novel in this sense becomes a stage for a re-imagining of the story of Genesis.

The product Ubik is finally given identity by Dick in the novel's final chapter: it is equated to 'the word' and, speaking of itself, says 'I am'. Dick identifies Ubik as

¹² *Ubik*, 128-9.

¹³ *Hyperspace*, 305.

¹⁴ *Ubik*, 189.

being God – or the word of God, the Logos, which creates and maintains the universe and which is in essence the same thing. Ubik is presented as being ‘perfect mind’, as Boehme would have seen it. It, the product, is the salvation of all creation, and as mind, it reinforces Joe Chip’s aforementioned philosophical thought on Plato’s ‘idea objects’. If the universe is a creation of word, which springs from mind, then every object in that universe would carry with it its own predated forms, the ideas which over time become overridden and replaced – or more properly improved – by new ideas. Boehme’s conceptual idea of God as the Ungrund, the ‘Abyss’, was ‘dynamic ever-increasing perfection’. New ideas from this perspective cannot be seen as being de facto better than their predecessors, only ‘more perfect’ as they stand in context with any given time or era; new ideas are instead a re-engineering of a concept that would otherwise become obsolete. However Boehme’s interpretation of God does not compare with Dick’s interpretation of the Ubik product.

To begin with, the idea of what is an artificial, man-made product – the Ubik itself – becoming ‘more perfect’ over time seems ludicrous, an oxymoron. There is also the fact that Ubik the product, in its initial incarnations in the novel, begins as a poisonous substance (the reader sees the development process in reverse: Chip despairs as the aerosol Ubik he is supposed to find has already regressed to prior forms; for example ‘liver and kidney balm’). Ubik is only perfect, with the power to restore and recreate, in its ideal, ultimate form as an aerosol spray. Ubik the product, seen to change, never began as something perfect – it started instead as the antithesis of its ultimate design parameters as a restorative, healing and rejuvenating agent. As a product, not as a growing entity, Ubik is not representative of ‘dynamic ever-increasing perfection’. If that was the case, then even in its prior forms, the Ubik

would be effective to some degree, or at least foreshadow the miraculous properties of its final, aerosol form.

Joe Chip encounters the product Ubik as an ointment, a balm and a tonic, and every one of these prior forms is not only utterly ineffectual but actually lethal, its existence entirely inapposite to its purpose. Dick keeps the reader guessing as to what Ubik is throughout the novel though understanding comes early on that the product is the key to Chip's deliverance; at the beginning of each chapter Dick writes out an advert, mirroring some of those found in Chip's world, that expounds upon the spurious virtues of what is, in essence, fake Ubik and each advert comes with a caveat for using the product. For example the 'advert' as given at the start of the sixteenth chapter: *Wake up to a hearty, lip-smacking bowlful of nutritious, nourishing Ubik toasted flakes, the adult cereal that's more crunchy, more tasty, more ummmish. Ubik breakfast cereal, the whole-bowl taste treat! Do not exceed recommended portion at any one meal.*¹⁵

The use of the neologism 'ummmish' is interesting and has in fact a dual role. Firstly, and as in *Martian Time-Slip* (1964) which is discussed below, a neologism is symptomatic of schizophrenic thought process disorder, and therefore emphasises *Ubik's* world as an unhealthy, malfunctioning place.¹⁶ Secondly the neologism can be seen as an advertising catchphrase and in that sense it reinforces Ubik as a commercial product, more of an artefact than a spiritual agency – in Dick's cosmology it is closer to a representation of Zebra than of God and this gives the reader a further clue as to what is happening: Ubik is not perfect, and although its aerosol form works 'as advertised', constant application of the stuff is necessary to stave off the unwanted effects of physical decay. It is Ella Runciter, Glen Runciter's

¹⁵ *Ubik*, p.209.

¹⁶ Richard D. Gross, *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992) 945-7.

dead wife, and also present in cryogenic half-life with Joe Chip, who holds the key to salvation. She herself created Ubik as an idea and despite Jory's attempts to destroy it through exercising a form of temporal regression on the Ubik spray, Ella manages – eventually – to get the product through to Joe Chip via Glen Runciter. She herself is the 'ontologically real thing', the mind behind Ubik. As an idea, the product is as ubiquitous as its name suggests, but as an effective product it is also elusive. The creator of Ubik is revealed to be Ella Runciter – in the half-life, illusionary world, she is God, and Ubik is the artefact by which she creates and maintains that world. The difficulty that Joe Chip has in acquiring Ubik throughout the novel is somewhat like Timothy Archer's quest for answers to renew his faith in *Transmigration*. In fact, like Timothy Archer, Chip's quest fails. Unlike Timothy Archer, an outside agency – Glen Runciter – intercedes to deliver the product Ubik, the 'answer', to Joe Chip in person.

In *Ubik*, Jory is revealed as the agent of entropy, the dark counterplayer, and is represented as monstrous: he eats other half-lifers to sustain his own existence, which causes the physical decay. Jory's physical embodiment in the half-life world is nightmarish in itself and his teeth and tongue are described as 'grey and shabby'. Jory uses the 'great shovel teeth' or 'troll teeth' to bite Joe Chip in an attempt to eat him.¹⁷ Monstrous and nightmarish physicality distinguishes any agent of entropy in Dick's novels: in *Martian Time-Slip*, the autistic boy Manfred Steiner is eventually encountered as he will appear in his old age, a disfigured cyborg that exists because of the machinery keeping him alive. In *Three Stigmata*, Palmer Eldritch represents an antichrist figure, and is also disfigured with mechanical stigmata – a metal arm, metal teeth, and a monocular metal eye. Before the chapter continues with a discussion of

¹⁷ *Ubik*, 207.

Ubik, it is worth at this point examining Dick's treatment of the disfigured or disabled characters that appear in his stories.

Generally if not exclusively, characters that are disabled or disfigured in some way in Dick's writing are afflicted as an outward and visible sign of their mental or spiritual corruption and/or the character's role in a particular story. For example, in *Ubik*, Jory literally eats the life essence of other people. He is a malevolent force and is portrayed with massive, shovel-like teeth. In *Dr. Bloodmoney* (1965), Hoppy Harrington lacks useable limbs. He learns to overcome his disability, but at the cost of his human spirit, becoming a loathed tyrant in his community. (The highly publicised withdrawal from sale of the drug thalidomide in 1961, after it was discovered that it caused abnormalities, notably deformation of the limbs, in developing fetuses was also a likely influence on the character of Harrington: Dick wrote *Dr. Bloodmoney* only two years later in 1963.) Harrington's disability is a sign of his 'inner evil'. Similarly, Palmer Eldritch in *Three Stigmata* is a cyborg, his outward human appearance deformed by the addition of synthetic or 'bionic' components. Eldritch's obvious role as the agent of evil in the novel is reinforced by the aversion people show to his physical appearance. Yet, both Harrington and Eldritch are motivated by a fear of isolation and loneliness, just as Manfred Steiner in *Martian Time-Slip* is autistic and therefore cut off in his own, in his case very dark, world. In some clear ways Dick is empathising with those characters and giving in essence a reason as to why they have become 'evil' or else propagated the incursion of entropy into the human world. It would not be fair to judge that Dick himself thought of physically disabled or disfigured people as being somehow 'inhuman' or 'inferior'. The fact of having a character with physical disfigurements also lends itself to the dramatic tenor of Dick's stories, a means of exciting morbid interest in his readers by engaging their

sense of what Peter Knight would term ‘body panic.’ Citing specific science fictional examples, Knight argues that ‘American culture teems with the traces of body panic.’¹⁸ He writes that since the 1950s, paranoid fantasies regarding science fictional body mutation have become endemic not only in popular culture, but within the private mind. After referring to the 1956 film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Knight emphasises the point that paranoid conspiracy theory actually represents a threat ‘to the American way of life.’¹⁹ On one level Knight’s assessment is true of the character of the malevolent Hoppy Harrington, with his emergent ‘telekinetic’ powers: he is a danger to those around him, as much so as Doctor Bluthgeld himself. Dick is actually engaging both with his readers’ horror of what is ‘other’ in a fictional world reflective of the political landscape of the 1960s. *Bloodmoney*, published in 1965, was obviously written in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis and is therefore a product of its time. Whatever Dick’s other intentions as he described the malleable reality of *Dr. Bloodmoney*’s world, he proves with his droll take on the consequences of nuclear war that he remained shrewd enough to employ the dramatic possibilities of engaging reader paranoia – on a personal physical level and a consensual political level – in order to entertain his readers. Harrington and Bluthgeld represent each of these aspects of the paranoid world of *Bloodmoney*: Harrington is the physically impaired and disfigured character representing ‘fear of the other’; and Bluthgeld represents ‘fear of apocalypse’. He is a shade generated by the 1960s political landscape, but it is obvious that Dick himself was fully aware of this: Bluthgeld’s power is one of shadow, that being the shadow of the reality of nuclear destruction. His telekinetic ability to generate ‘nuclear’ explosions has the effect not of discharging apocalyptic

¹⁸ Peter Knight, *Conspiracy Culture: From Kennedy to the X-Files* (London: Routledge, 2000) 169.

¹⁹ *Conspiracy Culture*, 174.

energies but of generating smaller, localised explosions (despite the fact that they remain powerful enough to rock Walt Dangerfield in his satellite).

In Dick's short story 'The Last of the Masters' (1954), another post-apocalyptic setting (arguably more realistic than *Bloodmoney*) is described. Dick shows in the story that bodily deformity and/or disability is not just confined to his human characters, and shows similarly that deformity and incapacity is not the sole hallmark of 'evil'. The robot Bors, himself afflicted by rust and physically impaired, is a compassionate character and more humane than the human beings who – with brutal savagery – eventually destroy him. When Bors's 'killers' realise that the robot was crippled and helpless, they know a moment of compassion for a machine that strove in its own way to improve the lives of the human beings it supervised. Similarly the 'hero' of *Three Stigmata*, Leo Bulero, is disfigured in that he displays a coconut-like rind on his skin in place of hair, and has in addition an enlarged cranium, traits gained from his 'E Therapy'. This is remarked upon several times in the story, but only Richard Hnatt's wife Emily displays any aversion to the 'rind' (it must be borne in mind that characters in the novel volunteer for E Therapy: only the misguided Hnatt coerces Emily into taking the treatment with him, essentially against her will). Other characters use the term 'bubblehead' as a pejorative to describe Bulero and others like him but Bulero himself is not an 'evil' character.

The significance of physical traits of abnormality or deformation in Dick's characters is threefold. It firstly highlights the underlying reason why a given character acts the way he or she does; and it secondly (and more obviously) serves as a simple visual device in the fiction to make the character figure more prominently in the imagination of the reader. Thirdly and most importantly, it gives simple weight to Dick's own cosmological beliefs that the world is inherently evil. A disabled or

impaired character in one of Dick's horror worlds might become evil because of his or her affliction; but Dick is drawing attention to the fact that the deformation *itself*, not the character afflicted by it, is a thing of evil and not something that a benevolent creator deity or supernal agency would bestow upon its creations. Dick's judgment in this matter might seem naïve to some readers but that judgment is merely a facet of his own humanistic beliefs and his empathy with and sympathy for those people that he believed were suffering.

Ultimately in *Ubik* and despite the belligerent machinations of Jory, Joe Chip manages to secure an endless supply of Ubik product by creating it through pure thought. Ella Runciter tells Chip that she wants him to replace her within the half-life world as the new agent or provider of salvation against Jory. Chip's story ends but Glen Runciter – whom the reader presumed was still alive in the 'real' world – is suddenly thrust into his own nightmare when he finds money in his pocket with Joe Chip's face on it, a reversal of Chip's own earlier experience of half-life when he encountered 'Runciter money'. The novel finishes ominously with 'this was just the beginning' as Dick upends the situation and leaves Runciter, and the reader, somewhat baffled. One of two things is possible: Runciter died at the beginning of the novel as Joe Chip and the others initially thought before he started contacting them in half-life; or the blurring of the lines between life and half-life has become so distorted as to allow no discernible difference between the worlds. In the second case, Ubik as product becomes a necessary component of both worlds. Jory then will have exceeded the boundary of half-life and invaded the world of the living, causing Chip to respond in like fashion. Still another way of looking at it is by using Dick's own cosmological ideas: in the half-life world, Ella Runciter is the equivalent of God and Chip replaces her – in effect merging with her. In doing so he makes the half-life world

ontologically real, but in response, the world of the living becomes the spurious, unreal world. Half-life as the world of the mind, the consensual illusion created by those in cryonic suspension, and represented as an alternate physical reality, shares the same traits as the 'real' world. That is, those that inhabit the half-life world are subject to the whims and strange laws of that world and their power to alter it is severely limited. In this sense, there is no ontological difference between the two worlds, as Dick sees it. The lines constituting 'reality' in both worlds are blurred and indistinct.

Scott Bukatman likens the novel's ending to a 'resonant variation on the science fiction/monster movie cliché, The End?', and the plot itself as only 'another appearance [...] producing infinite regression with which the reader must be satisfied.'²⁰ Bukatman also argues that *Ubik* as product, in the final analysis, exists only to 'sustain the illusion of coherence' and prior to this makes the convincing argument that all the 'realities' in *Ubik* are quite as spurious as each other; he points to Pat Conley's ability to manipulate the past as being indicative of the fact that manifold 'presents' exist – all those present times potentially real, and all potentially spurious.²¹ There is in fact little wrong with Bukatman's analysis of *Ubik* with the exception that he does not lend enough weight to *Ubik* announcing itself as the novel ends as "I am". Bukatman points to the novel's other 'adverts' (such as for *Ubik* toasted flakes) when he writes of *Ubik* as demonstrating, effectively, its 'cheapness' as a commodity. In fact however, the tacky adverts that precede Joe Chip's revivification also precede *Ubik*'s ultimate 'perfect' form as an aerosol spray: thus *Ubik* as product cannot be written off as a medium for sustaining only 'the illusion of coherence'. In its ultimate form, it becomes much more: an agency, in fact, of human salvation. And, while the open ending of the novel serves to highlight Bukatman's

²⁰ *Terminal*, p.95.

²¹ *Terminal* 94 and 97.

point that all the novel's realities are spurious, the point really is that the major twist in reversing the roles of Chip and Runciter (as victim and saviour respectively) occurs *after* Ubik is found, in perfect form. Bukatman argues that the novel 'pretends linearity' but, in fact, if Dick wanted a disjointed tale for its own sake, he would have reversed the roles of Chip and Runciter throughout the novel, not just at the end. Ultimately, entropy is staved off – it is no accident either that Ubik is shown actually to possess miraculous healing powers.²² This is something that lies in the purview of the divine, not of the man-made product – and no prior 'unperfect' form of Ubik, as advertised before Ubik announces itself "I am", could revivify Chip and his comrades. The Ubik in its aerosol form is the one thing capable of rejuvenating the half-lifers and staving off entropy.

In a statement that seems to be at odds with Bukatman's observation that the ending of *Ubik* is indistinct and clichéd, Dick himself eventually came to think of it as being more than that, in fact representing it as actuality or a form of truth. Dick wrote:

I figured out *Ubik*. Runciter is [...] Jesus, Buddha. Any & all of them. Now, why is *Ubik* important? Because it shows that (in purely modern secular terms) [...] Plato was somehow right about us being in a cave and seeing only images cast on its walls, not true reality, not reality at all. Runciter breaking through to Joe Chip is actual reality; the Paraclete [Dick is referring to the concept of the Holy Ghost as a spiritual advisor] breaking through to us is the same. We are in a kind of pseudo-reality; Plato was right. This is, in a way, what Jesus is saying in John: He came from actual reality, proving that our world isn't all there is – in fact, our world is somehow (are you ready?) fake.²³

Dick here is assigning to one of his own novels the same importance as he would ascribe to any extant religious text. He writes of *Ubik* as if it had become the medium (along perhaps with many of his other stories) by which divine revelation was imparted to his readers. The importance of that statement is what is paramount here. Dick's logic in this letter seems flawed, but it is only flawed if the reader sees

²² *Ubik* 207. Chip sprays Ubik onto the injured hand which Jory has bitten, and the wound heals.

²³ Philip K. Dick, letter to Claudia Krenz Bush, 23 September 1974, Philip K. Dick Science Fiction Collection, Pollak Lib., California State University, Fullerton.

his novel *Ubik* as fiction. Dick, as demonstrated earlier, saw it as *truth* (for example, see the Introduction for a discussion of his statement ‘*thus what I tell is the truth*’). Dick’s fiction was more than his route through his own philosophy: it was the means through which he communicated what he felt to be facts of ‘divine’ import; of revelatory significance. In the extract, Dick claims that ‘Plato was right’ but he does not support the claim with anything other than with a representative story from his own science fiction. And yet, if the message of *Ubik* is that Runciter represents true reality, why does Runciter himself at the end of the novel find that Joe Chip is representative of the ‘true’ world, or ‘reality’? These conundrums make Dick’s work and thought extremely difficult to unravel, but in one purely aesthetic sense, Scott Bukatman is right: the ending of *Ubik* seems unsatisfying and clichéd. Dick returned to his novel five years later after it was published and claimed it then as being ‘truth.’ There is a level of arrogance to Dick’s statements here, but he believed his own rhetoric and therefore believed in the importance of what information had been imparted to him, and his right to communicate these ‘truths’ to his readers (and in this case, to his correspondent).

Although Dick did not bracket *Martian Time-Slip* as being one of the novels that, like *Ubik*, ‘restaged’ the 1957 *Eye in the Sky*, themes of entropy are also prevalent in that novel. Therein the breakdown of reality occurs through the precognitive visions of an autistic boy, Manfred Steiner, who eventually comes into contact with Jack Bohlen, an apparently recovered schizophrenic. The fact that Dick has chosen Mars as the setting for his story is interesting. Dick interprets the world as a frontier, alien but earth-like, romanticised and made fantastic in the same way as representations of Mars represented by C. S. Lewis or Edgar Rice Burroughs or more specifically of Ray Bradbury. In discussing Bradbury’s Mars, George Mann writes:

‘[Although] Bradbury’s images of the Martian colony are long since outdated, this hardly matters; the stories themselves [...] are more truly about emotion and character, not about the (likely) reality of Mars’.²⁴ Brian Aldiss agrees with Mann, comparing Edgar Rice Burroughs’ interpretation of Mars in the novel *Pellucidar* to Bradbury’s later work insofar as both visions of the planet are fantastical: ‘[Edgar Rice] Burroughs’ Mars is like Ray Bradbury’s later Mars; it reports on areas which cannot be scrutinised through any telescope’.²⁵ *Pellucidar* was published in 1923, and the romanticised view of Mars with its breathable, Earth-like atmosphere and inhabitants was based, to some extent, on scientific thought about the planet at the time. Bradbury, writing later (*The Martian Chronicles* was published in 1950) and Dick both adopted this outdated, fantastic Mars as the setting for their stories, though Dick had no reason to: by the mid-1950s the idea that Mars possessed running water and breathable atmosphere was disproved. It seems however that Dick wanted to set his science-fiction story in a frontier setting, much like Bradbury had done, if only to introduce the Martian natives, the Bleekmen who are seemingly modelled on Australian Aborigines, as the antithesis of mankind in its current state: a primitive, entirely spiritual people, living as best they can off the land. Dick could have set his story on Earth, but the novel would have been quite different, and – unless he introduced the idea that water on Earth was a dwindling resource – the character of Arnie Kott, the rich magnate who controls the apportioning of water on Mars, would also have vanished. The Earth-like Mars is necessary for Dick’s story: a largely empty space as set against the overcrowded, urban Earth that Dick suggests in the world of the novel that could – in that world – be realistically colonised (and farmed!) by emigrants from Earth.

²⁴ George Mann, ed., *The Mammoth Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (London: Robinson, 2001) 74.

²⁵ Brian W. Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1973), 168.

In the world of *Time-Slip*, schizophrenia amongst the people of Earth is widespread.²⁶ Men like Jack Bohlen leave Earth simply to get away from the overcrowding and business of their home planet, to build a supposedly more relaxed, constructive life on Mars. This puts Bohlen into contact with both the Bleekmen, toward whom he is shown to be sympathetic early in the novel, and with the megalomaniacal Arnie Kott, who treats the Bleekmen as slaves at best, vermin at worst. Kott's plans to grab land ahead of the UN get him involved with Manfred Steiner and with Jack Bohlen as the novel progresses; and the story culminates with Kott abusing a Bleekman ritual in order to travel back in time and prevent Bohlen's father from staking his claim for land.

The society of the Bleekmen is technologically primitive and many are forced to rely on the charity of settlers to survive. Bohlen encounters them for the first time after landing his helicopter, as per UN regulations, to assist a group of Bleekmen who have run out of water in the Martian desert. Kott is aboard a second helicopter and makes a point of not wanting to stop to help the 'five niggers', and Bohlen, through helping the Bleekmen, earns Kott's enmity.²⁷ Bohlen's observations of the Bleekmen focus on their technological ineptitude, but he is aware that it was the Bleekmen's ancestors that constructed 'the great canal system'.²⁸

The relationships between the characters in *Time-Slip* are complex and made more so by Manfred, about whom the reader learns only gradually as the novel

²⁶ Philip K. Dick, *Martian Time-Slip* (London: Millennium, 1999) 71. Jack Bohlen says: "Schizophrenia is one of the most pressing problems human civilisation has ever faced [...] The pressure was too great for me; it was emigrate or go mad."

²⁷ *Time-Slip*, 22-4.

²⁸ *Time-Slip*, 23. The outdated idea that Mars possessed canals came originally from the observations of the Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli. In 1877 Schiaparelli reported the presence of long lines along Mars's surface which he called *canali* or 'channels'. The American astronomer Percival Lowell translated the Italian word into 'canals' and was adamant that they had been created by an advanced civilisation. Lowell published the book *Mars as the Abode of Life* in 1908. In the 1950s the idea that Mars had breathable atmosphere was disproved, but Dick's fantasy of Mars readily reflects Lowell's interpretation.

progresses. A special facility on Mars, Camp Ben-Gurion (or Camp B-G), has been set up to care for ‘anomalous’ children that embarrass the UN and the community on Mars. These include mutated children who have been exposed to radiation, and Manfred is there because of his autism. Interestingly the ‘anomalous’ children are taught and cared for by humans, but the supposedly healthy, adjusted children at the Public School are taught by teaching machines named after their personality types or for the historical figure they are built and programmed to represent. The Public School is a place that Jack Bohlen fears above all else, because of the machines and the way in which they are built to iron out ‘special quirks’ present in the children to enable them to better adjust to society; it seems to him to be a ‘neurotic’ system that comes to build an unhealthy world.²⁹ Bohlen, as his own schizophrenia resurfaces in the novel, is vested with the power to see past the constructed, flawless façade of his society to the rotten core beneath: actually what his schizophrenia allows him to do is to express himself with an individualism otherwise lacking in the tyrannical, claustrophobic civilisation he inhabits. Very early on in the novel, Manfred Steiner’s father Norbert commits suicide, crushed through sheer despair. The contributing factor is him going to see Manfred in Camp B-G: what Bohlen to some extent sees, and especially what Arnie Kott’s ‘tame’ Bleekman Heliogabalus sees, is that Manfred is in many ways a normal child and more importantly an individual; Norbert Steiner sees only ‘emptiness’ in Manfred, an uncommunicative wall. He hates his son and the guilt drives him to kill himself.³⁰

The signs of entropy come through Manfred himself however, and are most pronounced when Jack Bohlen and his father Leo, who is prospecting for land in the FDR mountain range and plans to build a series of apartment buildings, take Manfred

²⁹ *Time-Slip*, 62.

³⁰ *Time-Slip*, 36- 41.

with them to see the site. Manfred, using his power of precognition, sits down to draw as the two men converse, and begins to sketch great wide apartment blocks as he looks out at the mountains. The buildings Manfred draws concern Leo however: they are ‘sagging with age’ and have a ‘ponderous, timeless, inertial heaviness’.³¹ As he continues to draw cracks in the buildings and broken windows it becomes apparent to the two men that Manfred is drawing the buildings not as they will look when built but as they will look in tens of years; he draws a face with a ‘turned-down, despairing mouth’ in a window of one of the buildings. As he draws, Manfred says “Gubbish,” smiling at the men and frightened by what he has seen. Manfred’s private autistic language also includes the word ‘gubble’ and the ‘clang associations’ of the neologisms – *rubbish* and *rubble* – are explicit, clang associations being another symptom of schizophrenic disorder.³² Manfred’s lot as a child is to see his ultimate fate, in stages, as a wheezing, ancient cyborg interred in the hospital inside the very buildings he drew in a state of ruin. This apparition, a machine from the chest down, appears to Jack Bohlen and his wife Silvia at the end of the novel.³³ Manfred as the ancient cyborg reveals to Bohlen that, eventually, he escapes the run-down buildings and goes to live with the Bleekmen.

Like *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, the reality slippage of *Time-Slip* is expressed in terms of decay and entropy, but unlike *Ubik*, entropy results from the terrifying perceptions of the Bohlen and Manfred rather than from the actual physical decay of an entire world. In *Time-Slip*, Manfred’s visions of decay are visions of a real future; in *Ubik*, the process of entropy is given a twist in that while things decay, they also ‘regress’ to their prior forms. Regression in this sense could be seen as

³¹ *Time-Slip*, 123.

³² *Gross*, 947. Slater and Roth explain that schizophrenics sometimes confuse words, producing ‘word salad’. Hence they state for example that ‘big’ can become ‘twig’ or ‘pig’, rendering communication difficult or impossible.

³³ *Time-Slip* p.224.

entropy, an undoing of positive progress, but the frightening aspect of the half-lifer world for Chip and the others is the fact that their own physical decay results from an acceleration of time – regression results from its reversal, and is therefore even more perplexing. Paul Horwich, when describing the process of entropy, writes: ‘Systems do not tend to go into states that are less probable than the states they are in.’³⁴ But in *Ubik* this is exactly what happens as entropy increases while time regresses; the world-system for the novel is improbable in a way that the world-systems for *Three Stigmata* and *Time-Slip* are not. This is based on the assumption that the natural process of time is to move forward as we perceive it, not to reverse and at the same time cause the world-system to decay. Dick ensures in *Time-Slip* that the entropy visions stem from forward-moving time: there is no backwards-time as there is in *Ubik*. Joe Chip is closer to Michael Moorcock’s Jerry Cornelius in his fight against entropy than he is to Jack Bohlen.³⁵

Interestingly Dick represents decay in both *Time-Slip* and *Three Stigmata* as human dissolution into the machine, so that both Manfred and Palmer Eldritch are cyborgs – an unhealthy state as far as Dick is concerned and, in a sense, the antithesis of his mystical thought: rather than reaching a transcendent state and becoming more than human or divine by becoming one with God, the cyborgs are represented in an eerie and negative light as a devolution to the subhuman. The change elicits in the reader feelings of revulsion at the artificial modification. Some of Dick’s fiction features machines that dissimulate as human as in for example *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, but the cyborgs are to Dick more artificial than androids and more repellent. It is almost as if, for Dick, the entirely artificial man, the android, has more

³⁴ *Asymmetries*, p.62.

³⁵ For example, in Moorcock’s *The Final Programme* (1965).

right to exist or is somehow more ‘wholesome’ than the cyborg; the cyborg being a man modified or preserved somehow by machines.

Ultimately in *Three Stigmata*, the hallucinogenic world brought on by the drug Chew-Z causes – eventually – every single member of humanity to take on the stigmata of Eldritch himself – the metal teeth, eye and arm, to become cyborgs. This unification at the cost of human identity represents a highly ordered and uniform state which in essence is the polar opposite to entropy; but what is being lost is human thought and identity as the reader finds in the closing passage of the novel. Leading up to it is Leo Bulero’s insistence that because of his advanced mind (he’s an ‘evolved human’ or ‘bubblehead’), he will be able to fight through the loss threatened by the pervasive power of Eldritch and Chew-Z:

“Hey Blau.” [Leo Bulero] said, poking with his non-artificial elbow the semi-thing beside him. [...] “Look at my double-dome, my big forehead; I’m a bubblehead, right? And this rind [as mentioned earlier, Bulero has protective rind instead of hair]; it’s not just on top; it’s all over. So in my case the [E Therapy] really took. So don’t give up yet. Believe in me.”

“Okay, Leo.”

“Stick around for a while. There’ll be action. I may be looking out at you through a couple of Jensen luxvid artificial-type eyes, but it’s still me inside here. Okay?”

“Okay,” Felix Blau said. “Anything you say, Leo.”

“‘Leo’? How come you keep calling me ‘Leo’?”

Sitting rigidly upright in his chair, supporting himself with both hands, Felix Blau regarded him imploringly. “Think, Leo. For chrissakes *think*.”

“Oh yeah.” Sobered, he nodded; he felt chastened. “Sorry. It was just a temporary slip [...]. I won’t forget again.”³⁶

The transformation into the cyborg Eldritch is another form of decay. Jack Bohlen suffered in *Time-Slip* from a delusion during a schizophrenic episode in which he saw his employer as a ‘man-like structure’, which mirrors the subsuming of human identity in *Three Stigmata* as well as the experiences of Leo Bulero when he sees Roni Fugate literally disintegrate before his eyes – like Al Hammond in *Ubik*, or Alys Buckman in *Flow My Tears*.³⁷ When Bulero realises that Roni Fugate will not become his mistress, he feels resentment and hate, and he thinks in terms of bringing harm to

³⁶ *Three Stigmata*, 230.

³⁷ *Three Stigmata*, 95.

her – forcing her to grow more ancient or actually to evolve, as his E Therapy has caused him to evolve. Because he is under the effects of Chew-Z, a drug that conjures an ersatz world in which the user exhibits a measure of dream-like (and thus sometimes ineffectual) control, his thoughts create a nightmare irreality. He toys with the idea of making himself younger, and therefore more attractive to Fugate, but settles instead on hurting her:

[...] You're my age, Miss Fugate. In fact older. Let's see; You're about ninety-two, now. In this world, anyhow; you've aged, here . . . time has rolled forward for you because you turned me down and I don't like being turned down. In fact, he said to himself, you're over one hundred years old, withered, juiceless, without teeth and eyes. A thing.

Behind him he heard a dry, rasping sound, an intake of breath. And a wavering, shrill voice, like the cry of a frightened bird. "Oh, Mr. Bulero –"

I've changed my mind, Leo thought. You're the way you were. I take it back, okay? He turned, and saw Roni Fugate or at least something standing there where she had last stood. A spider web, gray fungoid strands wrapped one around another to form a brittle column that swayed . . . he saw the head, sunken at the cheeks, with eyes like dead spots of soft, inert white slime that leaked out gummy, slow-moving tears, eyes that tried to appeal but could not because they could not make out where he was.

"You're back the way you were," Leo said harshly, and shut his own eyes. "Tell me when it's over."³⁸

Bulero loses control over the thought process and the puddle-Fugate ends up trying to grow into a skull 'of some life-formation to come'; his mind makes a monster of her and the drug accelerates entropy. The 'life-formation' is not true life but something that has aged beyond its means; it cannot evolve because Leo has made it too old. The thing is lifeless and as Eldritch explains to him "she evolved not while alive but there in the ground."

Eldritch's name is interesting enough and reminiscent of the language used in H. P. Lovecraft's fiction: the word means *weird*, *strange*, or *incomprehensible*. The drug Chew-Z, which Eldritch tries to peddle to humankind, is so potent that it infiltrates the collective consciousness, even amongst non-users. It, like Manfred's visions of horror, infects the world and changes every conscious mind. Eldritch is not

³⁸ *Three Stigmata*, 95-6.

human and sets himself up as a god, and indeed he controls the infected, Chew-Z world; he is utterly alien, having taken a ship to Proxima from Earth that brought him into contact with aliens and the drug Chew-Z. Everything decays in the Chew-Z world to become a nightmare, and every human being exhibits Eldritch's cyborg stigmata. The prognosis for Eldritch's world is one of absolute horror from which there is no escape: the final message of the novel is one of despair, and Leo Bulero's slip in forgetting himself despite his insistence to the contrary merely reaffirms his impotence – even as an 'evolved' human – to prevent the decay and the encroachment of entropy.

An important point here is that despite Scott Bukatman's admonition that machines in Dick's worlds are actually symptomatic of those 'fascistic' worlds and are not directly satirised by Dick, machine encroachment on the human identity through entropy is something else entirely. It is not a political comment but a social one: a fear of human absorption into a gestalt, partly organic, but ultimately lifeless, entity. Scott Bukatman writes in *Terminal Identity* using the word *cybrid* to denote cyborgs in science fiction: 'All of the cybrid protagonists of the electronic age, including Robocop, Brian O'Blivion, *Neuromancer's* Case, and *TRON's* Flynn, retain a *meat component*. The flesh continues to exist to ground the subjectivity of the character. To let go of the flesh, then, is to surrender the subject.'³⁹ This idea is an old one in science fiction, the delineation of the point where a cyborg loses its personality, or its human soul. In C.L. Moore's 'No Woman Born' (1944), a badly burned woman – Deirdre – has her brain interred in a robotic construct. By the end of the story, she has learned to develop her physical powers and becomes in many ways 'superhuman',

³⁹ *Terminal*, 258.

but at the cost of her personality. The original mind is lost as well as the flesh.⁴⁰ This is implied in the return of Palmer Eldritch from Proxima; the change in him is physical as well as mental and the stigmata of that change is his deformed, cyborg body.

The reader of *Time-Slip* experiences Jack Bohlen's schizophrenic break in which he witnesses the amalgamation of machine and human at the cost of the human in a foreshadowing of Palmer Eldritch's demon-like possession of the human race:

He [Bohlen] saw the personnel manager in a new light. The man was dead.

He saw, through the man's skin, his skeleton. It had been wired together, the bones connected with fine copper wire. The organs, which had withered away, were replaced by artificial components, kidney, heart, lungs – everything was made of plastic and stainless steel, all working in unison *but entirely without authentic life* [my italics]. The man's voice issued from a tape, through an amplifier and speaker system.

Possibly at some time in the past the man had been real and alive, but that was over, and the stealthy replacement had taken place, inch by inch, progressing insidiously from one organ to the next, and the entire structure was there to deceive others. To deceive him, Jack Bohlen, in fact. He was alone in this office: there was no personnel manager. No one spoke to him, and when he himself talked, no one heard; it was entirely a lifeless, mechanical room in which he stood.

He was not sure what to do. He tried not to stare too hard at the manlike structure before him.

[...]

"Bohlen," the structure said, "are you sick?"⁴¹

Dick's fears mirror Bohlen's own fears. The structure is there to deceive; in this case it does in fact dissimulate as being other than what it is: a personnel manager rather than a construct, an agent or more properly victim, of entropy. In the case of the 'manlike structure', the fight of life against entropy has met with dismal failure: the body has decayed, and all efforts to maintain it with willpower have been in vain. The skeleton, which otherwise would collapse, is wired together with metal – an artificial support. Worse, the structure does not realise the horror of its own existence, its own lifelessness: the 'insidious' progression of mechanisation and destruction of identity

⁴⁰ Robert Silverberg, ed., *Science Fiction: 101* (New York: ibooks, 2001) 134-209.

⁴¹ *Time-Slip*, 67.

has ensured its complicity in the plans of Dick's dark counterplayer – it is unaware of its fate.

The mystical side of *Time-Slip* is provided largely by the Bleekmen: Heliogabalus, the servant of Arnie Kott, helps him to change the past by getting Kott to take Manfred to a site sacred to the Bleekmen, a rock called Dirty Knobby. Kott desires to change history somewhat so that he can stake a claim for land in the FDR mountain range ahead of Jack Bohlen's father and thus stay in business on Mars, making money. Using Nembutal, Kott travels to the rock with Manfred and, like the users of Chew-Z, dreams a new reality for himself: but the reality warps just like the Chew-Z world. Kott finds himself in the past, back in fact where the novel began: but Manfred's infection is everywhere, like Eldritch's stigmata. Reading a newspaper, Kott reads what he thinks at first is a printing error: "Gubble, gubble", it said. The article became meaningless, nothing but the gubble-gubble words one after another. [...] Darn those gubble-gubble words, he said to himself. That's what the kid says! They sure spoil the article in the paper.⁴² Kott in fact is seeing the world through Manfred's eyes: he sees the innate and 'omnipresent' hostility of people as they collide into one another on the street below his apartment (deliberately and not by accident), and he sees that those people have only 'fragments or remnants of faces'

This interference in the time-stream, not being a natural process, is what Paul Horwich would call 'bilking' or cheating fate.⁴³ But he himself is cheated and is plunged into the nonsense 'private language' world of the autistic Manfred. Heliogabalus revealed to Kott previously that Manfred's thoughts were "as clear as plastic."⁴⁴ Between the Bleekmen and Manfred there exists understanding: and there is in the name of the Bleekmen the same connotations of decay and entropy as exist in

⁴² *Time-Slip*, 206.

⁴³ See *Asymmetries*, 92-105.

⁴⁴ *Time-Slip*, 183.

Manfred's 'gubbish world'. Heliogabalus says to Kott of himself and Manfred: "We are both prisoners, Mister, in a hostile land" at which Kott laughs 'loud and long'. Manfred's dread of death stems from his visions of the claustrophobic co-op habitats that will be built in the FDR range in which he is destined to be interred; these same claustrophobic habitats drove Bohlen to breakdown and led him to explore a simpler life in open frontier land on Mars. Dick sees this environment as forcing upon human beings an unwelcome unification; humans become enclosed and surrounded, and struggle for freedom but to no avail. The disintegration of society as Dick sees it is also the amalgamation of humanity into a soulless, single entity. Manfred sees and fears it: whenever he looks at people and sees them close to each other he sees invasion and possession, one of the other. As he watches Bohlen with Doreen Anderton (Kott's mistress with whom Bohlen is having an affair) Manfred thinks: 'How could two people stand being so close? It was, to Manfred, as if their separate identities had flowed together, and the idea that such a muddling could be terrified him.'⁴⁵ The fear of engulfment is the schizophrenic fear of depersonalisation, the loss of identity. This mingling extends to the corruption as Manfred sees into the future of people's bodies; prior to Kott's 'time-bilking' experiment (which in the end fails), several chapters of the novel focus on one scene replayed over and over through the perceptions of different characters – Anderton and Bohlen both feel a sense of déjà vu as this plays out.⁴⁶ Through Manfred's eyes, the horror of it is repulsive as he watches Anderton with Bohlen, both of whom are drunk:

Her [Anderton's] eyes fused over, opaque, and from behind one eye the lashes became the furry, probing feet of a thick-haired insect stuck back there wanting to get out. It's [*sic*] tiny pin-head red eye peeped past the loose rim of her unseeing eye, and then withdrew; after that the insect squirmed, making the dead eye of the woman bulge, and then, for an instant, the insect peered through the lens of her eye, looked this way and that, saw him but was unable to

⁴⁵ *Time-Slip*, 168.

⁴⁶ *Time-Slip*, 177. Bohlen realises that time is skewed and that he has lived through the same night with Kott, Manfred, Heliogabalus and Anderton many times over.

make out who or what he was; it could not fully make use of the *decayed mechanism* [my italics] behind which it lived.

Like over ripe puffballs, her boobies wheezed as they deflated into flatness, and from their dry interiors, through the web of cracks spreading across them, a cloud of spores arose and drifted up into his face, the smell of mould and age of the Gubbler, who had come and inhabited the inside long ago and was now working his way out of the surface.⁴⁷

The insect motif accompanies the decay that Manfred sees; insects, as what Dick would call ‘reflex machines’, unable to think and as lifeless as the decaying humans in which they reside. Manfred, unable to deal with the spectacle, laughs at it, a schizophrenic disorder of affect. Anderton and Bohlen, unable to stop themselves copulating, are disgusting to Manfred; he hears Anderton say to Bohlen: “Gubble me more [...] Gubble gubble gubble me, put your gubbish into me, into my gubbish, you Gubbler. Gubble gubble, I like gubble! Don’t stop. Gubble, gubble, gubble, gubble, *gubble!*”⁴⁸ Manfred sees the human beings as dead things already fallen to entropy:

Jack Bohlen, too, was a dead sack, teeming with gubbish. The outside that fooled almost everyone, it was painted pretty and smelled good, bent down over Miss Anderton, and he saw that; he saw it wanting her in a filthy fashion. It poured its wet, sticky self nearer and nearer to her, and the dead bug words popped from its mouth and fell on her. The dead bug words scampered off into the folds of her clothing, and some squeezed into her skin and entered her body.⁴⁹

The ‘dead bug words’, the ‘teeming gubbish life’, Manfred sees as invasive; they are omnipresent and threaten to engulf the world. Manfred’s delusional vision is a form of the fear of thought-projection and influence – words that infect minds and bodies and against which those minds and bodies have no defence. Freedom for Manfred comes when he decides to deny his predestined existence as a monstrous cyborg by opting to live in the desert with the Bleekmen, who are not infected by the ‘gubbish’ he sees and whom he finds beautiful. The cyborg Manfred projects back into the past to thank Jack Bohlen for trying to help communicate with him as a boy – but the cyborg actually will never come to be, and Manfred denies his existence in the

⁴⁷ *Time-Slip*, 137.

⁴⁸ *Time-Slip*, 144.

⁴⁹ *Time-Slip*, 143.

tightly-packed apartment buildings.⁵⁰ Unlike the despairing message given at the end of *Three Stigmata*, *Time-Slip* gives rather a message of hope, of individual triumph against decay, against encroaching entropy.

All three novels explore the decomposition of the world, and its ultimate transformation into something else new – whether good or bad. In *Ubik* and *Time-Slip*, the power of Joe Chip and Manfred to alter their destinies and to fight against entropy is a god-like gift; they are omnipotent in the worlds they inhabit, Chip with the power to give life and to heal and Manfred with the power to liberate, his thought processes all-pervasive in the world. *Three Stigmata* is quite different: Palmer Eldritch, godlike though he is, is understood by the reader as a demon. In the world of the novel, Eldritch is the highest power and as the dark counterplayer personifies entropy. Leo Bulero, Barney Mayerson and Felix Blau, and all humans, are hopeless against it. Eldritch's mind is powerful enough to possess every human being, and the full terror of it is living with the physical debilitation, the stigmata of evil, while recognising that a kind of mental fusion or merging, a 'muddling' as Manfred Steiner experiences it, will surely result. This existence as a nightmarish gestalt becomes a living hell, a prison from which there is no escape. Meaning is lost and communication is rendered pointless; as in Manfred's world, everybody would communicate through *gubbish*, through words bereft of sense or relevance, as Arnie Kott discovers when he tries to enter Manfred's world for his own gain. In the end, Dick's cosmological ideas and his private mystical hope for attaining reality through transcendence is what is being explored in these novels; but the forms of transcendence are entirely dissimilar.

⁵⁰ See *Time-Slip*, 221-5.

Of *Three Stigmata*, Dick wrote some years after the book was published in a 1978 *Exegesis* entry, stating: ‘Leo Bulero defeating Palmer Eldritch is the saviour/messenger (Son of Man) defeating the demiurge creator of this prison (& illusory) world. Breaking his power over man.’⁵¹ With this in mind, perhaps the later *Ubik* can be read as a reshaping of *Three Stigmata*, carrying a more obvious message of hope that Dick found more palatable, offering a world that did not finish in absolute horror. Perhaps for Dick, during his search for ‘answers’, the conclusion of *Ubik* offers a more preferable outcome – that, after all, confusion at the state of the world or one’s place in it is better than existing in a nightmare existence that offers no way out for those incarcerated there.

⁵¹ *A Life*, 133. Sutin also writes on the preceding page that *Three Stigmata* ‘terrified’ Dick.

CHAPTER FOUR: IDENTITY AND THE HIDDEN WORLD

Maybe I only exist so long as I take the drug. That drug, whatever it is, that Alys gave me.

Then my career, he thought, the whole twenty years, is nothing but a retroactive hallucination created by the drug. . . .

What happened, Jason Taverner thought, *is that the drug wore off*. She – somebody – stopped giving it to me and I woke up to reality, there in that shabby, broken-down hotel room with the cracked mirror and the bug-infested mattress. And I stayed that way until now, until Alys gave me another dose. . . .

Jesus Christ, he thought, is that it?⁵²

The above extract is taken from *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said* wherein Jason Taverner, having previously enjoyed a life of celebrity as a popular entertainer, is attempting to work out exactly what happened to the reality he once knew after being faced with the prospect of living a fugitive existence in a spurious world. Taverner has no form of identification, and discovers that – in his new ‘reality’ – he does not even have a birth certificate, does not appear on any records, and does not, in fact, exist. In this third chapter of the thesis, ‘Identity and the Hidden World’, an exploration will be made of one of the most fundamental themes to arise in Philip K. Dick’s work: identity crisis, and how a person’s perception of and relationship to the outside world (and in Dick’s case, the hidden world that lies behind the spurious world) dictates that person’s sense of uniqueness and self. Focusing in particular on three of Dick’s novels (*A Scanner Darkly*, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* and *Flow*), the chapter will analyse and delineate the conditions which bind Dick’s characters to a common reality. As is so often the case in Dick’s writing, characters in the novels struggle continually to maintain their own worldview, whether consciously or otherwise, and are forced to fight off the encroachment of environmental entropy upon their identities and/or the invasive influence of an unseen, sometimes hostile,

⁵² Philip K. Dick, *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said* (New York: Vintage, 1993) 179.

invasive force – whether that force is ‘Valis’ or a facsimile thereof, or something else.⁵³

In *Flow*, Jason Taverner becomes a victim of another of Dick’s crumbling realities and is subject to the ultimate existential question: if the world forgets me, do I exist at all? A lack of a sense of identity posits this problem in the face of a Dickian twist, as the world comes unglued. Nothing is certain anymore: object permanence becomes irrelevant in the face of apparently skewed perception.⁵⁴ For Taverner, his life as he knew it has ceased to be, and everything he thinks he knows about his life has become fiction. The reader is faced with the possibility that Taverner may actually be losing his mind, convinced that he has a rich lifestyle and a celebrity girlfriend (Heather Hart) who shares a portion of the accolade on Taverner’s prime-time television show.

The reader becomes interested in Taverner straight away: a television star and singer who regularly pulls an audience of thirty million viewers, and who is described as being a ‘six’, a product of eugenics and as such an advancement on other human beings that Taverner describes as ‘ordinaries’.⁵⁵ Taverner is ageing, but handsome, tall and physically (and supposedly psychologically) strong, but Dick plunges this apparently perfect human being into a nightmare scenario in which even he, Taverner, is utterly lost, and routinely used and outsmarted by the ‘ordinaries’. The agent of Taverner’s migration into a new reality where he does not exist, and has never existed, is one of Taverner’s mistresses, Marilyn Mason, a ‘no-talent’ for whom

⁵³ It is important to realise that themes of decay are emphasised (actually endemic) in several of Dick’s important novels including *Martian Time-Slip* (1964), *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965) and *Ubik* (1969).

⁵⁴ See *Flow*, 146. Music produced by Taverner in his reality exists in the new, skewed one: the character Alys in fact possesses almost all of Taverner’s records. But these objects, apparently significant given their actuality and solidity, are themselves unreliable. Taverner later plays them back (161) to find that they are blank, reproducing no noise other than background hiss.

⁵⁵ *Flow*, 5.

Taverner has – in exchange for sex – engineered a singing career. Marilyn is furious with Taverner for choosing Heather Hart instead of her, and is described as being ‘unyielding and iron-rigid . . . bloodless, as if she were an animated corpse’⁵⁶. The dystopia into which Taverner is hurled, the ‘Black Iron Prison’ is prefigured by Mason, herself a thing of iron. She throws at him a creature, a ‘Callisto cuddle sponge’, which despite its innocuous nomenclature is quickly revealed to be a horrible, gelatinous parasite which latches onto Taverner and inserts ‘feeding tubes’ into his body. Taverner wakes up briefly in a hospital with a concerned Heather Hart watching over him, then falls unconscious; and when he finally awakens, in normal clothes instead of a hospital gown, it is to find himself in a ‘lousy, bug-infested cheap wino hotel’.⁵⁷ Taverner phones his agent, Al Bliss, and discovers that Al has never heard of him. Panic ensues when Taverner telephones the birth registration control centre in Iowa to be told that he has no birth certificate. And in this world where his privileges as a celebrity have been revoked, Taverner – without identification cards in his wallet – can look forward to internment in an FLC, a Forced Labour Camp. The world in which Taverner now finds himself in is one in which his very identity has been hidden, effectively wiped out by some extraneous, mysterious force. The loss of Taverner’s identification cards, the physical evidence of his existence as a person, is an attribute of the new skewed reality he finds himself in. In the new irreality, Taverner now stands against (he wants his celebrity status to return). The world in turn denies knowledge of him.

A physical invasion of Taverner’s body by the alien cuddle sponge invites immediate comparison with Dick’s own mystical experience of being bombarded by information-rich pink light, courtesy of the ‘artefact’ or ‘Valis’. The cuddle sponge

⁵⁶ *Flow*, 12.

⁵⁷ *Flow*, 15.

however, is a parasite; its invasion of his body does not yield up any rewards for Taverner, and while he thinks at first that the hospital removed the thing, he feels one of its feeding tubes stirring in his chest when he is in the cheap hotel⁵⁸. The creature, or part of it, is still inside him and the assumption made by the reader at this point is that the creature has somehow caused Taverner to become ‘what they call an *unperson*’; that it has plunged him into this world where he is totally unknown, into a parallel universe – perhaps the ‘shadow universe’ hinted at by cosmologists like Stephen Hawking.⁵⁹ Christopher Palmer, in his book *Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern* (2003), speculates that Dick’s novels after the 1977 *A Scanner Darkly* (in particular the ‘Valis trilogy’) ‘investigate the possibility of something like salvation by self-surrender’ to Valis as an extraterrestrial agency.⁶⁰ As a benign influence, such an agency might indeed presage salvation, and Dick himself would seem to agree with Palmer on this.⁶¹ But science fiction as a genre has often explored the nature of divinity (frequently in a bizarre fashion) – it is not just a facet of Philip K. Dick’s corpus of work. Just as superhuman powers often come at a high price in science fiction (as in, for example, the fate of Gully Foyle in Alfred Bester’s 1956 *The Stars My Destination*), so too does the acquisition of divinity.

Not only did Dick seek knowledge of God in his *Exegesis*, he explored religious themes almost exclusively in his post-2-3-74 work. Timothy Archer in *Transmigration* also seeks knowledge of God, to find *anokhi*, which equates to Holy Wisdom.⁶² As Angel Archer points out to Timothy, such a quest makes him like

⁵⁸ *Flow*, 20.

⁵⁹ *Flow*, 19. Here Taverner employs the word ‘unperson’.

⁶⁰ Christopher Palmer, *Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2003) 178.

⁶¹ Philip K. Dick, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991) 242-43. Bill Lundborg is the subject of another ‘divine invasion’ and is implied as being a vessel for Timothy Archer’s soul. Bill is explaining Timothy Archer’s fascination with Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, and that its basic message is ‘God’s will is [humanity’s] peace’. I cite this as an example.

⁶² *Transmigration*, 63. Dick writes that *Anokhi* is the Hebrew word for God – Yahweh: ‘I am’.

Satan, whose desire to know God – in other words being privy to His plans and functions – ultimately earned him expulsion from Heaven. Frank Herbert explores this theme in *God Emperor of Dune* (1981), wherein Leto Atreides II – son of Paul Atreides, the protagonist of the original *Dune* (1965) – has achieved apotheosis. His divine transfiguration is accompanied by a monstrous physical change into that of a vast sandworm, and the only human features which remain are his face and arms. Leto, as humanity’s ‘God Emperor’, seeks for them the ‘Golden Path’, a path of survival and progress, but to engineer this path he has first had to give humanity ‘enduring eons of enforced tranquillity’, which humanity apparently finds acutely uncomfortable, and thus seek to rebel against Leto’s rule.⁶³ Leto has done this to teach a lesson to humanity, that they will only seek peace and security thereafter with ‘extreme caution and steadfast preparation’. Leto has had thousands of years in which to engineer his lessons for humanity, and as an omniscient immortal, is capable of viewing humanity’s future and seeing its ultimate fate along any given path. For Leto, omniscience is not a gift, but a curse, as he recounts in a journal transcribed for future generations of human beings:

I assure you that the ability to view our futures can become a bore. Even to be thought of as a god, as I certainly was, can become ultimately boring. It has occurred to me more than once that holy boredom is good and sufficient reason for the invention of free will.⁶⁴

‘God Emperor’ Leto may be, but Herbert invests him with a great deal of humanity and the story is a tragic one. Leto is a speculative example of what occurs to the human mind that sees, knows and/or becomes God (or at least, god-like). Leto’s human aspect is frail and sensitive, and his possession of omniscience augments rather than counters this ‘weakness’. If the conjecture of Herbert’s *God Emperor*

⁶³ Frank Herbert, *God Emperor of Dune* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988) 196.

⁶⁴ *God Emperor*, 44.

holds any significance, it is that there are some things humanity was not meant to know, as H.P. Lovecraft often wrote. Lovecraft, himself a troubled person, interpreted the universe in his fiction as an infinitely oppressive place, and his paranoid writing mirrors much of Dick's own fiction. His well-known short story 'The Call of Cthulhu' (1926) is one such example of this paranoid style.⁶⁵

Dick's theological and cosmological theories hinge on discovering the truth behind the seeming world, behind the veil of the Black Iron Prison and on finding the mind of God; but he is enlightened enough to realise that even if he had found it before he died, he might not have welcomed it. In *God Emperor*, Leto is revealed to be a selfless character, harsh but fair; the very avatar of godly power, despite the fact that his humanity makes him question his own actions. In Dick's cosmology, and in fact in the cosmology of Jacob Boehme, God is an ultimately ineffable force as one might expect, though that disclosure stopped neither man from attempting to explore the methodology and mindset of God as an omnipotent power.

The real tragedy for Timothy Archer in *Transmigration*, as indeed for Dick himself, is that their respective quests for knowledge of God are doomed to failure. Timothy Archer dies in the Dead Sea Desert attempting to look for his answers, and Dick – in writing the Valis Trilogy and in working endlessly on his *Exegesis* – likewise died looking for his answers, and it seems before any meaningful revelations could be found. In both cases, the search for the truth, for the hidden world, is also a search for identity: Dick regarded himself as a Christian, but his faith – his identity as a Christian – was jeopardised by the questions he was posing and the alternative religious traditions he was exploring. For Timothy Archer in *Transmigration*, it is the

⁶⁵ H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Call of Cthulhu.' *H. P. Lovecraft Omnibus 3: The Haunter of the Dark* (London: HarperCollins, 1994) 61. The story's narrator posits that 'the most merciful thing in the world [...] is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance [...] and it was not meant that we should voyage far.'

discovery of the Zadokite documents and the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls that prompts his crisis of faith, and leads ultimately to his resignation as Episcopalian Bishop of the Diocese of California. By the novel's end, Timothy's religious identity has been destroyed; he is a tumult of conflicting beliefs, and has more than once turned to occultism in his search for legitimacy in the Christian belief system, for 'validation' of his faith. The paradox is that faith is not something one seeks to validate; either it is there, intact and unspoiled, or else it does not exist at all, and perhaps was never there in the first place.⁶⁶

Taverner's own quest in *Flow* is rather more mundane. Taverner is a creature of the material world, built up by it and made famous by it, a creature whose needs are entirely physical. All he seeks is a return to the lifestyle he knew, to the reality he knew, as the star of the *Jason Taverner Show* which is screened, as the reader is told, at 9 every Tuesday evening. The force behind Taverner's shift into the parallel world in which he does not exist is of secondary importance to Taverner. In trying to ascertain the nature of the force, he often experiences sensations of panic; he, a 'six', psychologically superior to any ordinary human in the novel's world, is nevertheless overcome by the same worry that would assail a lesser human mind.⁶⁷ Yet that at the same time seems to form Taverner's main strength: he does not allow himself to get caught up in metaphysical debate in his thinking, and seeks only a return to what for him constitutes normality. Normality for Taverner is signified by solid objects, tangible things that can be touched and manipulated. He does not know how or why his identity has been erased, but it is the physical concerns that provoke him over and above the metaphysical. When his world starts to 'leak back', his records start appearing in private collections and in jukeboxes; people start to recognise him as a

⁶⁶ *Transmigration*, 82. Timothy Archer, speaking with his daughter-in-law Angel Archer, says: "I'm not sure I'm a Christian. I'm now not sure there in fact is such a thing as Christianity."

⁶⁷ See for example *Flow*: 20, 177, and 179.

celebrity again.⁶⁸ Dick's characters often display a distinct bipolarity of interests: Taverner is perhaps the protagonist of the novel, but the real subject of it is Police General Felix Buckman, the policeman to which the book's title refers. Buckman becomes much more emotionally tied to the evolving mystery of Taverner's disappearance and reappearance and the crises that mystery provokes, and is shown – despite his flaws – to be a compassionate, caring human being in a way that Taverner is not.⁶⁹ Dick's argument that you must be against the world in order to penetrate behind it, to the truths that really matter, is paramount here: Taverner's material wealth and privileges are all that matters to him, and so the world comes to take him as one of its own, whereas Buckman's life is left largely in tatters. The dichotomy between Buckman and Taverner becomes explicit to the reader as the novel closes and there is no doubt that Taverner is merely a creature of the world in contrast to the compassionate, sensitive Buckman, whose concern – as the reader ultimately learns – is for humanity itself.⁷⁰ Dick gives an interesting take on Buckman as a policeman. As a part of the state machinery, Buckman should – in Dick's novel – be ruthless, uncompromising, oppressive and evil. Instead, by taking the reader into Buckman's mind, Dick humanises the character to the extent that by the novel's end, Buckman has in fact become 'more human'; he stops existing as a creature of the Black Iron Prison state and comes instead to stand against it in wholehearted opposition as the reader learns in the novel's 'Epilogue'.

⁶⁸ *Flow*, 180. On hearing his record play on the jukebox, Taverner feels elation: "God damn it, *it's there.*" His world is back and now that he has it, the questions as to why it vanished in the first place essentially become meaningless to him.

⁶⁹ *Flow*, 24 – 5. Here a 'psionic' (telepathic) police nark, Ed, discovers that Taverner holds racist views towards black people when Ed reads his mind. The world of the novel is one in which blacks have been systematically sterilised to control their population and they are literally dying out. Ed is disgusted when Taverner admits "There're enough blacks alive to suit me". The supposedly perfect 'sixes' are the replacement for black people in the novel, who are treated by the state as being genetically inferior. See also to p.4 of this chapter of the thesis.

⁷⁰ There are religious parallels to Christianity, of course. NT Matt. 6:24: Jesus, addressing a multitude of listeners, says: "You cannot serve God and mammon."

The dominant theme of *Flow* is the rediscovery of lost identity or the discovery of new identity; for Taverner, this is a simple return to his opulent, celebrity lifestyle, which is all he desires. For Buckman, it is the realisation that compassion and love towards human beings should form the crux of his own identity and purpose – and the reader learns in the ‘Epilogue’ to *Flow* that Buckman is assassinated for writing an autobiographical exposé on the apparatus of the police system that is stifling humanity.⁷¹ In Dick’s novels, rising up to confront the world through experiencing dissatisfaction with it as being flawed, or even imprisoned, results most frequently in terrible punishment for the person who attempts it.⁷² Timothy Archer ultimately dies in *Transmigration*, and Buckman, too, in *Flow*; which can be seen as the ultimate price for trying to hold onto their human identity. A similar fate awaits Bob Arctor in *A Scanner Darkly*, whose dual persona as the police officer ‘Fred’, combined with drug abuse (the drug here is ‘Substance D’), results in his becoming permanently brain-damaged, in fact brain-dead; no longer truly human, he is reduced to the status of an insect, a ‘reflex machine’ as Dick describes it.

Christopher Palmer reads *Scanner* as being didactic, a story that carries an anti-drug message. This seems to contradict what Dick himself wrote in his ‘Author’s Note’ to *Scanner*, where he writes: ‘There is no moral in this novel; it is not bourgeois’, but Palmer’s assessment is convincing.⁷³ The ‘Author’s Note’ is a moving account of the various friends Dick had who fell victim to drug abuse, and thus victim, as Dick writes, ‘to an error in judgement’. According to Lawrence Sutin, Dick was emotionally struck by *Scanner*’s poignancy: ‘[He] cried often during the long

⁷¹ *Flow*, p.229

⁷² Philip K. Dick, *A Scanner Darkly* (London: Millennium, 1999) 121. Here Donna Hawthorne addresses Bob Arctor: “What’s there really in this world, Bob? It’s a stopping place to the next where they punish us here because we were born evil.”

⁷³ *Scanner*, 218-19. Dick’s ‘Author’s Note’ is presented here. The Note also appears as a scrolling rubric at the conclusion of Richard Linklater’s film *A Scanner Darkly* (2006).

nighttime stints writing *Scanner* . . . he would type until he collapsed from exhaustion, then sleep an hour or two and go at it again'.⁷⁴ Fatigue is another adversary of human identity in Dick's fiction, usually manifest through the intrusion of entropy into the world (as in the novel *Ubik*).

The protagonist of *Scanner*, Bob Arctor, is also an undercover agent with the police. As a police agent, Arctor is equipped with a 'scramble suit' that disguises his appearance and voice, and he is given the name 'Fred' (as discussed in Chapter II). Arctor's job is to expose the dealers of Substance D, and ultimately to find the place where it is manufactured, and he sets himself up as a drug user, a dooper, in a household that includes fellow beatniks Jim Barris and Ernie Luckman, and features occasional visits from a mutual friend, Charles Freck. All Arctor has to do, in his dooper guise, is live in his house. There are recording devices, visual and audio, hidden around the house and called scanners. As Fred, Arctor has to report on the comings and goings of everyone in the house, including himself – Bob Arctor – in order to keep fellow police officers from guessing his identity and perhaps blowing his cover. Early on in the novel, Fred's superior, Hank, orders Fred to observe Arctor primarily, over and above the other men⁷⁵. Fred/Arctor is of course dismayed, but as the novel progresses, his doping gradually destroys his mind and it becomes more and more difficult for him to remember that he is both Fred and Arctor; he becomes confused. Finally, Hank tells Fred that Barris is the man that the police are really interested in⁷⁶, after revealing that Fred's assignment watching Arctor's house is over. Hank reveals that he has already realised who 'Fred' is at this point when he speaks to Fred:

⁷⁴ Lawrence Sutin, *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (New York: Harmony Books, 1989) 205. Sutin also presents here what he terms a 'fitting coda' to the writing of *Scanner* in the form of one of Dick's *Exegesis* entries made in 1977: "I can see what I have done to transmute those terrible days into something worthwhile".

⁷⁵ *Scanner*, 45.

⁷⁶ *Scanner*, 182.

“You and I have spent a lot of time rapping together. I pieced it together a long time ago. That you’re Arctor.”

“I’m *who*?” he said, staring at Hank the scramble suit facing him. “I’m Bob Arctor?” He could not believe it. It made no sense to him. It did not fit anything he had done or thought; it was grotesque.⁷⁷

The grotesquery for Fred comes through the ludicrous revelation that he is Arctor. As Fred/Arctor’s mind breaks down, the logic of his assignment has been lost – he has come to view Arctor as being an outsider, a foreign quantity that has no bearing on his own, now obscured (actually occluded) identity. He has become a bipolar personality, and does not recognise any part of himself in Arctor’s life as a beatnik. What for Hank should be a simple admission to Fred that he knows Fred’s real identity becomes instead a shocking revelation to Arctor; he cannot understand how he can be a hybrid identity incorporating himself as both police agent and beatnik.

It is interesting that in Richard Linklater’s 2006 film version of Dick’s novel, the theme of identity crisis is imagined on-screen in explicit fashion.



Fig. 1. Two images of ‘Fred’, actually Bob Arctor in a scramble suit, from Richard Linklater’s 2006 film adaptation of Dick’s novel. The two images show how the scramble suit was represented within a few seconds of screen-time: with many fragments and faces blending to create a whole (and false) image. The resemblance of the right-hand image to Philip K. Dick is probably intentional

⁷⁷ *Scanner*, 181.

The visually striking scramble suit animation is one aspect of this; but there is also the fact that Linklater, who wrote the screenplay for the film, decided to amalgamate four notable characters from Dick's novel into just two. The first such character in the film is Charles Freck, who in the novel is two characters (Jerry Fabin is the second). The second character is Donna, who is revealed in the film to be Hank as well. It is perfectly plausible for example that Freck/Fabin were amalgamated to become one character in the film simply to save on screen time. However the effect on a reader of the book who then sees the film is, at first, confusion. This, along with the merging of Donna with Hank, helps make explicit the theme of identity crisis that is prevalent in the book without weighing down the film with explanatory narrative or additional dialogue.

All this confusion takes its toll on Arctor in the novel as well as the film. Arctor's mind finally switches off.⁷⁸ Arctor is carted off to New-Path, a rehabilitation facility, and there is given another identity as 'Bruce', and given also menial tasks to perform to keep him busy.⁷⁹ Arctor, now Bruce, is discussed by Donna Hawthorne and a member of staff at New-Path, Mike Westaway, as they sit together at a McDonald's fast food stand. Donna, actually an undercover federal agent, now reveals to the reader her suspicions that Substance D is grown and manufactured in rehabilitation clinics like New-Path in Santa Ana by the very people the drug has 'burned out', in a sinister twist to the novel.⁸⁰ She asks Mike what the name of the drug means, and he says "*Mors ontologica*. Death of the spirit. The identity. The essential nature".⁸¹ In what becomes an inversion of the situation for Taverner in

⁷⁸ *Scanner*, 187.

⁷⁹ *Scanner*, 191.

⁸⁰ *Exhilaration*, 212-13. Christopher Palmer observes that this is the only way characters 'get into the novel', by being an addict/police agent 'literally or metaphorically'. He argues that the 'gallantry' which Dick tries to infuse Donna with at the novel's end 'does not work.'

⁸¹ *Scanner*, 202.

Flow, Bruce's identity is wiped out not by extraneous force, but by his own substance abuse – his own 'error in judgement', as Dick termed it. The world still exists, but is hidden from Bruce/Arctor; there is a veil across it which he himself has created. Unlike Taverner, Bruce/Arctor cannot act, even in an impotent way, to bring his world back.

Palmer points out in *Exhilaration* that there are no invasive, extraterrestrial forces, intrusions from other realities, that manifest in *Scanner*, 'unless we count the dopers' drug trips'.⁸² However, the social decay delineated in *Scanner* bears all the hallmarks of Dick's Black Iron Prison. Decay and entropy are not as dramatic, not as marked, as they are in *Ubik* (1969) but the signs are clear: the world of *Scanner* is another dystopia. Because of this, the story that Donna tells Bob, about one Tony Amsterdam, who experienced a vision of God and then a doorway, 'very pleasing', into another world, is important.⁸³ That reality, the true world, is hidden but still present in *Scanner*, and the fact that it can only be accessed by substance abuse is irrelevant, especially given how many of Dick's fictional realities are seemingly accessed, maintained or lost through drugs in his novels.⁸⁴

Christopher Palmer's observation that characters in the novel must be addicts or agents in order to be incorporated into the novel in the first place takes on a new significance when one considers the plot of the story, that New-Path is the place where Substance D is manufactured and thus (perhaps) part of a vast conspiracy involving both the police and the drug dealers. If the two sides are truly one organisation, playing games with the people in their world, then Dick's Black Iron Prison is inescapable: the world of *Scanner* is too heavily ensconced around the

⁸² *Exhilaration*, 179.

⁸³ *Scanner*, 184 -5.

⁸⁴ For example, the drugs Can-D and Chew-Z in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965); KR-3 in *Flow*; or the cans of *Ubik* in the eponymous novel (1969) which also find primeval incarnation as bottles of tonic with dubious ingredients.

people in it, and all of them – except for Tony Amsterdam – have fallen for the illusion, for the ‘seeming world’, instead of the hidden, true world behind it. The novel is deeply concerned with surveillance; its world is a paranoid nightmare in which everything is subject to intensive scrutiny. The police spy on the dopers, but (through Barris) the dopers spy on the police (Arctor) and the police spy on themselves (Fred vs. Arctor).

When Charles Freck commits suicide, he swallows down ‘kinky psychedelics’ with his expensive wine instead of the barbiturates he had paid for, and realises then that he will now be subject to an eternal trip. Obliging, an eight-foot tall creature covered in eyes manifests in his room, carrying a scroll, and begins reading Freck’s sins out to him.⁸⁵ This scene, which ends with Freck thinking ‘at least I got good wine’, serves to highlight the novel’s surveillance motif and emphasises with black humour the ridiculousness of the delusional paranoiac’s predicament. By reading out Freck’s sins, the creature gains instant superiority over Freck, knowing his name and history as, presumably, he has always been watching Freck from somewhere beyond the boundaries of accepted human reality. Freck has no idea what the creature is, and can guess only at its function, not its identity. The nameless watcher, like the scramble suited police agents, has no identity of its own, and is itself impregnable to scrutiny. Like the agents, it ‘narks’ on those it has been watching, but it does so by punishing the subject of its surveillance directly rather than reporting to an agent of higher rank. The creature in this sense is its own agency, a gestalt entity that perhaps represents the unified beatnik/police conspiracy agency hinted at by the novel.

The surveillance theme that is so explicit in *Scanner* is also evident in *Flow*. Jason Taverner seeks to regain the fame that kept him in the public eye, but he is

⁸⁵ *Scanner*, 147-49.

anxious to avoid the scrutiny of the police. As an *unperson*, Taverner cannot afford to be discovered by them – but of course, he is. The status of being an *unperson* implies that Taverner himself is a fake or phoney – a simulacrum of a real person. Taverner as the reader realises is literally a mass-produced good; a product of manufactured ‘perfection’ as revealed by his ‘six’ heritage and his shallow celebrity lifestyle⁸⁶. The irony is that Taverner believes himself to be superior and unique to the legions of ‘ordinaries’, but is nothing more than a spurious creation, as fake as the irreality into which the novel projects him. Taverner, as a fake himself, of course requires fake identification in order to function in the world. Obliging, Kathy Nelson, a police informant and psychiatric patient, forges the necessary cards for him. The fake cards, however good they might seem at first, prove unequal to the task of keeping Taverner beneath notice. ‘Once they notice you, Jason realized, *they never completely close the file* [Dick’s italics]. You can never get back your anonymity. It is vital not to be noticed in the first place. But I have been.’⁸⁷ Taverner does not ever truly grasp his own identity; it is lost in a miasma of celebrity and wealth, and as the reader finds out in the novel’s ‘Epilogue’, Taverner dies after contracting a disease as a direct result of his shallow lifestyle.⁸⁸

Taverner’s concern is only for his wealth and prominence as a television star, and as soon as he begins to regain his celebrity status, he feels elated. He tries to pass on the ‘privilege’ of fame to a woman he meets while running away from the house

⁸⁶ *Flow*, 231. Here in the novel’s ‘Epilogue’ is a mention of the cherished, hand-made vase created by Mary Anne Dominic, an item that is appreciated and ‘loved’, is a direct counterpoint to Taverner’s love of mass-produced ‘things’; of common goods, items and media products. It counterpoints Taverner himself and all that Taverner stands for: he is himself essentially artificial, a product of genetic engineering.

⁸⁷ *Flow*, 75. Later, Felix Buckman reiterates the point to himself while thinking about Taverner, whom he is going to frame for the murder of Buckman’s sister, Alys: ‘Don’t ever interest us. Don’t make us want to know more about you,’ 217.

⁸⁸ *Flow*, 230. Here in the Epilogue is written: ‘Taverner, long since retired from the entertainment field, died [...] of [...] an ailment acquired by Terrans at various Martian colonies privately maintained for dubious enthrallment of the weary rich’.

where Felix and Alys Buckman live (Alys has died from a drug overdose; her private guard suspects Taverner has murdered her).⁸⁹ The woman, Mary Anne Dominic, is a skilled potter, young, shy and overweight, and Taverner's intention is to present Mary Anne as a new talent on his television show, to start her career. She refuses, saying: "Leave me alone, please. . . Can't I lead my little life the way I want to?"⁹⁰ As the polar opposite of Taverner, she elects to keep her privacy and anonymity intact. She does not require the trappings of fame to confirm her identity as Taverner does, and he leaves shortly afterward. The reader is left with the impression that Taverner feels towards Mary Anne in a way he does not feel warmth to any other woman in the novel, whether Marilyn Mason, Heather Hart, Ruth Rae or Alys Buckman, all of whom Taverner regards simply as sex objects. That alone may be Taverner's salvation, the one thing that frees him, if only for a short time, from his self-absorption. This mirrors Buckman's own compassion in the novel, although the extent of Taverner's magnanimity extends only to Mary Anne, and certainly not to humanity as a whole.

Police General Felix Buckman has been investigating the bizarre phenomenon of Taverner's non-existence, but no file exists for him on any computer; and to erase all records would prove to be, in Buckman's opinion, impossible given the intricate machinery and vast resources at the disposal of the police. Buckman is shocked when he discovers that Taverner really is who he claimed all along to be – a famous celebrity. The file on Jason Taverner that Buckman has been asking for arrives on his desk despite the fact that previous attempts to find the file had yielded nothing (for obvious reasons); but now Taverner's reality is coming back. The file contains a publicity photograph of Taverner and clipped to it is a memo that reads '*Courtesy of*

⁸⁹ *Flow*, 168.

⁹⁰ *Flow*, 184.

the Jason Taverner show, nine o'clock Tuesday nights on NBC: ““Jesus God,”

Buckman said. The gods, he thought, are playing with us. Pulling off our wings’.⁹¹

Buckman calls the television network, NBC, asking them how long they have featured Taverner’s show, and finds out they have done so for three years. But Buckman, who always watches television, has not heard of the show. This, following the death of Buckman’s sister, Alys, with whom Buckman has been involved with in an incestuous relationship, proves too much for Buckman who grows angry, feeling perhaps duped and foolish.⁹² Taverner’s presence at Buckman’s home, with Alys at the time of her death, provides Buckman with an opportunity to redirect his grief and anger at losing Alys by attempting to frame Taverner for her murder. Not wanting the scandal of his relationship with Alys to get out, Buckman opts to release a story that is ‘more lurid than theirs’.⁹³ Alys’s death itself becomes a motif for decay and entropy in *Flow*’s world: Taverner discovers Alys’s body in the bathroom of her house. Affected by what he takes to have been mescaline she offered him, he sees Alys’s body as an old, yellowing skeleton. The theme of entropy in *Scanner* and *Ubik* find incarnation here, too; the decay of people and objects is a sign, in Dick’s worlds, of malfunction – of sickness.

The story Buckman fabricates revolves around the fact that he knows that his sister had had a brief affair with Taverner’s girlfriend, Heather Hart. Taverner, jealous over the relationship, decided to kill Alys. Taverner meanwhile, despite running from Buckman’s house where Alys died from a drugs overdose, has no idea that Buckman

⁹¹ *Flow*, 194.

⁹² *Flow*, 166.

⁹³ *Flow*, 192. By ‘theirs’, Buckman refers to Police Marshals Holbein and Ackers, who have reason to dislike him for his past good treatment of political prisoners and students kept in the Forced Labour Camps. Holbein and Ackers originally had Buckman demoted, and he knows they will jump at the chance to wreck his career as a police general by using the investigation of Alys’s death to expose Buckman’s incestuous relationship with his sister.

intends to frame him. His euphoria at the fact that his reality is coming back is obvious:

Jason Taverner said to himself, My luck has turned. It's all come back, everything I lost. Thank God!

I'm the happiest man in the whole fucking world, he said to himself. This is the greatest day of my life. He thought. You never appreciate it until you lose it, until all of a sudden you don't have it anymore. Well, for two days I lost it and now it's back and now I appreciate it.⁹⁴

Ultimately, as the reader learns in the novel's 'Epilogue', the attempt to frame Taverner fails. Buckman has cause to regret his vengeful attempt to frame Taverner, which in the end would have been an empty victory – Taverner being the petty and shallow man that he is. The reader also learns that the entire episode has been caused by Alys's experimentation with a drug called KR-3, which alters not only the perception of the user but the reality of the world the user inhabits, effectively allowing the user – through wish-fulfilment fantasy – to manipulate reality, separating it into two parallel worlds.⁹⁵ As the parallel worlds merge back into one, Taverner's reality, his hidden world, comes back as well. Buckman, consumed by grief for his sister and guilt over trying to frame Taverner, drives away from his office in the police headquarters in a completely flustered state, and driving around randomly, eventually finds a gas station in which a black man is refuelling his own car.⁹⁶

Crying continually, feeling overwhelming sorrow and a generalised pity for humanity in general, Buckman lands his quibble (a flying car) at the gas station intending to communicate his sense of loss and anguish. He draws a heart, pierced by an arrow, on a slip of paper, and gives it to the black man – who ignores it because it makes no sense. Buckman leaves in his quibble, only to start crying again. He lands again at the gas station, and this time approaches the black man and hugs him.

⁹⁴ *Flow*, 199.

⁹⁵ *Flow*, 208-212.

⁹⁶ *Flow*, 220-224.

Eventually, Buckman lets the man go and makes to return to his quibble, but the man – who introduces himself as Montgomery L. Hopkins – ‘flashes on’ what Buckman is trying to communicate, and invites him to spend some time at his – Montgomery’s – house, with his family. Buckman agrees to do so, and then leaves; he thinks, ‘Flow, my tears’, a statement which Dick informs the reader, through Buckman’s thoughts, is taken from ‘the first piece of abstract music ever written. John Dowland in his Second Lute Book in 1600’.⁹⁷ Buckman, supposedly a hard-nosed police general whom Taverner has reason to fear, has found new identity through this crisis, as a champion, really, of humanity, or at least human values and human compassion.⁹⁸

The ‘Epilogue’ that follows this scene is strange in that it explains the various fates of the novel’s major characters. Christopher Palmer writes that the ‘Epilogue’ is ‘standard in realist novels . . . but surprising in a novel whose chief premise has been the suspension of time and place brought about by Alys’s drug and its effects on Taverner. In fact the tone of the ‘Epilogue’ is sardonic, as though Dick insults the characters’.⁹⁹ But the ‘Epilogue’ can be interpreted another ironic way. It is an example of Dick’s deadpan humour simply because the novel is about a shifting, unstable world and the ‘Epilogue’ ties it up with a ‘real-world’ conclusion, complete with dates for various future events that occur in the characters’ lives. Seen this way, after the emotional final scene with Buckman and Hopkins, the ‘Epilogue’ comes across as a downbeat joke. If this was Dick’s intention, then the humour might seem to jeopardise the seriousness of both Taverner’s quest for the real world and Buckman’s compassionate epiphany concerning humankind. But then again, the casual dismissal of Taverner’s life in the ‘Epilogue’ only serves to highlight the

⁹⁷ *Flow*, p.224

⁹⁸ *Flow*, p.127. Buckman convinces Taverner, on their first meeting, that he (Buckman) is a ‘seven’. It is a trick that gives him an advantage over Taverner, who is at all times naturally arrogant as a ‘six’, and Taverner never finds out that Buckman is not what he claims to be.

⁹⁹ *Exhilaration*, 212.

uniqueness of the vase created by Mary Anne Dominic – an item that is cherished ‘to this day’. The vase is not forgotten as the mass-produced Jason Taverner is forgotten; Taverner’s death in fact merits only ‘small obit squibs’ in newspapers.¹⁰⁰ The vase in fact has more identity of its own than Taverner does, and in the ‘Epilogue’ Dick treats the vase as if it were one of the novel’s major characters. Finally of course, Dick used humour simply to lift the mood of his fiction, and was able to easily blend paranoia, horror, and misery with hilarity.¹⁰¹

Very early on, there appears in *Flow* a manifestation of what Dick termed ‘the Beside Helper’ in *Divine Invasion*; a presence designed to guide and protect a single human soul.¹⁰² In *Flow*, the ‘Beside Helper’ appears as a talking toy, an electronic thing, perhaps a robot, called Cheerful Charley. For a toy, Cheerful Charley exhibits a singular level of perception regarding Jason Taverner’s situation. Weirdly, it knows all about the world that has been taken, hidden really, from Taverner and it knows the steps Taverner can take to reclaim his identity as a celebrity performer. Despite the reader’s growing awareness that Taverner is flawed and shallow, his responses to the machine’s babbling are as endearing as the machine itself, and the humour of the scene plays an important part in *Flow*’s story: it highlights the fact that Taverner and the talking toy are very much alike, products of the same merchandising machine, made only to sell.¹⁰³ Taverner calls Cheerful Charley ‘junk’, as he terms the commercials that sell them on his show ‘junk’; but Taverner himself has been manufactured to the same spurious standards that will appeal to a mass audience of consumers. Dick is emphasising that Taverner and Cheerful Charley are one and the same thing – both junk. As an incarnation of a ‘Beside Helper’, Charley is strangely

¹⁰⁰ *Flow*, 230-1.

¹⁰¹ Examples of this are rife in Dick’s fiction. See especially *Ubik* (1969).

¹⁰² The ‘Beside Helper’ of *The Divine Invasion* is Linda Fox, who is revealed at the novel’s end as Herb Asher’s saviour.

¹⁰³ *Flow*, 36-7.

prescient but also exceptionally shallow – made to appeal to Taverner’s own sensibilities despite his early rejection of the toy as ‘junk’.

Taverner actually looks up Heather Hart and phones her on the advice of Cheerful Charley. A divine agency acting to help Taverner would likely have been ignored by him. Taverner is not concerned with the metaphysical, but with worldly goods. He listens to Cheerful Charley precisely because it is a product, like himself, and he can understand it even as he professes to hate it. Taverner sees the toy’s advice as wisdom, when in fact his supposedly superior ‘six’ mind should be telling him, in logical fashion, that if the world has already forgotten him so too will Heather Hart have forgotten him.¹⁰⁴ Taverner gets from Heather Hart what he deserves for listening to a toy. Hart doesn’t recognise Taverner when he makes a video telephone call to her, and she calls him a ‘twerp fan’.¹⁰⁵ Hart, herself a ‘six’, displays about as much empathy and compassion for Taverner’s predicament as Taverner displays in regard to everyone else’s problems. And when Taverner’s reality finally does ‘leak back’, he is not in truth regaining anything except another spurious world – a ‘fake fake’, whereas what Buckman gains is the courage to face up to the world and stand against its tyrannical regime in realising that he has sympathy for the plight of humanity.

A constant theme in Dick’s novels is the idea of ‘waking up’ from a consensual delusion, as in Herb Asher’s summation that we as humans look at the world in a ‘hypnotised, asleep way’ and that ‘it is the perceptions [of the world] that change, not the world’.¹⁰⁶ Like Buckman in *Flow*, the ‘wake’ can be metaphorical, in the form of an epiphany or revelation. The hidden world, obscured by the veil of occlusion, must be fought and striven for; and in discovering the hidden world, one of Dick’s

¹⁰⁴ *Flow*, 56. ‘Cheerful Charley,’ [Taverner] thought, ‘told me to look up Heather Hart. And as everybody in TV-land knows, Cheerful Charley is never wrong.’

¹⁰⁵ *Flow*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ *Divine Invasion*, pp.198-199

characters can usually expect only further struggle, not reward.¹⁰⁷ In Dick's novels, the reality of the 'waking world' is not always stable, nor reliable. It can in fact be just as precarious as the seeming, occluding world.¹⁰⁸ Thus, characters in Dick's fiction never know in whether or not they are 'awake' and in the real world or 'asleep' in the spurious world.

Nevertheless, the same 'wake up' messages that appear in *Divine Invasion* also form the teaching of Edgar Barefoot, who gives seminars on Arabic mysticism and who appears in *Transmigration*.

The story of *Transmigration* culminates in the spirit of Bishop Timothy Archer coming back from the dead, to inhabit the mind of Bill Lundborg, the schizophrenic son of Kirsten Lundborg, Timothy's mistress. Edgar Barefoot believes that Bill is the *bodhisattva*, and that Timothy Archer really does inhabit Bill's mind.¹⁰⁹ Angel though, having seen 'occult madness' take away the faith and lives of her friends and family, is not quite prepared to believe that 'Bounding Bill the Dingaling' is the vessel for the ghost of Timothy Archer – her father-in-law, and her friend.¹¹⁰ Timothy Archer, the former Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of California, has already lost his faith in Christ and in Christianity, and is searching for true knowledge of God that will revalidate his faith, and prove the existence of Christ. The crisis for Timothy occurs when Zadokite documents and the Qumran scrolls, the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls, are discovered and research begins on them¹¹¹. Angel, who admires Timothy

¹⁰⁷ Philip K. Dick, *Ubik* (London: Millennium, 2000) 127 and 130. Glen Runciter contacts Joe Chip, who is in 'half-life', a form of suspended animation, by manifesting himself in Chip's by means of graffiti. Runciter's urgent message is that Chip must realise that he – Chip – has been killed.

¹⁰⁸ *Ubik*'s final twist is that Runciter is the one who is dead, and Chip has been trying to contact him – in which case the whole novel is nothing more than a fantasy of Runciter's as he whiles away his time in 'half-life'.

¹⁰⁹ *Transmigration*, p.221. Barefoot explains to Angel Archer that the *bodhisattva* is someone who has, in Buddhist thought, achieved *Nirvana* but turned it down in order to return to the world and help other people; see footnote 10.

¹¹⁰ *Transmigration*, 40.

¹¹¹ *Transmigration*, 54 and 63-84.

as a powerful intellectual as well as a friend, is worried that this crisis of faith, and his burgeoning affair with Kirsten Lundborg, will cause him to tumble, and will in fact cause all people – as Angel sees it – to ‘tumble’ with him.¹¹² As the novel explains, the Zadokite documents and the Qumran scrolls posit a new possibility for Christian scholars, that the teachings of Jesus were in fact not those of a single man, but ‘the aggregate belief-system of an entire sect. A group product’.¹¹³ Furthermore, these sources date back two hundred years before Jesus was born; and so if they are really the source of the Synoptic books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark and Luke), the teachings cannot come from Christ. A great deal of scholarly study has been carried out in this area, and extensive analysis is not appropriate here; but certain facets of the theories that feature in *Transmigration* are worth noting to provide background and context to the novel.

John Allegro, in his book *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Myth* (1979), points out that the scrolls were likely the work of the Essenes, a breakaway Hebrew sect with their roots in Gnosticism. For any Gnostic sect, the truth of the world, as discussed in the Introduction to the thesis, was that it was the work of an evil creator. Such speculation would of course be interpreted as blasphemy by the Pharisees for example, but Gnostic belief systems built in a ‘way out’ for a good Creator to exist, by creating a dualist cosmology. Without the adoption of a dualist system, the Gnostics would not have been able to explain away the presence of evil in the world and their faith would have been undermined.¹¹⁴ Allegro notes foul-sounding rituals

¹¹² *Transmigration*, 44. Angel, speaking to her husband Jeff, speaks of Timothy and says: “Do you grasp it? If he tumbles, we all take a fall. We all are doomed.”

¹¹³ *Transmigration*, 82. As in *Flow* and other of Dick’s novels, what is mass-produced is generally not desirable: the prevalence of the ersatz is a manifestation of entropy. As a contrast, the product Ubik in the eponymous novel is profoundly difficult to acquire.

¹¹⁴ Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism* (Oxford: Alden Press, 1985) 149. Lieu writes: ‘A problem inherent in a monotheistic religious system like Judaism or Christianity is that of the origin of evil. Christianity sought the answer in human volition and free will.’

that have their origins, seemingly, in ancient fertility cults, such as when Gnostics would anoint themselves with semen, or eat semen and menses as their Eucharist, finding value in these substances as being divine.¹¹⁵ Intoxicants were also employed in these rituals, leading to what Kirsten Lundborg describes as ‘orgies’ when explaining to Angel how such findings have upset Timothy.¹¹⁶

However the Zadokite writings that Timothy has been scrutinising during his trips to see the scroll fragments in London hint at something, *anokhi*, that means in Hebrew ‘I am’, which is synonymous with God. The way in which the word *anokhi* is used in the writings is new, however, and nothing like it has been seen before. As Timothy observes, they used the word not in the sense that they knew of it or thought about it, but that they *possessed* it. His excitement wanes at first when he realises that the *anokhi* was a form of mushroom, grown in caves, detoxified so as not to be deadly but still strong enough to induce hallucinations.¹¹⁷ In what Angel Archer comes to interpret as a joke (but a serious one, given the possible consequences for Timothy Archer), Timothy nevertheless allows himself to be caught up in the excitement of rediscovering the *anokhi* for himself. Timothy believes that, if he travels to the Dead Sea Desert, he may in eating the *anokhi* come to regain lost knowledge. He says to Angel: “Think what it would mean!”¹¹⁸

For Timothy Archer however, as for Dick himself, his quest for knowledge (‘gnosis’) of God and for the hidden world, was a hopeless task. He goes to the Dead Sea Desert, but being an unpractical man (as Angel observes many times in the

¹¹⁵ John M. Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Myth* (Newton Abbot: Westbridge Books, 1979) 121-132.

¹¹⁶ *Transmigration*, 91.

¹¹⁷ *Transmigration*, 90. Zadokites would make mushroom bread and broth for their Eucharist.

¹¹⁸ *Transmigration*, 209.

novel), he dies there.¹¹⁹ He becomes lost, apparently trying to climb a cliff to get his bearings, and falls down into a gorge; and all he had taken with him in his car, for his excursion in the Dead Sea Desert, were two bottles of Coca-Cola. The obsession, the madness as Angel refers to it, of the ‘Over-valent idea’ that drives one to distraction, has finally destroyed virtually everyone she loves – Timothy, Kirsten (who kills herself with barbiturates), and her husband Jeff (who shoots himself).¹²⁰

Timothy Archer’s quest for *anokhi* mirrors Taverner’s quest for the hidden world, and also Bob Arctor’s quest for identity. It also mirrors Dick’s own quest for answers, while Dick’s cosmology – his ‘blind, dark counterplayer’ vs. the Ungrund of Jacob Boehme – mirrored that of the Essenes, who as Allegro writes, ‘largely inherited [dualism] from Iranian thought [and...] identified good with light, and evil with darkness.’ The Essenes, like Dick, found a dilemma in monotheistic religion, as Lieu points out: in taking the world to be corrupt, one must believe that ‘either God was Himself evil, or He was incompetent’.¹²¹

By the end of *Transmigration*, Angel Archer has come to learn that Bill Lundborg is apparently the ‘host mind’ for Timothy Archer’s consciousness, and knows that the madness has infected him too. Bill as a character is interesting, because despite being schizophrenic, a hebephrenic, he actually begins the novel as the voice of reason amongst Angel’s group of friends, and is grounded in common, everyday activities like fixing and spray-painting cars. Like Taverner in *Flow*, Bill’s reality is fixed on objects, on tangible ‘things’ that keep him rooted to the world. Bill more closely mirrors Mary Anne Dominic than Taverner, however: his desire to repair and to maintain cars stands in opposition to entropy just as Dominic’s pottery

¹¹⁹ *Transmigration*, 18. Here for example it is explicitly demonstrated that Timothy Archer does not relate well to the ‘real world.’

¹²⁰ *Transmigration*, 104-106. Here Dick presents a definition of the ‘over-valent idea.’

¹²¹ *Scrolls*, 138.

does. Taverner is not a positive, creative force in the same way as Bill Lundborg and Dominic are creative forces – he is, like his audience, a consumer.¹²² Bill, struggling to adapt to a society that locks him away, is frequently the only character – aside from Angel – to maintain his equilibrium in the face of sweeping madness.

By the novel's end however and to Angel's dismay, Bill loses his grip on tangible reality as he begins to disclose his 'true nature' as being both Bill Lundborg and Timothy Archer (in essence a restaging of the Bob Arctor/Fred identity crisis in *Scanner*). Bill, like Timothy Archer, talks about things with Angel that only she and Timothy could have known about, but it's clear that – despite any evidence to the contrary – Angel has had enough of hearing about occult theories of the dead coming back to haunt the living, such as Timothy believed happened to him after his son shot himself.¹²³ Instead, she assumes that Bill's schizophrenia is simply taking on a new, grimmer aspect as he begins thinking more and more like Timothy Archer.

Bill describes the takeover, Timothy Archer's transmigration, in very similar terms to how Dick described 2-3-74:

“About a month after his death, Tim came back to me. I didn't understand what was happening. I couldn't figure it out. Lights and colors and then an alien presence in my mind. Another personality much smarter than me, thinking all sorts of things I never thought. And he knows Greek and Latin and Hebrew, and all about theology. He thought about you very clearly. He had wanted to take you with him to Israel . . . That night at the Chinese restaurant.”¹²⁴

If the reader takes Bill's account at face value, then 'Tim' is not only Timothy Archer come back to live inside Bill, but also the artefact Valis; or Thomas, the First Century Christian, whom Dick thought might be sharing his mind. The outside world will never understand what is happening inside Bill Lundborg's mind; his

¹²² Taverner's first reaction on seeing one of Mary Anne Dominic's vases is to put it on his television show, thereby turning it into just another mass consumer good. In this is Taverner's desire to bend something unique to more closely resemble his own existence as a manufactured product.

¹²³ *Transmigration*, 232. Bill talks about a conversation Angel had with Timothy at a private dinner in a restaurant before Timothy left America to fly to Israel.

¹²⁴ *Transmigration*, 232.

understanding, such as it is, is his own, despite anything he might say to others in trying to communicate that understanding. In this way *Transmigration* closely resembles Dick's own experiences, and replicates the same tragedy. What Dick thought he had gained in terms of information and theories, cosmological and theological data on the hidden world, he was unable to communicate fully to others; at least not in a manner that satisfied him. Dick's personality can be said to find incarnation (or a manifold transmigration) in the novel in Angel Archer, but also in Bill Lundborg. Identifying himself with a schizophrenic character, Dick clearly implies that what he was truly afflicted with was not AI Voice or Zebra or Valis or whatever one wants to label it, but the inability to express the information he believed was within him, an inability to teach others of the revelations he himself had been subject to. Dick's difficulty in communicating his theological and cosmological philosophies to people through religious discourse such as appears in the *Exegesis*, and in cogent form, may have been the catalyst that provoked him into utilising his fiction as the medium through which to attempt to teach his belief system.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ See also the Introduction to the thesis for a discussion of the didactic tenor of Dick's work.

CHAPTER FIVE: ENCRYPTION AND HOLOGRAPHY

Before embarking upon a discussion of the way in which Dick employed the concept of ‘holograms’ and ‘holographic reality’ in his work, specifically as he used them to explore the idea that the world is ‘irreal’, it is perhaps important to realise that he began to do so long before his ‘mystical revelations’ during 2-3-74. Writing in *The Mammoth Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (2001), George Mann states that ‘Dick’s early work [...] is more straightforward in its narrative and characterisation than the complex explorations of reality that he was to write later.’¹ This however is certainly not true of Dick’s novel *Eye in the Sky* (1957), in which clear parallels to later work – particularly the theological aspects of that later work – are evident. Although *Eye in the Sky* resembles *Ubik* (1969) in many ways, it has in fact a great deal in common with Dick’s post-2-3-74 fiction.

Eye in the Sky begins as several other of Dick’s reality-bending novels begin: with an accident (or a calamity of some kind). Work that follows this model of accident leading to a strange or new world includes *Dr. Bloodmoney* (1965; begins with a nuclear war), *Ubik* (begins with the explosion of a bomb, and either an attempted or actual assassination), and *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said* (1974; Jason Taverner is attacked by an alien creature that buries itself in his chest). In all four of these works, the initial accident causes unconsciousness in the novel’s main characters; and when they awaken, they find themselves ‘somewhere else’. In *Flow*, Jason Taverner finds himself in a world where he no longer has celebrity status; in *Ubik*, Joe Chip finds himself the butt of a cosmic joke when the man he thought had been killed informs him that Joe, in fact, is the one who has died; in *Bloodmoney*, mutants arise with strange telepathic powers; and in *Eye*, the malfunction of a

¹ George Mann, ed., *The Mammoth Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (London: Robinson, 2001) 119.

particle-light beam renders eight people unconscious, before they wake up in the first of a bizarre series of fantastic, alternate worlds, which become increasingly nightmarish as the novel progresses.

Themes that Dick was to come back to later on in his life are all present in *Eye*. Firstly there is the fact that the first alternate world the characters encounter deals very specifically with God (or a twisted incarnation thereof); and each world thereafter does the same, except that only the first world deals with an actual deity rather than a surrogate one. Secondly, the characters in these alternate worlds perceive that they are, in fact, still unconscious at the scene of the accident, and that they are gradually waking up; they can *see* the real world beyond the phantasmagoria of the worlds projected upon them by the light beam. This occurs in the same way, for example, that Manfred can see beyond the actuality of Mars to its decaying future in *Martian Time-Slip* (1964); or when Tagomi sees through the façade of his world to the true world beyond in *The Man in the High Castle* (1962). The characters in *Eye* see the reality of their situation towards the end of the novel, as their unconscious bodies begin to wake; and they see the reality earlier on in their dreams, when they ‘sleep’ in their fantasy worlds. Thirdly and most importantly, the text of *Eye* itself identifies key themes that seem to have fascinated Dick from the very first: religion (especially in its mediaeval aspect) and dualism in particular is the first such theme; decay and breakdown of ‘reality’ is the second; This suggests that 2-3-74 was hardly the catalyst for Dick’s mystical thought in his *Exegesis* and in his fiction, but that it was merely symptomatic of his earlier thoughts and observations.

As an example, Jack Hamilton – the protagonist in *Eye* – is asked by Joan Reiss if he bought a particular print by Paul Klee from her book and art shop. Hamilton admits that he ‘probably’ has, and Reiss goes on to say that she ‘has never been able

to decide what Klee is trying to say.’ To this, Hamilton responds: ‘Maybe he isn’t trying to say anything. Maybe he’s just having a good time.’² According to an excerpt from one of Dick’s 1974 letters (written in July of that year) as presented in Lawrence Sutin’s *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (1989), Dick experienced a ‘vision’ wherein he saw many thousands of paintings appearing and replacing themselves before his eyes at ‘dazzling speed’. Dick alleged that he ‘[recognised] the styles of Paul Klee and one or two of Picasso’s various periods’. Dick claimed this was an ‘exciting and moving’ sight, and claimed it was a ‘miracle’; but the point here is a simple one. In *Eye*, as soon as Hamilton and the other eight victims of the particle-beam accident wake up in their first fantasy world, one of the first things the characters talk about is the artwork of Paul Klee. Dick associates the artwork, even at this early stage in his career, with ‘unreality’ or ‘irreality’. Klee himself, a Swiss painter whom Nazi Germany denounced after 1933 for producing ‘degenerate artwork’, is a difficult painter to classify as he had worked variously in sundry fields including cubism, expressionism and surrealism. Many of his paintings are abstract works, and subject to various interpretations – which may well have been something that Dick admired. Having used Klee in *Eye* as a kind of symptom of the unravelling world the novel’s characters find themselves in, it is tempting to believe that this might have informed Dick’s experiences during 2-3-74.

The actual cause in *Eye* for the breakdown of reality for its central characters is notably close to Dick’s own alleged experiences of the beam of pink light, ‘Valis’, which he claimed projected information into his mind that allowed him to perceive the world more intuitively and see beyond the ‘irreal’ to the underlying reality of the universe. Thus, *Eye* can be read as a science-fiction fantasy that prefigures the events

² Philip K. Dick, *Eye in the Sky* (London: Gollancz, 2003) 30.

of 2-3-74 by seventeen years. Similarities between events in *Eye* and earlier short stories like 'The Great C' and 'Colony' (both written in 1952 and published in 1953) are also evident, especially as regards the treatment of 'sentient objects', whether computers, rocket ships, houses or carpets. In all of these stories, objects actually feed on human beings: in 'Colony' an alien entity masquerading as a rocket ship eats the characters; the Great C eats humans to sustain itself in the eponymous story; and a house attempts to eat its occupants in *Eye* (p. 200). The effect of course, as Joe Chip finds in a different way in *Ubik*, is that no object can be trusted – they are simply malevolent, whether they are trying to eat people or simply blackmailing them into giving them money to procure a specific service.

Eye begins with Jack Hamilton, a missile engineer, and his wife Marsha going on a tour of a new energy generator: the 'Belmont Bevatron', which as the tour guide Bill Laws explains, is basically a particle accelerator built for advanced research into 'cosmic ray phenomena' (*Eye*, p. 14). With them on the tour are five other people including Charley McFeyffe, a policeman who has just accused Hamilton's wife Marsha of being a Communist, which has resulted in Hamilton being fired (or at least indefinitely suspended) from his job at the missile plant as Marsha is classified as being a security risk. As a showpiece, the Bevatron is activated during the tour, whereupon it almost immediately malfunctions, and blasts the sightseers and their guide with radiation, disintegrating the observation platform on which they are standing and sending them plummeting to the ground below. The whole event takes only a moment, but the time in which the characters are then immersed in a series of fantasy worlds runs to days. Waking up in a hospital bed seems to Hamilton to be the end of the ordeal, but the impression does not last long:

[...] Things seemed to be under control.
Seemed . . . but something was wrong. [Hamilton] could feel it. Deep inside him, there was a nagging sense that something basic was out of place.

“Marsha,” he said suddenly, “you feel it?”
Hesitantly, Marsha came over beside him. “Feel what, darling?”
“I don’t know. But it’s there.”
After an anxious, undecided moment, Marsha turned to the doctor. “I told you something’s the matter. Didn’t I say that when I came back?”
“Everybody coming out of shock has a sense of unreality,” the doctor informed her.³

After Hamilton and his wife are driven home by a staff physician, Marsha tells Hamilton what it is she has found most disturbing; the fact that the staff in the hospital seemed to be unreal, vaguely-formed creatures without character or individual characteristics. The doctor who was treating Hamilton is described by Marsha as being faceless, a ‘blob [like] doctors you see in toothpaste ads’ (*Eye*, p. 26). The nurse who was present with Hamilton was likewise a vague construct, ‘a sort of composite [like] all the nurses you ever saw’ (*Eye*, p. 27). This motif of identity being hidden or distorted was most obviously taken further in Dick’s later work, *A Scanner Darkly* (1977). In *Scanner*, the undercover police officers – Bob Arctor included – wear holographic ‘scramble suits’, the technology of which projects a myriad of shifting images made up of facial and bodily composites in completely random sequence, leaving them utterly unrecognisable and rendering the individual as a ‘vague blur’.

Although it quickly becomes apparent that something is wrong with the world that the characters of *Eye* populate, Marsha is the quickest to learn the truth: that all eight of the people involved in the accident actually remain physically present within the Bevatron, although their minds have been somehow displaced into an hallucinatory world. Although disturbed by his wife’s speculations, Hamilton sets his mind to working out what has happened to them all. To the tour guide Bill Laws, and to Marsha, Hamilton says: ‘we’re still in Belmont, California. But not the same Belmont. There’ve been a few changes here and there. A few additions. There’s

³ *Eye*, 23.

somebody hanging around'.⁴ The ominous 'Somebody' implies deific influence; and preceded by Bill Laws, Hamilton discovers that religious charms, as well as prayers, have a profound effect in their now-different Belmont, and uses them to heal his 'physical' injury – an open wound on his arm, just as Laws used the same charm to heal his own broken bones.

Not entirely convinced that prayer alone will be enough to sustain him and his wife, Hamilton's next step is to go out looking for a new job, and he tracks down Doctor Guy Tillingford, an old friend of his father's, to see whether Tillingford's company ('EDA', the Electronics Development Agency) will 'take him on' (*Eye*, pp. 42-3). But Tillingford is not the scientist that Hamilton remembers; he relies now upon a 'religious prayer wheel', spinning and studying it as if consulting it for guidance. Hamilton further discovers that Tillingford – and presumably everyone else – now follows the teachings of a religious movement which he first sees incarnate in a black-bound book, the *Bayan of the Second Bab*. Disturbed, Hamilton asks Tillingford about the nature of the work people undertake at EDA, convinced – and rightly so – that it is nothing like he remembers:

"This place is still a scientific organisation, isn't it? Or is it?" [Hamilton asked].

"Still?" Puzzled, Tillingford took back his *Bayan* from Hamilton's lifeless fingers. [...]

"Let's put it this way. I've been – cut off. Deep in my own work, I've lost contact with what the rest of the field is doing." [...]

"Here, we're working with an eternal and basic problem, that of communication. [...] All of us form a team to tackle this basic problem of man's existence: keeping a well-functioning wire open between Earth and Heaven." [...]

"Other fields," Hamilton [said]. "What are they doing? Physics. What about the physicists?"

"Physics is a closed subject," Tillingford informed him. "Virtually everything about the material universe is known – was known centuries ago." [...]

"And the engineers?" [...]

"[The] Lord is a strict taskmaster, you realise; His specifications are quite exact. Frankly [...] I don't envy those fellows. One slip and" – he snapped his fingers – "*poof*."

"Poof?"

"Lightning."

"Oh," Hamilton said. "Of course."⁵

⁴ *Eye*, 40.

⁵ *Eye*, 45-8.

Shaken, Hamilton attempts to get to the root of the mystery of his new existence. Themes explored in greater detail in *Ubik* – especially those of entropy and decay – are foreshadowed in *Eye* during a confrontation with a group of workers from EDA (all described as ‘young’, ‘blond’ and sporting ‘crew cuts’ on p.52) led by Brady, a zealous follower of the Second Bab. Brady attempts to expose Hamilton as a ‘heathen’, in order to stop him from taking up the job offered to him Tillingford. A bizarre series of competitive tests ensues; and when Hamilton attempts to outwit Brady by stating a complex equation that he is sure Brady will not be able to answer, a disembodied mouth and hand – those of an angel – appear next to Brady, feeding him the required answers. “I quit,” Hamilton says, in response to this tactic (*Eye*, p. 56). Brady’s triumph is an ephemeral one however, because Hamilton convinces the angel that Brady has attempted to make him quit out of petty jealousy; in response to which, the angel ‘damns’ Brady and his colleagues, afflicting them with a monstrous curse which leaves them stunted and covered in sores. A great section of the surrounding landscape around the EDA building is also blighted, and is left dry and arid. Unfortunately, Hamilton’s car is parked within this ‘damned area’ (*Eye*, p. 60); and upon investigating, sees something not unlike the various ‘decay’ phenomena that Joe Chip has to contend with in *Ubik*: his car is broken down, its seat covers faded.

Just as in *Ubik*, the answer to the problem lies not in science or practical repair of any kind, but in divine intervention. The answer in *Eye* however, is not a miraculous aerosol spray to restore the world, but prayer. Looking in his car’s repair manual, Hamilton finds that all of the technical information has been erased, and replaced with ‘household prayers’. As soon as Hamilton mutters an affirmation of his faith in the Second Bab, the engine in his car starts: ‘It took four different common household prayers to carry the car down the highway to Belmont’ (*Eye*, p. 61). The

fifth such prayer restores the engine to normality, likewise restores the car's faded seat covers and returns to Hamilton a semblance of confidence as he realises he can use the 'laws' of this world to his advantage – so long as he knows what those laws are. As the novel progresses, it becomes obvious that the eight characters involved in the Bevatron accident are living through one another's own (often hellish, or later revealed to be hellish) interpretations of how the world works; but this is something to return to later.

The implication of the blackly comic cosmology of *Eye*, as in *Ubik*, is that faith and religion only function inside these twisted, unreal worlds, and then only in a rather demeaned or denigrated form; 'faith', *per se*, has far less significance in 'reality'. Prayers in *Eye* function in the same way that Tagomi uses a trinket – a piece of jewellery – to see beyond his unreal world in *The Man in the High Castle*; or in the same way that the drug Chew-Z allows its users to create their own fantasy worlds (albeit twisted ones) wherein they gain godlike powers in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. Trinkets (or substances, such as drugs) and prayers – whether unquantifiable or intangible – form the means by which characters shape their worlds. But a more important point should be made, in regard to the function of the *mind* in many of Dick's stories; and the mind's ability (real or imagined) to project itself onto the outside world, and to affect everyone (usually adversely) in that world. There is usually a character that holds the key to one of Dick's twisted, unreal worlds; in the case of *Eye*, as with *Ubik*, multiple characters hold those keys. The approach to these two novels differs from that taken in *Three Stigmata* or in *Martian Time-Slip* in that these multiple characters have control over fate and destiny (as compared to Palmer Eldritch alone, or Manfred Steiner alone).

In *Ubik*, Dick reveals that control over the half-life world lies with three characters: Glen Runciter (especially, as he manifests omnipresent and, more vitally, demonstrates omniscience), his wife Ella, and the sadistic boy Jory. But Dick turns everything around by the end of the novel; and it seems then that Joe Chip has control, or else that ‘reality’ has become so warped that ‘control’ itself, in the divine sense, becomes meaningless.

This notion of deific *control* is vital to understanding Dick’s interpretations of godly powers and what constitutes a ‘deity’: many of these agencies demonstrate only some, never all, of the qualities needed to be, actually, God. For example, Glen Runciter in *Ubik* is capable of manifesting himself anywhere in Joe Chip’s half-life world and so is omnipresent; he can also track developments in the half-life world, and so demonstrates omniscience; but he does not have omnipotence, and only Ubik, the product, can deliver salvation.

As stated earlier in Chapter Three, Dick was aware of the close connection between the novels *Eye in the Sky*, *Time Out of Joint*, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *Ubik* and *A Maze of Death*. That point bears repeating here and is interesting for a number of other reasons. Primarily, what stands out is Dick’s use of *unconsciousness* as a tool to introduce his characters into a new and often twisted environment, which often proves to be an environment in which ‘truth’ (singular, or series of truths; or even ‘the’ truth) can be found, in some form. On awakening, the characters experience their new and strange environment, and gradually if not immediately begin to realise that ‘something is wrong’. The manner in which characters wake up, only to find deeper truths beyond what they thought they knew, can be likened to Dick’s own cosmological ideas regarding the Creator (God, or the Ungrund as borrowed from Jacob Boehme), and the process of *anamnesis*: the idea

that in observing its creations, the amnesiac deity (through especially the ‘teaching device’ of the artefact ‘Zebra’) comes to remember itself. When the deity remembers itself fully, in Dick’s mystical system, human beings achieve apotheosis – and become one with the Creator, in a new and perfect world. *Truth* ultimately is what is achieved through this transcendence; no more falsehood remains. The process of anamnesis is literally to awaken; humanity awakens as the Creator awakens (or more properly, reawakens).

The ‘truth’ as revealed in the five novels Dick refers to in the extract is not, as might otherwise be implied, necessarily a ‘comfortable’ truth; with a prime example being *Three Stigmata*, and the utterly selfish (if not outright evil) Palmer Eldritch becoming by the novel’s end the perverse and parasitic new god of the universe. Eldritch represents a darker side to the Creator; he is not the true Creator, but Dick’s ‘dark counterplayer’, the enemy of God. He represents, in Dick’s cosmology, what would occur if the teaching apparatus of the artefact, Zebra, was to prove itself dominant to the Creator. *Ubik*, confusing as it is, at least posits benevolent ‘deities’ in the new universe shaped by the vagaries of half-life: the reader may have no idea whether Joe Chip or Glen Runciter hold the keys to this universe, but both characters are compassionate and benign, acting against the Eldritch-like character of Jory, *Ubik*’s ‘dark counterplayer’. Similarly in *Eye*, the character of Hamilton – while at no point in control – acts to foil the creators of each of the hellish worlds he is plunged into. There is a reason why the four ‘good’ characters of *Eye* (Hamilton, Marsha, Bill Laws and David Pritchett) do not themselves generate any hellish worlds during their mass hallucination: they are foils, against the other four characters, all of whom are revealed to be terribly flawed in some way, as revealed by the horrors they visit – albeit sometimes unintentionally – upon their comrades.

This introduces the second important point that Dick elucidates on in his extract from the *Exegesis*: the concept of ‘joint hallucination’. Dick rightly states that he has ‘written [the concept] up at least five times’, because other novels lean heavily on this notion; in particular *Martian Time-Slip* and *Dr. Bloodmoney* (about which more will be given later).

The first of the hellish worlds in *Eye*, and the foremost clue as to what Dick is really writing about in the novel, is the fantasy realm of Arthur Silvester, a retired soldier with some exceptionally bigoted opinions. Silvester’s world is the world of the ‘Second Bab’, ruled over by an entity – the ‘Eye in the Sky’ of the novel – called ‘(Tetragrammaton)’.⁶ In Silvester’s world, he – Silvester – has primary importance, believing himself one with God. His religion of the ‘Second Bab’ is Silvester’s interpretation of justice; it is his means of comprehending the world. A world in which nobody is rewarded for their faith or punished for their sins would be anathema to Silvester. In his confrontation with Brady, Hamilton denounces the religion as being sadistic, and angrily declares that Brady and his “Moslem” colleagues “belong back in the Middle Ages” (*Eye*, p. 55); but to Silvester, the world is perfect.

Hamilton, together with the police officer Charley McFeyffe, manage in Silvester’s world to reach heaven; floating up there by hanging onto, of all things, an umbrella (*Eye*, pp. 82-3). Silvester’s universe begins to take shape when Hamilton sees the globe of the Earth:

[They] ascended, [and] the [...] umbrella burst through [the clouds]. Instead of the chill black of night, they were rising in a dull medium of discriminate gray, an unformed expanse of colorless, shapeless nothing.

Below lay the Earth. [...]

The Earth was alone in the firmament. Around it wheeled a blazing orb, much smaller, a gnat buzzing and flickering around a giant, inert bulb of matter. That, he realized with a thrill of dismay, was the sun. It was *tiny*. And – it moved! [...]

⁶ *Tetragrammaton* means the four Hebrew letters usually given in English as YHWH (Yahweh) or JHVH (Jehovah); used as a symbol (or, as is the case in *Eye*, a substitute) for the ineffable, indescribable name of God. It is given in parentheses in *Eye* because, presumably, only the characters in the novel – having heard the name – know how to speak it.

This was the ancient Ptolemaic universe. Not his world. [...]
Having accepted this, he was not particularly surprised to observe a deep underlayer far below the grayness, a reddish film [...].
It was Hell.
And above him [...] Heaven. [...]
It was the biggest lake he had ever seen. [...] A kind of lake within a lake. [...]
It wasn't a lake. It was an *eye*. And the eye was looking at him and McFeyffe!
He didn't have to be told Whose eye it was.⁷

Hamilton and McFeyffe are forcibly ejected from Heaven by (Tetragrammaton) and sent hurtling back to the Earth; unharmed (except that McFeyffe, a Catholic, is afflicted by a plague of boils). Having garnered enough clues as to whose world everybody is trapped in – or more properly whose mind – Hamilton sets out to find Silvester. Silvester is overcome, knocked 'unconscious', and the group of people shortly discover that they have left Silvester's world, only to find themselves inside the world fantasised by Mrs. Edith Pritchett, David Pritchett's mother; a world so pristinely clean and moral that everybody and everything is sexless; including the animals:

If ever there was any doubt in [Hamilton's] mind [as to whose world they were in], it was resolved by a sight glimpsed as [they travelled out] of Belmont. Standing obediently in front of a small rural shack was a horse attached to a cart full of scrap iron: rusty sections of abandoned autos. The horse was wearing trousers.⁸

Edith Pritchett's world proves to be much more of an ordeal than Silvester's, and she has the power – as the 'deity' of her world – to abolish any object, aspect or concept in her world. A variety of things vanish from it, including but not limited to sex, cats, car horns and factories; and leading ultimately to trees, seas, land and air; which ends her fantasy world rather abruptly, as the others in the group seek to end her fantasy, of which they are thoroughly fed up, through trickery (*Eye*, pp. 166-73). As the novel progresses, each hellish world is revealed to be fouler than the last, and more sinister; until by degrees, in McFeyffe's world – a violent fantasy in which he, as the revealed

⁷ *Eye*, 84-7.

⁸ *Eye*, 119.

Communist sympathiser, fantasises himself as a champion of the people; although he, along with everyone else in the group, are then beaten senseless by McFeyffe's own 'Party hatchetmen.'⁹

The novel seems to end cleanly, with the group finally waking up out of the serial nightmares, and finding themselves badly injured – but conscious – on the floor of the Bevatron. Hamilton and Bill Laws go into business together, and as Sutin observes, Dick liked the idea that '[one] or more characters [decide] to put their shoulders to the wheel to set society right' (*A Life*, p.91). However, the ending is rather more complex than an initial reading indicates; like Glen Runciter in *Ubik*, Hamilton is left wondering whether the world he now inhabits is truly the 'real' world, though he quickly dispels his own doubts (mainly out of fear that he could be wrong, and that he is present, yet again, in a fantasy world). The reader, however, is left with the impression that this world is simply Hamilton's world; a world which makes sense, because Hamilton is rational, and (largely) benevolent. Because of that very point however, there is nothing substantial present in the text to indicate *why* the world at the end of *Eye* might not be real; and, as in *Ubik*, the reader is left to guess as to what, really, is happening.

What is clear in *Eye* as it is in *Ubik* is the method by which these twisted worlds operate: while each world is a consensual hallucination, each is also formed by the projection of one powerful mind (powerful usually by accident) onto others. In *Ubik*, that mind is Jory; in *Eye*, it varies from character to character as the novel proceeds, but certainly, each character within their own nightmarish fantasy world has total power over their companions in that world. The dualist cosmology that Dick endorsed

⁹ *Eye*, 233.

in his own thought and in much of his fiction is evident in *Eye*; particularly as it is observed by Marsha:

“[It’s] all so quiet. As if we’re the only people alive. Living in a gray bucket, no lights, no colors, just sort of a – primordial place. Remember the old religions? Before the cosmos came chaos. Before the land was separated from the water. Before the darkness was separated from the light. And things didn’t have any names.”¹⁰

The Taoist belief system of yin and yang, thematically considered by Dick in greater complexity in later works is clearly evident in *Eye*, five years before *The Man in the High Castle* was published in 1962, and more relevantly written six years before. *Martian Time-Slip* also dealt with the yin and yang theme, with the concept of a ‘real’ world, the world of light (yang); and the ‘irreal’ world, the dark shadow world below it (yin), a world which dissimulates as being ‘real’ or ‘actual’. *Ubik*, and later *A Scanner Darkly*, studied this in more subtle fashion. The ‘two worlds’ theme (accepting that even in *Eye*, there is one ‘irreal’ world – albeit one with multifarious, concurrent aspects – and one ‘real’ world) is of prime significance here: the projection

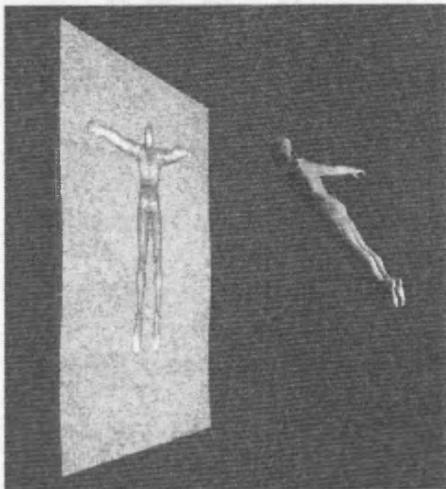


Fig. 1. Holography, illustration from Stephen Hawking, *The Universe in a Nutshell* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2001) 198.

¹⁰ *Eye*, p. 31.

In cosmology and astrophysics, speculation is rife as to whether or not our physical universe is in fact a shadow of another, unseen universe. This is the theory of *holography*, in which a universe on some speculated higher level to our own (a higher ‘brane’, a term which means basically ‘sheet’ or ‘membrane’). The idea of *holography* is explained by Stephen Hawking, in *The Universe in a Nutshell*:

Holography encodes the information in a region of space onto a surface one dimension lower. It seems to be a property of gravity [...]. In a brane world model, holography would be a one-to-one correspondence between states in our four-dimensional world and states in higher dimensions. From a positivist viewpoint, one cannot distinguish which description is more fundamental.¹¹

According to Hawking then, it is theoretically possible that our universe exists as a lower-dimension world (our generally accepted four-dimensional world, accepting time as one of the dimensions) that reflects (actually embodies) universes in higher dimensions. In a cosmological model of this type, as Hawking writes, this higher dimension – the *yang* world to which Dick alludes in his cosmology – projects, through gravity, onto the lower *yin* world.

Unlike Dick, Hawking is not concerned as to which, if either, of these universes is more ‘fundamental’; or in other words, as to which one is ‘more real’. He writes that a parallel universe could exist as a physical phenomenon, but adds the caveat that while such a universe could project itself onto ours, that universe itself would be invisible to us (*Universe*, p. 188). This, as Hawking explains, is due to the fact that gravity would be able to ‘propagate’ through the dimensions between the brane universes, but that light would not.

Thus, Dick might argue, Zebra – the world-projecting artefact – lies beyond our own universe, in some hypothetical higher dimension. While capable of forming solid objects in our universe, or facsimiles thereof, the artefact itself would never be seen, if

¹¹ Stephen Hawking, *The Universe in a Nutshell* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2001) 198.

it belongs to another universe. Dick presumably named the artefact 'Zebra' not on a whim, but because of its camouflage (actually disguising) properties; if Dick believed that the artefact was somehow stationed in our own universe, it would have to be disguised by some physical means, perhaps as a different (even if visible) object.

This theory applies to any feat of 'projection', mental or spiritual, exhibited by characters in Dick's novels; and the reason for this is because there is no difference in Dick's fiction between the world, and the mind; that is, between physically warped worlds (ostensibly 'real' or 'actual') and the projected, illusory worlds of *Ubik*, *Three Stigmata*, or *Eye*, that to those who inhabit them seem – at least at first – to be as 'real' as the world at their point of origin in the novels.

Dr. Bloodmoney (1965, written in 1963) runs parallel as a story with *Eye*, *Ubik* and *Three Stigmata*. The novel offers a picture of an almost tranquil and quite surreal post-Third World War California, in which survivors – most of them free of the deleterious effects of radiation poisoning – band together in small communities and try to piece together their lives. In this community, those who can fix and build things are especially prized. One such 'handyman' is Hoppy Harrington, deformed from birth by thalidomide; without limbs, he develops telekinetic powers. Importantly however, these powers do not manifest until after the bombs fall at the beginning of the novel. After characters fall unconscious, they awaken into a new world defined by the powers of previously ignored people, such as Hoppy. And as the novel proceeds, the reader learns that the eponymous antagonist, the demented Dr. Bluthgeld, who helped design and build atomic bombs, learns to use his mind to proliferate further nuclear attacks on the world.

Bluthgeld uses these powers late in the novel to assail Walt Dangerfield, a man doomed to forever orbit the Earth in a satellite, left marooned there in the aftermath of

the war. Dangerfield broadcasts from his satellite every day as he orbits the Earth, keeping people entertained and – more importantly – in contact with one another by relaying messages for them by radio.

Bluthgeld is convinced that he has the power to begin the Third World War – and when that occurs, he – as one of the survivors – feels tremendous guilt and blames himself for what has happened. Later in the novel however, he comes to loathe his fellow survivors and again wishes the bombs to fall on them. Explosions – supposedly atomic – erupt around those targets that Bluthgeld wants destroyed, including Walt Dangerfield in his satellite:

Now it must begin again. Bluthgeld thought to himself. The war. Because there is no choice; it is forced on me. I am sorry for the people. All of them will have to suffer, but perhaps out of it they will be redeemed. Perhaps in the long run it is a good thing.

He seated himself, folded his hands, shut his eyes and concentrated on the task of assembling his powers. Grow, he said to them, the forces at his command everywhere in the world. Join and become potent, as you were in former times. There is need for you again, all ye agencies.¹²

[...]

All at once [Walt Dangerfield's satellite] shuddered. Staggering, he caught hold of the wall nearest him; a concussion, series of shock waves, passing through. Objects fell and collided and burst; he looked around amazed.

Meteor? he wondered.

It seemed to him almost as if someone were attacking him.¹³

The nature of the world of *Dr. Bloodmoney* is sufficiently plastic that it allows for the literal projection of Bluthgeld's most profoundly evil and destructive impulses – to destroy human life. This is a facet of Dick's writing that Lawrence Sutin identifies with 'Jungian projection' – the altering of human perceptions by the human psyche, which in Bluthgeld's case leads to real attacks taking place.¹⁴

Dick borrowed and then expanded upon Jung's ideas; what is most striking in Dick's fiction is the way in which projected worlds, holographic or not, are disguised; the way in which they are encrypted – that is encoded – to dissimulate as other than they are. One example is obviously the invention of the 'scramble suit' in *A Scanner*

¹² Philip K. Dick, *Dr. Bloodmoney* (London: Millennium, 2000) 222.

¹³ *Bloodmoney*, 231.

¹⁴ *A Life*, 90. Sutin is discussing *Eye in the Sky*.

Darkly (a device designed to perform a literal encryption of its wearer, effectively creating a ‘virtual person’). Any wearer of a scramble suit is completely isolated from the outside world, and the world is unable to communicate effectively with the wearer (which is almost immediately apparent in the novel, as soon as Arctor appears on the pages of the novel). The wearer becomes a ‘vague blur’, just as in *Eye*, the doctor is described by Marsha as a ‘blot’ and the nurse as a ‘composite’. They are projections masquerading as actual people.

But the more fiendish of Dick’s reality-bending novels explore the idea that ‘reality’ itself is encrypted; that, as a projection (holographic, ‘psychic’, mental or otherwise), it is capable of utterly deceiving people that it is, to all intents and purposes, real. To Bill Laws in *Eye*, the fantasy world of Edith Pritchett – however ill-conceived – is actual, and incontrovertible; despite Hamilton’s insistence that the world is simply an illusion: “‘Illusion?’” Laws grinned sarcastically; with his hard fist he thumped the wall of the kitchen. “It feels real enough to me” (*Eye*, p. 149). When this kind of deception takes place in Dick’s fiction, the effect is alarming; and in *Ubik* especially, no character even has the luxury, by the end of the novel, to say for certain that the world they, or another, inhabit is ‘real’. The effect of residing in half-life, it seems, is to blur all reference points of actuality; the ‘reality’ of a world is warped even beyond the subjective frames of reference that, variously, Joe Chip and Glen Runciter perceive. Eventually, their world has become codified to the extent that no character – let alone the reader – can unravel it.

Writing in *Virtual Worlds* (1992), Benjamin Woolley warns the reader of the dangers of choosing to analyse ‘reality’:

Few of us think about ‘reality’ much – those of us who intend to write books about it have to keep reminding ourselves that we are rare exceptions. It is, perhaps, the conceptual equivalent of unconscious motor functions such as breathing. It is vital to life – without it, we would be unable to distinguish the real from the imaginary, the true from the false, the natural from the artificial. But we do not have to think about it to use it – indeed, as soon as we do start thinking about it, it

becomes extremely difficult to continue using it. For this reason, perhaps, some may regard it as a peculiar subject for any sort of analysis: it is a given, a fact of life, and best left hidden behind the curtain of unconsciousness.¹⁵

What Dick does in his fiction, in his explorations of the constituents of ‘reality’, is to embrace unconsciousness as a device, as a method of transition, from a period during which a character in his novels knows his position and place in the world, to a period where they effectively know nothing (as Jason Taverner in *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said*). The cosmological ideas that Dick considered for use in his fiction mirror not only his own apparent experiences during 2-3-74, but also reflect a deeper process in his non-fictional, numinous conjecture: that the *world itself* might wake up in advance of the people in it; instead of attaining an ‘ontological reality’ by achieving apotheosis with the Creator, or the Ungrund – which relies on a simultaneous process of anamnesis between both Creator and humanity – ‘reality’ in Dick’s fiction is completely skewed. Such a thing occurs in *Flow*; and it is also present in *Ubik*, *Bloodmoney*, and of course *Eye*. The world moves on, ahead of the sleeping characters, who awaken – too late – after the change.

Using ‘unconsciousness’ as a device in his fiction, as a process or harbinger of change, is perhaps not subtle; but as an intellectual concept to be explored in conjunction with Dick’s mystical theorising, it is fascinating. It means that time, as well as space, shifts for characters in Dick’s fiction, and it becomes increasingly hard to determine any concrete chronology for events within the novels; in *Eye* for example, the events of the novel take place within a time-frame of moments, although for the characters living through one another’s increasingly nightmarish fantasy worlds, that supposed time-frame becomes meaningless as their phantasmagorical existence runs on, and on. It adds further confusion to an already confused situation;

¹⁵ Benjamin Woolley, *Virtual Worlds* (London: Penguin Books, 1993) 3.

just as Charles Freck in *Scanner* has to confront a situation in which he lies supine – so he perceives – for all eternity, as a list of his sins is read out after he attempts to commit suicide by taking an overdose of drugs.

Arguably, what Dick himself might find most disturbing from any discussion of a construction of ‘reality’, has its roots in Stephen Hawking’s quotation, presented earlier: that, ‘from a positivist viewpoint, one cannot distinguish which description [regarding the validity of ‘real’ versus ‘shadow’ universe] is more fundamental’. Dick himself regarded the establishment of a system for determining *exactly* what it is that constitutes a ‘fundamental reality’. After spending so much time encrypting his worlds, translating them back proved just as much of an impossible struggle for Dick as it continues to prove for his readers.

CHAPTER SIX: MACHINE WORLDS

The representation of machines in science fiction, particularly intelligent machines, presents the same problem to an author as does the representation of alien beings and ‘ineffable’ alien deities, and before moving on to a discussion of these representations in Philip K. Dick’s work, they are worth discussing in more general terms here.

As human beings have no experience at dealing with any of these things, a science fiction author is totally reliant on imagination to bring ‘life’ to these constructs. With few exceptions, intelligent machines are represented as being ‘evil’ in science fiction, or if not evil, then simply ‘anti-human’. Isaac Asimov created the ‘laws of robotics’, a series of ethical guidelines, for his own machine creations; laws which (largely) prevented a robot from bringing harm to a human being. The fact that Asimov assumed that these laws would be required to prevent his stories from spiralling off into paranoid war stories fought between humans and machines is interesting. Without them, Asimov in essence assures us, robots would be hostile. In Frank Herbert’s *Dune* series, ‘human computers’ called *mentats* are employed to do the job of ‘thinking machines’. The background to *Dune* is that thousands of years before the story begins, humans fought a holy war, the ‘Butlerian Jihad’, against a hostile robotic empire in order to reclaim their freedoms. In the glossary to *Dune* (1965), the first book in what became a series, Herbert explains that the lessons learned from this holy war remain now in the O.C. (Orange Catholic) Bible as a commandment: ‘Thou shalt not make a machine in the likeness of a human mind’.¹

Writing in *Human Robots in Myth and Science*, John Cohen contests in the final chapter whether or not man can be classified as a ‘robot’. In drawing comparison

¹ Frank Herbert, *Dune* (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1965) xvii-xviii.

between human and machine, Cohen asks ‘Is man a mindless robot?’ and whether ‘he [can] boast an unrobotlike mind?’² As he states:

[It would not] be wise to assume that usage of the English word ‘mind’ happens to be the sole repository of truth about a supremely baffling problem of philosophy and psychology. If we took as our point of departure a word or phrase which had little or nothing to do with Western tradition we might arrive at totally different conclusions. We could begin with the Chinese *Hsin li* (‘the reasons or principles of the heart’); with the Egyptian *ka, ba, akh, or khaba* (shade, soul, mind, image); with the Hebrew *nephesh, ruah, or neshamah* (life, spirit, soul); with the Greek *nous, logos, or pneuma* (mind or spirit, wisdom, breath); with the Latin *anima* or *animus* (breath, rational soul); with the Japanese *kokoro, tamashi, seishin* (mind, soul, spirit) or with any of the countless expressions for ‘mental’ functions in archaic or surviving primitive languages.³

Cohen argues here that language limits understanding of ‘mind’. Until our language becomes more complex, an agent of conception unrelated to, as he points out on the same page, primitive root languages and past religious cults, questions about the composition of ‘mind’ are largely irrelevant. There can be, in essence, no question that will generate an apposite answer.

For most science fiction authors however, these debates about what constitutes ‘mind’ are secondary to the assumption that their fictional ‘thinking machines’ are intelligent, and that they possess ‘mind’, in the most basic sense of the word. Leaving Cartesian arguments aside for the moment, intelligent machines and robots in science fiction would seem for the most part to simply ‘be there’, for their own sake and for the purposes of telling a story; but there are reasons for that, and hidden meaning, which this chapter will aim to disclose.

The paranoid assumption that thinking machines, once created, will act in a way inimical to humanity has become in science fiction something of a cliché; and similarly the irony that it is humans themselves who end up creating their own worst enemy, usually by fashioning a legion of robotic slaves that rise up and rebel against them. Memorably in cinema, this is exactly what occurs in James Cameron’s *The*

² John Cohen, *Human Robots in Myth and Science* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966) 131.

³ *Human Robots*, 131-2.

Terminator (1984), in a way emulated by Andy and Larry Wachowski's more recent *Matrix* trilogy (which began with *The Matrix* in 1999). There are very few examples of machines existing in a science fiction environment that do not have this connection with their creators or builders. They have at some past point been produced by humans or at least organic beings, whether or not they later gain the capacity to 'evolve'.

More recently, Frank Herbert's son Brian has with Kevin J. Anderson expanded upon the *Dune* mythology, and written a trilogy that clarifies what the Butlerian Jihad was, an event that Frank Herbert originally left shrouded in mystery (and perhaps by design). Nevertheless, in the newest *Dune* trilogy, beginning with *The Butlerian Jihad* (2002), the machine empire has a 'god', in the form of a computer 'evermind' called Omnium. This theme was also explored in the *Matrix* trilogy. In *The Matrix Revolutions* (2003), the second sequel to the original film, the machine 'god' was referred to in the credits (perhaps facetiously) as the Deus Ex Machina, and both it and the aptly named Omnium exhibit qualities of omniscience. Each copy of Omnium on each planet in his empire is continually fed information from every other copy, by robot courier ships, with the effect that all of the 'Omniums' on all of its worlds are identical, sharing the same memories and having the same thoughts. The Deus Ex Machina on the other hand has direct links with its ancillary forces both in the 'real' world and in the illusory world of the Matrix. In both of these examples, 'thinking machines' blend together and as a gestalt become more than the sum of their parts, attaining godhood in effect if not in fact.

Like the monsters of H.P. Lovecraft, the motivations of these machine deities for doing what they do are perceived by humans as being horrifying (or at least bewildering), simply because the human mind cannot understand them. Unlike

Lovecraft's monsters however, Omnius and the Deus Ex Machina require humans for, respectively, slave labour or for fuel. In the case of the latter, there is an obvious connection with human sacrifice as the deity – as in Dick's 'The Great C' (1953) – either eats humans to survive, or leeches from them as a source of energy. What is debatable about any fictional intelligent machine is whether or not it can be classified as being *alive*. Human life is, in the end, defined by mind and consciousness; and an 'intelligent machine' is by definition no less conscious despite being cybernetic rather than biological. However, the word *cybernetic* – derived from the Greek *kubernētēs* – means 'pilot' or 'governor'; the brain through which physical processes, whether robot or (arguably) human, are for the most part managed and controlled. By definition then, *cybernetic* implies simply 'brain' or 'mind', but it has come to be associated directly with principles of Artificial Intelligence and robotics.

This statement suggests a connection between human beings and 'thinking machines' on a cerebral level, and consequently creates a certain amount of confusion which can be explored within the purview of science fiction: how does one distinguish between a robot and a human being? This question is asked repeatedly in much of Philip K. Dick's own work, and answered – most memorably in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968). The question is fundamental: if humans and robots are not psychologically distinguishable from each other, then surely both groups can be considered to be 'alive'. This chapter will undertake a full discussion of *Androids* in due course, with the focus on the ways in which Dick addresses this question. Of course, Dick is not the first to ask this question, let alone the only author or intellectual to do so. At this point, a retrospective analysis of this subject is required.

In his *Discourse on Method* (1637), René Descartes identifies themes which recent science fiction continues to explore. From an intellectual point of view, it

seems that Descartes and Dick could not be more different. The *Discourse* progresses steadily from an initial state of doubting human ‘reality’ and therefore the human condition and human experience. Through the application of a rational philosophy with its roots based in mathematics, Descartes arrives at the conclusion that God exists as an entity, and that the created world represents not illusion but reality. In Dick’s fictional worlds, and in his cosmological thought, God has no fixed state of being and His existence, logically, is uncertain. Correspondingly of course, the nature of Dick’s created worlds is uncertain and ‘reality’, in his fiction and his mystical thought, lies uncomfortably in a state of continual flux. Dick’s worlds manifest all the properties of an illusion or a dream. In such an uncertain cosmology, self awareness and identity is threatened, and vulnerable in the end to outright obliteration (as for example when Arnie Kott experiences Manfred Steiner’s world for himself in *Martian Time-Slip*, or when the eponymous villain of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* eventually becomes an omnipresent entity that spiritually and physically replaces all other conscious beings in the universe). As far as Descartes was concerned, his *Discourse* eliminated all of these uncertainties. His familiar phrase *cogito, ergo sum* – “I think, therefore I am” – was all of the ‘evidence’ that he required as surety for his own existence, and by extension from this principle, the existence of other human beings and the world itself. This seeming digression serves adequately as background to introduce a more germane contrast between Dick’s fiction and Cartesian philosophy: the analysis of human beings and robots or ‘thinking machines’.

In Dick’s fiction, antagonistic machines opposed to human beings are represented as being either comic or horrific, or a as mixture of both. In the short story ‘Colony’ (1953), Dick pits a group of space travellers against an alien intelligence

which mimics and replaces human machines and equipment. Through this intelligence, the machines become animate and the humans cannot place their trust in any heretofore inanimate object in their surroundings. The space travellers are attacked by a variety of such objects. First by a sentient microscope, later a rug and ultimately a rocket ship which actually eats the humans who board it (in their final, desperate attempt to escape). The situation is of course presented humorously. Dick's more complex studies of relationships between humans and machines become more sinister where machines actually dissimulate as humans.

Unlike Dick, Descartes was adamant that there would be discernible differences between such machines and human beings which would evade the kinds of basically paranoid questions Dick's fiction raises. Presented below is an extract from Descartes' fifth discourse. Of interest here is his intellectual process:

[If] there were such machines which had the organs and appearance of [an] irrational animal, we would have no means of recognizing that they were not of exactly the same nature as these animals: instead of which, if there were machines which had a likeness to our bodies and imitated our actions, inasmuch as this were morally possible, we would still have two very certain means of recognizing that they were not, for all that, real men. Of these the first is, that they could never use words or other signs, composing them as we do to declare our thoughts to others. For one can well conceive that a machine may be so made as to emit words [...]; but not that it may arrange words in various ways to reply to the sense of everything that is said in its presence, in the way that the most unintelligent of men can do. And the second is that, although they might do many things as well as, or perhaps better than, any of us, they would fail, without doubt, in others, whereby one would discover that they did not act through knowledge, but simply through the disposition of their organs: for, whereas reason is a universal instrument which can serve on any kind of occasion, these organs need a particular disposition for each particular action; whence it is that it is morally impossible to have enough different organs in a machine to make it act in all the occurrences of life in the same way as our reason makes us act.⁴

What is striking here is that Descartes is describing machines that run according to a predetermined path of action according to the 'disposition of their organs'; in other words, machines that follow a program. After an initial inspection of Descartes' statement, it would seem that he is not describing 'thinking machines' in the same terms that a science fiction author might. However, every character representative of a

⁴ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*, trans. F. E. Sutcliffe (London: Penguin, 1968) 73-4.

‘thinking machine’ in science fiction has at some point transcended its original programming and grown far beyond the parameters of its initial function. In a sense, ‘thinking machines’ in science fiction have grown and matured into a new, advanced state. Although not originally created as living creatures, in a sense they learn (or earn) life through achieving a state of consciousness and self-awareness. After that point, they are free to develop as they will.

What Descartes terms as being ‘morally possible/impossible’ is significant only as a religious or spiritual matter. His statement does not imply that humans are incapable of making machines that emulate other humans. Descartes places emphasis on *morality*, because to argue that man-made machines could learn to think as humans think would be to blaspheme against God – hardly the most desirable assertion to make in 1637, provided one wanted to elude the wrath of the clergy. Cartesian philosophy centres on thought, and in a sense on the concept of mind as being the foundation upon which all other aspects of creation are built, and by which they can be proven to exist. ‘Mind’ in this sense is therefore synonymous with ‘life’. These same philosophical conclusions can be found in Jacob Boehme’s cosmological ideas as discussed in Chapter One, and because of that they can of course be found within Dick’s own cosmological ideas. It is with this insight that a discussion of the way in which Dick represents thinking machines – specifically those that masquerade as being human beings – can now be undertaken.

Dick’s short story ‘Second Variety’ (1953) is a tale set on Earth following a third world war. In it, the American-led United Nations fight a war of attrition against depleted Soviet forces. By the end of the story, both sides have discovered – to their cost – that the armies of automatons created by the UN to fight the Soviets are now killing humans regardless of their allegiance. The robots are first introduced as the

'claws', efficient but obviously robotic murderers that lie in wait for humans amongst the ashes of the battlefield.⁵ Later on, an American soldier, Major Hendricks, undertakes an arduous journey to the Soviet lines in order to negotiate a peace treaty. It is while he is amongst the Soviet soldiers that he discovers what the claws have been building in their underground factories, above and beyond their original remit: robots that masquerade as humans in order to infiltrate human strongholds and kill soldiers. Of these robots, Hendricks discovers several subtypes, or 'Varieties'. Each robot in a Variety is identical, which is how they are ultimately recognised for what they are. Dick uses the story partly as a forum to debate the status of the Varieties as being either machine or human, when Hendricks speaks first with Klaus Epstein, an Austrian, and then a Pole named Rudi Maxer. Both men have been impressed into service in the Soviet Army:

[...] "Interesting, isn't it?" [Hendricks said].

"What?" [Klaus said].

"This, the new types. The new varieties of claws. We're completely at their mercy, aren't we? By now they've probably gotten into the UN lines, too. It makes me wonder if we're not seeing the beginning of a new species. *The* new species. Evolution. The race to come after man."

Rudi grunted. "There is no race after man."

"No? Why not? Maybe we're seeing it now, the end of human beings, the beginning of a new society."

"They're not a race. They're mechanical killers. You made them to destroy. That's all they can do. They're machines with a job."

"So it seems now. But how about later on? After the war is over. Maybe, when there aren't any humans to destroy, their real potentialities will begin to show."

"You talk as if they were alive!"

"Aren't they?"

There was silence. "They're machines," Rudi said. "They look like people, but they're machines."⁶

The debate echoes Cartesianism in that Hendricks, accepting that the claws have exceeded (in fact evolved beyond) their original design boundaries, are now thinking for themselves; and that consequently they are alive. The idea of machines being capable of evolution is an old science fiction device, more recently expounded upon

⁵ Philip K. Dick, *Second Variety: The Collected Stories of Philip K. Dick, Volume 2* (London: Millennium, 1999) 16.

⁶ *Second*, 30.

in *The Matrix* to chilling effect when Hugo Weaving's character – Agent Smith – equates humanity with a 'virus', positing machines as humanity's evolutionary successors. *The Terminator* also hypothesises a world in which machines replace human beings as the dominant 'life form'. *The Terminator* in fact mimics 'Second Variety', intentionally or not, very closely; both feature a similarly executed post-apocalyptic world in which groups of humanoid robots infiltrate human habitats as a means of killing the people residing there. The name of the film, *The Terminator*, is also evocative of the futuristic nightmare world it exhibits, where, due to an ongoing nuclear winter, it is always dark. Taking the word 'terminator' alone to denote the dividing line between the light and dark hemispheres of a moon or planet suggests the idea that mankind has plummeted into an eternal night time. In connection with Dick's work as it is discussed in this chapter, this particular nightmare future can be read as a representation of Dick's own dualistic cosmological thought: the divergence between the seeming world and the dark 'tomb world'.

The differences between the two films and Dick's short story however are that the films imagine the forces of 'the machines' as following gods; or at least god-like leaders with powers of surveillance and control, powers that are sufficiently developed to enable a simulation of deity-like omnipotence. In *The Matrix*, this is the Deus Ex Machina; in *The Terminator*, a self-aware military program called Skynet. In 'Second Variety', Dick simply writes that the claws manage to evolve and reengineer themselves according to their own design, and this implies that they have a kind of hive consciousness rather than following a single leader. However, what is couched within the two films is more explicit in 'Second Variety': human beings, directly or indirectly responsible for creating intelligent machines, act like 'deposed' or unwanted gods. Their creations, the machines, have rejected them.

Far more complex is Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968). The struggle between bounty hunter Rick Deckard and his renegade android quarry, brought vividly to life as interpreted in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), actually represents a more significant confrontation in *Androids*, partly political, but primarily spiritual. Deckard's physical conflict with the androids led by Roy Baty is secondary to the revelations he experiences through empathetic identification with their plight. Not only do Deckard's own actions affect his burgeoning comprehension of the world in which Dick places him, but he is himself acted on by a quasi-supernatural agency in the form of the martyr-like figure of Wilbur Mercer. The world which Wilbur Mercer inhabits, representing a constant struggle to rise above the encroaching forces of entropy after 'World War Terminus', is revealed by the novel's end to be ersatz, as is Mercer himself. However, the importance of 'Mercerism' to the human characters of the novel is undiminished. Dick used a short story that he wrote four years earlier, 'The Little Black Box' (1964), to inform the religious subtext of *Androids*. In a note written in 1978, Dick states that Mercer may be 'an invader from some other world' and that 'in a sense all religious leaders are . . . but not from another planet as such.'⁷

The world in which *Androids* is set is essentially a darker version of the post-apocalyptic California presented in Dick's earlier novel, *Dr Bloodmoney* (1965). The humans that remain on Earth collect and treasure animals, each of which is a hugely expensive commodity, in the wake of the radiation fallout that has wiped out entire species. Those that cannot afford a genuine animal instead buy electric versions, like the sheep Deckard owns as the novel opens. In this strange climate, some humans suffer the effects of the fallout more than others, and each is known as a 'special' or

⁷ Philip K. Dick, *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale: Volume 5 of the Collected Stories of Philip K. Dick* (

by the pejorative term ‘chickenhead’. This class of people, afflicted by low intelligence, is relegated for the most part to menial jobs, and is portrayed in the novel through the character of John (‘J. R.’) Isidore. Isidore is analogous to the character of Manfred Steiner in *Martian Time-Slip* (1964), and experiences similarly alarming visions of entropic decay in the world around him.

When Isidore is introduced into the novel, Mercerism is also revealed for the first time. By grasping the handles of an ‘empathy box’, a person can join their consciousness with that of the messianic figure of Wilbur Mercer and with other people currently engaged in what is essentially a mass hallucination; or apparently so.⁸ Through the empathy box, people are transported to a barren desert, into the body of Wilbur Mercer, whose only goal is to ascend a steep hill for eternity while faceless enemies hurl rocks at him. For Isidore and for every other human involved in what is exposed as an almost flagellant ritual, the need to aid Mercer – and thereby themselves – is overpowering, despite their awareness of the ritual’s futility:

[John Isidore] had crossed over in the usual perplexing fashion; physical merging – accompanied by mental and spiritual identification – with Wilbur Mercer had reoccurred. As it did for everyone who at this moment clutched the handles, either here on Earth or on one of the colony planets. He experienced them, the others, incorporated the babble of their thoughts, heard in his own brain the noise of their many individual existences. They – and he – cared about one thing; this fusion of their mentalities oriented their attention on the hill, the climb, the need to ascend.

[...] A rock, hurled at him, struck his arm. He felt the pain. [...] At last a bird which had come there to die told him where he was. He had sunk down into the tomb world. He could not get out until the bones around him grew back into living creatures [...]

[Reluctantly Isidore let go]. Releasing the handles he examined his arm, then made his way unsteadily to the bathroom of his apartment to wash the cut off. This was not the first wound he had received in fusion with Mercer and it probably would not be the last.⁹

The fact that the ‘hallucinatory’ injury is carried over into the ‘real’ world is in one sense disturbing; but the sense of empathy that Mercer’s followers gain from the experience outweighs the risks – including, as the text continues, the risk of death. The ‘tomb world’ that Isidore and those in empathetic contact with him experience

⁸ Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (London: Orion Books, 1999) 19.

⁹ *Androids*, 20-3.

represents the threat that hangs over so many of Dick's fictional worlds: the possibility that at any moment, entropy will finally close in and annihilate the world. The visions of ruin, as experienced by Manfred in *Time-Slip* and by Mr Tagomi in *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) are as real to Isidore as his lonely apartment and his job repairing broken electric animals. Like Manfred, Isidore has a word, a neologism, for the encroachment of entropic garbage: 'kipple', corresponding to Manfred's 'gubbish'.

The androids in the novel are unable to feel empathy for other creatures (including each other), and are jealous of the humans who participate in the ritualistic bonding with Mercer. What is most interesting about every human and android character within the novel is in their relationships with one another. Dick manages to create an atmosphere of hostility between humans and androids, but at the same time highlights the similarities between them, similarities which no member of either group – with the exceptions of Iran (Deckard's wife) and Deckard himself by the novel's end – seems to grasp.

Wilbur Mercer is eventually denounced as a fraud on a live television broadcast by a popular and seemingly ubiquitous television presenter called Buster Friendly.¹⁰ Friendly, actually an android, reveals that Mercer is fake, and that he is in fact a hired actor called Al Jarry, and that the barren desert in which he seems to toil daily is merely a studio set. Satisfied that 'nearly every human in the system' heard Friendly denounce Mercer, Roy Baty wears an expression of 'accomplishment' on his face.¹¹ He does not however comprehend that 'Wilbur Mercer', itself an ersatz construct, in many ways represents Baty himself, as it does all androids.

¹⁰ *Androids*, 179.

¹¹ *Androids*, 180.

Dick challenges the principles of Cartesianism in *Androids*. While artificial, the android characters dissimulate as humans and are therefore impossible to differentiate except by means of the ‘Voigt-Kampff’ test. This test measures a subject’s responses to a series of questions designed to provoke an emotional reaction, and not all subjects – the android Luba Luft included – are inclined to cooperate in the procedure. When Deckard first tries to apprehend Luft for questioning, an android organisation posing as a police force intervenes, and takes Deckard back to its headquarters – all the while under the pretence that Deckard is an impostor, and not a legitimate bounty hunter.¹² Unsure of whether the ‘police’ that have apprehended him are human or not, Deckard is brought before an officer named Garland and introduced to another bounty hunter called Phil Resch. Between the two of them, Deckard and Resch manage to reveal Garland as an android and ‘retire’ (in other words kill) him, but such is the mounting paranoia on both sides that both Deckard and the businesslike Resch begin to suspect Resch himself of being an android. Resch, for his part, apparently had no idea that he had been working for a fake police force administered and controlled by androids. The two work together briefly to retire Luba Luft, but this sparks a crisis of confidence in Deckard. Although Resch proves to be human following a Voigt-Kampff test administered by Deckard, Deckard is upset at the findings and begins to question the nature of his work in light of Resch’s apparent emotional detachment:

“Do you have your ideology framed?” Phil Resch asked. “That would explain me as part of the human race?”

Rick said, “There is a defect in your empathic, role-taking ability. One we don’t test for. Your feelings toward androids.”

“Of course we don’t test for that.”

“Maybe we should.” He had never thought of it before, had never felt any empathy on his own part toward the androids he killed. Always he had assumed that throughout his psyche he experienced the android as a clever machine – as in his conscious view. And yet, in contrast to Phil Resch, a difference had manifested itself. And he felt instinctively that he was right. Empathy toward an artificial construct? he asked himself. Something that only pretends to be alive? But Luba Luft had seemed *genuinely* alive; it had not worn the aspect of a simulation.

¹² *Androids*, 85-96.

“You realize,” Phil Resch said quietly, “what this would do. If we included androids in our range of empathic identification, as we do animals.”

“We couldn’t protect ourselves.”

“Absolutely [...]”.

You’re a good bounty hunter, Rick realized. Your attitude proves it. But am I?

Suddenly, for the first time in his life, he had begun to wonder.¹³

Deckard’s ability to empathise with the androids, something that not even the androids themselves are able to engage in, is a virtually unique trait amongst the characters of the novel. Only Deckard’s depressed wife Iran has previously displayed any sympathy towards androids in disgust at the type of work her husband undertakes. As the novel begins, Iran accuses Deckard of being “a murderer hired by the cops.” Deckard justifies himself by telling her that he has “never killed a human being”. Iran replies, “Just those poor andys.”¹⁴ By the novel’s end, Deckard and Iran are reconciled, each understanding the other more fully following Deckard’s revelation that he empathises with the androids.

In contrast to Deckard and despite his compassionate nature, John Isidore is placed in the position of helping the last group of renegade androids, comprising Pris Stratton, Roy Baty and his wife Irmgard. However, Isidore wants only for company and is completely unable to identify with them, particularly after he watches Pris Stratton dismember a spider with detached curiosity, which he observes with ‘a weird terror’.¹⁵ This, of course, is a perfectly natural reaction to what Isidore perceives as an act of cruelty; but Stratton performs the mutilation of the spider with a schizophrenic flattening of affect, ‘smiling’.¹⁶ Stratton, identical in appearance to the android Rachael Rosen with whom Deckard has a brief affair, has Rosen’s cynical and spiteful personality. However, both androids act without truly understanding the consequences of their actions on others; they act purely out of selfishness. Deckard however

¹³ *Androids*, 120-3.

¹⁴ *Androids*, 14.

¹⁵ *Androids*, 176.

¹⁶ *Androids*, 177.

understands Rosen's unpleasant characteristics, recognising in them human traits, but this is something that Isidore is unable to do.

What Deckard and Isidore have in common is their identification with Wilbur Mercer, who – despite openly admitting to Isidore that he is indeed a fraud – is still able to help both men, appearing as an entity at once unreal and authentic. It is Mercer's own selflessness which gives him his power to help, even restoring to Isidore the dismembered spider – or at least one just like it – whole and unharmed.¹⁷ Mercer further proves himself 'real' by appearing to Deckard and warning him to beware of Pris Stratton as Deckard moves in to Isidore's apartment block to retire the last three androids. Mercer foils Stratton's ambush and Deckard, despite feeling revulsion at the prospect of murdering an android identical in appearance to Rachael Rosen, is able to kill her.¹⁸

Ultimately the novel is concerned with how a human – Rick Deckard – reclaims both his identity and his soul. He does this through three his interactions with three different types of artificial construct: electric animals (the novel ends with Deckard acquiring an electric toad); androids; and Wilbur Mercer. Dick is not concerned with portraying the androids as being 'evil', merely as being different from humans. It is Deckard's ability to care for artificial constructs as he would animals or human beings that saves him, prompting Mercer to intervene and safeguard him from Pris Stratton's attack. Unlike their counterparts in 'Second Variety', the androids in the novel are concerned with their own survival, not with the extermination of humanity. As in *Blade Runner*, which admittedly presents the material of the novel very differently, 'evil' as a concept is not itself represented by any one group or character; this is in

¹⁷ *Androids*, 184.

¹⁸ *Androids*, 189.

sharp contrast with *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965) or *Ubik* (1969).

The presence of ‘evil’ in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is identifiable only through the teachings of Wilbur Mercer:

You shall kill only the killers, Mercer had told them the year empathy boxes first appeared on Earth. And in Mercerism, as it evolved into a full theology, the concept of The Killers had grown insidiously. In Mercerism, an absolute evil plucked at the threadbare cloak of the tottering, ascending old man, but it was never clear who or what this evil presence was. A Mercerite *sensed* evil without understanding it. Put another way, a Mercerite was free to locate the nebulous presence of The Killers wherever he saw fit. For Rick Deckard an escaped humanoid robot, which had killed its master, which had been equipped with an intelligence greater than that of many human beings, which had no regard for animals, which possessed no ability to feel emphatic joy for another life form’s success or grief at its defeat – that, for him, epitomized The Killers.¹⁹

Dick presents this statement on Mercerism early in the novel, because as events progress, it becomes clearer to the reader that the concept of ‘absolute evil’, like the concept of ‘The Killers’, is purely subjective. To John Isidore, upset at the loss of his android ‘friends’ and especially at the death of Pris, with whom he was in love despite her faults, cannot bear to stay near to Rick Deckard. To Isidore, a Mercerite, Deckard himself is one of The Killers, and this despite Mercer’s assurance that what Deckard is doing, executing the androids, ‘has to be done’.²⁰ When Deckard suggests that Isidore might want to move into a spare apartment in his (Deckard’s) building after he has killed all of the androids, Isidore stammers at him: “I don’t w-w-want to live near you”.²¹ Read another way, those responsible for turning Earth into a radioactive wasteland in World War Terminus, and for destroying almost all of the planets wildlife, are The Killers. The faceless tormentors that hurl stones at Mercer and those that commune with him represent, ultimately, those who waged the war; they have forced Mercer and the rest of humanity to strive constantly, daily, just to survive, and to extract themselves from the ‘tomb world’.

¹⁹ *Androids*, 28.

²⁰ *Androids*, 189.

²¹ *Androids*, 193.

The presentation of robots in Dick's work – particularly those that dissimulate as being human – varies greatly. The presentation is, however, rooted in a common theme of paranoia: the fact that suspense can be created in a science fiction novel, simply because the reader does not fully trust robot characters, is evidence of that. A science fiction novel with robot characters plays on the reader's fears, but does not necessarily realise those fears by making robots, *per se*, 'evil'. Machines opposed to humanity which do not disguise themselves as human beings are, in Dick's work, almost universally comic (as in 'Colony' or *Ubik*). Machines which resemble humans on the other hand, are by their very nature more menacing, even if they do not represent agents of 'evil' as the evolved claws in 'Second Variety' do.

In *The Penultimate Truth* (1964), Dick constructs another post-apocalyptic world, but one very different from the later depiction of Earth in *Androids*. The plot of *Penultimate* centres on a global conspiracy by a privileged elite to keep the underground factory workers in their 'tanks', all unaware that the war they are working to win has long since finished. The Earth, meanwhile, has been turned largely into a park, in which human governors, each with the title of Dominus, rule their thousand-acre demesnes. Robot characters this time do not resemble humans, except in the most superficial way in possessing an anthropomorphic structure. These robots, the 'leadies', are the troops of the governing elite and – without guidance – think nothing of killing errant 'tankers' who dare to venture up above ground. The chief architect of this conspiracy is Stanton Brose – an ancient hulk kept alive only by his selfish hoarding and constant use of 'artiforgs' (simply, artificial organs). When Nicholas St. James ventures forth from his underground tank in search of an artiforg to save the life of ageing engineer Maury Souza, he discovers the conspiracy, and

likewise discovers that Brose will not give up his monopoly on the life saving artiforgs lightly.

Brose in essence resembles Palmer Eldritch in *Three Stigmata*. Not quite a robot, Brose is nevertheless a cyborg, kept alive by machines long after he should have died. This process is not by itself evil, of course; the human actually is evil, his machine components simply the mark – the stigma – of his evil condition. ‘Evil’ cyborgs in Dick’s work are generally treated in the same way as the character of Darth Vader in George Lucas’ *Star Wars* (1977), and more especially in *Return of the Jedi* (1983). In the original *Star Wars* trilogy, the audience immediately recognises Vader as ‘evil’. No characterisation is required. The visual cues are all the audience needs to reach this conclusion, one that is merely reinforced when Alec Guinness, as Obi-Wan Kenobi, says of Vader in *Return of the Jedi*: “He is more machine now, than man. Twisted and evil.” Similarly, Dick’s ‘evil’ cyborgs, purely based on his description, can be recognised immediately as villains. The mechanical apparatus by which they now survive (like Stanton Brose) or through which they now perceive and interact with the world (like the eye and arm of Palmer Eldritch) become their hallmarks, the sign which indicates that the character in question is malevolent. In Eldritch’s case, his steel teeth – similar to the troll teeth of Jory in *Ubik* – are another sign of his corruption. Just as Eldritch’s eye comes to represent his unwelcome omniscience and the arm his omnipotence, his teeth carry the threat that he will – as the novel ends – ultimately consume the universe.

Physically, the character of Stanton Brose – like that of Baron Harkonnen in Frank Herbert’s *Dune* – is a bloated, corpulent hulk. Dick describes Brose as ‘[an] ancient sagging mass in [a] motor-driven chair’.²² His appearance is enough to make

²² Philip K. Dick, *The Penultimate Truth* (London: Gollancz, 2005) 85.

Joseph Adams (a so-called ‘Yance man’ who feeds the simulacrum president Talbot Yancy with rhetoric that it spouts for the ‘benefit’ of the tankers living underground) feel sick. At the same time, Brose’s voice is described in mechanical terms, as ‘wheedling, thin, like a guy wire plucked by an evil pneumatic spirit’.²³ It is Brose that the reader comes to fear over and above the leadies. The leadies, simple robot warriors, are recognisable and clearly not human; the threat they present to the characters of Dick’s world in *Penultimate* is therefore clearly defined and candid. Brose however is neither, and his status as a human being is debatable. Dick is not treating the character unfairly, as if Brose is afflicted by some disease beyond his power; he is instead emphasising that the character’s own choices have made him what he is – just like Palmer Eldritch.

The only robotic object to disguise itself as an object of a different type in *Penultimate* takes the form of an intelligent assassination device. In a darkly comic scene reminiscent of Dick’s short story ‘Colony’, the machine enters the demesne of the Yance-man Verne Lindblom and kills him with a poisoned dart as he sleeps. The machine’s only human trait is the fact that it goes out of its way to bump into an object and then say the words “damn it” for the benefit of the microphones in Lindblom’s bedroom, in order to incriminate another man. Its work done, this machine then changes shape and becomes a simple, albeit virtually indestructible, television set.²⁴

Philip K. Dick’s fiction does not deviate substantially from assumptions made about ‘thinking machines’ in science fiction – at least in terms of the origins of robots and computers where, generally, they have been created by human beings. Where it does differ is in its twist on the question of ‘mind’ in robots and intelligent computers.

²³ *Penultimate*, 37.

²⁴ *Penultimate*, 116-119.

The question that preoccupies much of Dick's fiction about machines (variously to ominous or amusing effect) is this: At what point does an intelligent robot become human, and vice versa? Is such a change even possible? In contrast with Cartesian philosophy, Dick shows the two terms to be interchangeable. One is not necessarily mutually exclusive of the other. As Dick writes in the introduction of his 1976 essay, 'Man, Android and Machine':

Within the universe there exist fierce cold things, which I have given the name "machines" to. Their behavior frightens me, especially when it imitates human behavior so well that I get the uncomfortable sense that these things are trying to pass themselves off as humans but are not. I call them "androids," which is my own way of using that word.

[...] These creatures are among us, although morphologically they do not differ from us; we must not posit a difference of essence, but a difference of behavior. In my science fiction I write about them constantly. Sometimes they themselves do not know they are androids. Like Rachael Rosen, they can be pretty but somehow lack something [...]²⁵

In science fiction, any 'thinking machine' that simulates human form or behaviour does so for only one reason: to triumph, in totality or in part, over humanity or an aspect of it. Thus, even 'good' robots in science fiction will by and large be represented as being superior to humans at *something* in order to justify their existence as characters. Interestingly, very few works of science fiction present worlds in which intelligent robots and computers are *self-made* or which, like humans in science fiction, are accepted simply as *being present*; or in other words, intelligent machines that do not require an author's explanation to a reader in order to justify the existence of machine characters. In some works, it is merely taken for granted that robots and similar machines exist; and the reader, in most cases, can safely assume that it is humans, or at least some organic life form, that were originally responsible for the creation of those robots.

One example of stories involving 'self-made' machines is Stanislaw Lem's *The Cyberiad* (originally published in Poland in 1967), a collection of typically comical

²⁵ Lawrence Sutin (ed.), *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), p. 211.

short stories involving two robot ‘constructors’, Trurl and Klapaucius, who are themselves robots.²⁶ Some reference is made to the creators of Trurl and the other robots, whom the reader believes to be human. But these creators have been long since forgotten, and Trurl’s entire world is populated by intelligent (and not-so-intelligent) machines.

Similarly in comic books, examples of self-aware, evolving machines without organic creators do exist; for example, the *Transformers*, in which popular interest has been rejuvenated in recent years (which culminated with Michael Bay’s cinematic renovation in 2007). Even in this case however, the ‘origin’ of the transformers is eventually explained in pseudo-religious terms when they are revealed to have been created by a god called Primus, in a story scripted by Simon Furman.²⁷ And, as in most fantasy mythologies, the religion is dualistic, with Unicron portrayed as Primus’ evil counterpart. The transformers as characters are interesting for two reasons: firstly that in their (usually humanoid) robot forms, they emulate human behaviour and language and each character has its own distinct personality (and in this way at least can be seen as ‘androids’); and secondly that they are each designed to transform into a different form purely to blend into their environments as a simple disguise. The ‘good’ robots generally employ their abilities to hide themselves away; the ‘evil’ robots, with the colourful moniker ‘Decepticons’, use their abilities for more immediately obvious reasons.

In *Human Robots*, John Cohen debates why it is, in myth, story and in ‘reality’, human beings determine to make robots at all. As he writes:

The overriding urge of a Prometheus or Odin to create a man is but a way of challenging the supremacy of the gods. The search for the elixir of life to triumph over mortality is another aspect of this urge.

²⁶ Stanislaw Lem, *The Cyberiad*, trans. Michael Kandel (London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1975).

²⁷ Simon Furman, Jeff Anderson, Bryan Hitch, Geoff Senior and Dan Reed, *Transformers: Legacy of Unicron* (London: Titan Books, 2003), #150.

[...And] here we can add that no man is totally devoid of [the urge to create], however humble its manifestation in the way he looks and listens, thinks and imagines, or engages in the humdrum activities of daily life. But poet and painter have this power in high and tormenting degree, tormenting because, in the end, they cease writing or painting in despair of achieving anything more than a shadow of the reality itself. Hence Leonardo da Vinci, the supremely creative man, abandoned his art and took to technology; instead of being content with representing a flying bird, he determined to *make* one.²⁸

Some of the reasons for why ‘thinking machines’ remain popular and prevalent in science fiction, no matter how they are presented, are contained within Cohen’s statement. Simply of course, they provide another means of expression for an author, and another channel through which to tell a story. In Dick’s fictional worlds, intelligent robots, androids and even television sets frequently act as the catalyst by which the Dickian underdog (or set of underdogs) will ultimately triumph, as in *Androids*. Even in ‘Second Variety’, the story ends with Hendricks – facing slaughter by a multitude of claw types – feeling a morbid, grim triumph as he realises the Second Variety has begun to fight against the other three Varieties.²⁹ There is a sense in Dick’s fiction that intelligent machines, however disturbing or alien they might seem, exist to confer on other more humble human characters the ability to improve upon themselves, or their condition.

²⁸ *Human Robots*, 105.

²⁹ *Second*, 52.

CONCLUSION

The Conclusion of this thesis demonstrates the belief Dick held that the human world is flawed and that the divine agency (or divine impostor) that governs it is likewise flawed. With reference to several other authors who were contemporaries of Dick, his work and thought are analysed in order to illustrate the reasons why Dick thought as he did. The Conclusion will also address the way in which Dick formed his stories to present largely extant theological ideas in a fresh way. It will demonstrate that Dick did not so much invent the mystical aspect of his work as try and find ways of reinterpreting and re-presenting ancient spiritual and religious thought, in effect restaging these ideas in his science fiction. The thesis has been working towards the theory that Dick wrote science fiction in part to reconcile his own lifestyle and beliefs with the dogma or tenets of ancient theological thought, as part of an attempt to justify himself and/or his experiences. Dick did not write solely to entertain himself and his readers, but more crucially, to develop a system through which he could properly express his evolving mystical thought. This occurred throughout his life as a writer, but became more pronounced in the period post-2-3-74.

Because of the nature of its topic, the thesis addresses religion and religiosity, broaching theological matters in order to contextualise Dick's work. For some science fiction authors, religion and theology are used as background or 'dressing' for the worlds that they invent in a way that Farah Mendlesohn describes as being unrealistic, naming *Star Trek* as 'the best known offender' with its 'one faith per planet' and making the accusation that 'indicative use of religion in world-building has been marred by laziness'.³⁰ Mendlesohn does not mention Philip K. Dick in this essay,

³⁰ Farah Mendlesohn, 'Religion and Science Fiction.' *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 267.

‘Religion and Science Fiction’, but it seems unlikely that Dick would have been one of the authors co-opted as an ‘offender’. In reading Dick’s work one becomes aware that theology drives his fictional worlds, rather than being adopted by those worlds and their characters as decorative dressing or as a means of making his worlds seem somehow more ‘exotic’.

Dick is of course not the sole author to address religion and theology in his science fiction in a significant way. Arthur C. Clarke’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) uses the strange and featureless ‘monolith’ as a divine agency or even avatar of God that is implied as being the instigator of evolution within humanity; but Clarke’s ultimate message is that humanity itself will eventually reach a transcendental state becoming analogous with God or with God’s will. This optimistic view lay within Dick’s own cosmological beliefs, but Dick differed from Clarke in that his own optimistic view was not itself sufficient ‘proof’ of the existence of God, or divine agency, which would act within the universe in a way that humanity would regard as being just or compassionate. Dick required ready evidence in order to assuage his own concerns and he could not find that proof. Similarly Roger Zelazny’s *Lord of Light* (1967) features as its eponymous protagonist Mahasamatman or ‘Sam’, the Buddha. The dualistic theme of *Lord of Light*, Light vs. Death, reflects Dick’s own dualistic cosmology of light and life vs. darkness and entropy, itself a Zoroastrian principle (Ormazd vs. Ahriman) that Dick dealt with specifically in *The Cosmic Puppets* (1957), discussed earlier in Chapter Two. Again in Frank Herbert’s *Dune* (1965), religion forms a central crux of the novel and its sequels, with ‘Orange Catholicism’ ultimately replaced by the messianic Paul Atreides who adopts the religious ways of the Fremen of the planet Dune. This religion, which is forced on every other inhabitant of *Dune’s* fictional world, is referred to at different points in the saga as

‘Zensunni’ or ‘Buddislamic’. *Dune* and its sequels have a very different message than Dick’s stories, being a study of the essentially fascistic political constructs of Herbert’s fictional future and the dictators that administer these constructs in what Ken McLeod calls ‘the great glaring exception to sf’s broadly liberal consensus’.³¹ Where other critics might also accuse Robert Heinlein of enforcing similar fictional political constructs in *Starship Troopers* (1959), McLeod rightly champions it, citing the fact that anybody may defend the otherwise democratic world which Heinlein creates in his novel, ‘regardless of their other attributes and abilities’.³²

Herbert however establishes a political hierarchy which his characters are not permitted to question (McLeod also points out the ‘satrapy’ of Herbert’s political agencies as being based on the Ottoman Empire). Had one of Dick’s essentially liberal protagonists ever arrived in Herbert’s world, his or her first priority would be – one suspects – to expose the weaknesses of the system and even to force its collapse or withdrawal, as Hawthorne Abendsen – however unwittingly at first – does in *The Man in the High Castle* (1962). What is clear is that for many science fiction authors, politics and religion, as in the contemporary human world, are inextricably linked. Where Dick differed ultimately is that he ideated not just fictional worlds for their own sake, but believed explicitly in the correctness of his assumptions and attempted to fix upon the human world his own sense of compassion and justice. As the reader will have already gathered however, Dick’s own interpretation of what, exactly, constitutes a ‘deity’ differs throughout the body of his work and thought (God as impostor, or as machine, or as ‘mystical other’).

³¹ Ken McLeod, ‘Politics and science fiction.’ *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 236.

³² Ken McLeod, ‘Politics and science fiction.’ *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*. 233.

The 'deity' in Dick's work can be literal (sometimes physical) or emblematic, but it is always present. It is the mechanism by which Dick's worlds function and (for the most part) eventually malfunction. The only dependable features of the 'deity' in Dick's work are its often surprising form and its tendency to fail, sometimes catastrophically. The failure itself can be simple breakdown, or it can be attributed to the inherent malice in the deity; the prime example being of course the eponymous character in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965). Another feature of Dick's deities is that they alternately wield, confound or destroy technology with ease. The question is: why does the deity fail in Dick's work? Why ultimately must it malfunction?

Technology as far as Dick's fiction is concerned confers dubious advantage at best and is an often treacherous tool. In *Ubik* (1969), Dick eventually presents his characters, stuck in their decaying world, with the panacea for world stability: an aerosol can of Ubik spray. But Ubik's effects are not permanent, and it must be continually applied to maintain its effects (perhaps as an allegory meant to imply that a human must continually renew their faith in order to exist, or at least to exist meaningfully). In the blackly comic short story 'Colony' (1953), the inanimate furniture, tools and transports on which the human space explorers rely turn on the humans and eventually consume them (referred to obliquely in Dick's essay 'The Android and the Human' (1972) which Dick opens with the comment, '[it] is the tendency of the so-called primitive mind to animate its environment'.)³³ Examples in Dick's fiction of deities wielding power over machines occur in, for example, *The*

³³ Lawrence Sutin, ed., *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 183.

Divine Invasion (1981): Yahweh destroys Herb Asher's treasured tape collection and just as quickly restores it (in this case, to teach Asher a lesson).³⁴

Occasionally in Dick's fiction, it is an actual machine deity that provides the path to human enlightenment; but the enlightenment, and the deity, is not always welcome – at least amongst certain groups. For example the messianic figure Wilbur Mercer in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), meant to inspire empathy and unity in humanity, is revealed as the novel closes to be nothing more than an actor called Al Jarry. At this point Deckard's robotic victims, in particular Roy Baty, take great delight in the revelation on prime-time television that the sham messiah is part of the Mercerism 'swindle'.³⁵

The theme is also foreshadowed in Dick's short story 'The Last of the Masters' (1954). In the story, the world is revealed to be in a post-revolutionary state. The world's governments have been dissolved and a loosely organised 'Anarchist League' now monitors the world's people. Although everybody is generally poor and their technological development has been retrograded by the League, most are grateful that they are no longer ruled by governments. There is no more war, and the League intends to keep it that way. The reader suspends disbelief at this apparently ideal situation (arrived at by incredible means), and is quickly introduced to three League agents: Edward Tolby, his daughter Silvia, and Robert Penn.³⁶ Having heard rumours of a surviving or perhaps rebuilt government, they are investigating the matter. The League agents are readily identified by others as such, by their 'ironite' walking sticks. (The name of the fictional compound or alloy seems unimportant, but a comment here is invited. It exists perhaps as a contraction intended by Dick to reflect

³⁴ Philip K. Dick, *The Divine Invasion*. (London: Voyager, 1996) 37-8.

³⁵ Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (London: Orion Books, 1999) 179.

³⁶ Philip K. Dick, *The Father-Thing: The Collected Stories of Philip K. Dick, Volume 3* (London: Millennium, 1999) 77-8.

iron pyrites – fool’s gold – as a way of reducing the League agents to fools, however well-meaning they might be. Equally, it could reflect the ‘ironic’ state of affairs described in the story, in that the League, while scattered and disorganised, has in effect established itself as the new government of the world by outlawing other governments.)

The story does not open with the agents however, instead focusing on ‘the last of the masters’, a robot called Bors (the Arthurian name anticipated to evoke in the reader, perhaps, some element of trust in the machine). When Bors is introduced, it seems to the reader that he is a human, in need of medical attention; but it quickly becomes clear that he is a robot, and that he relies upon human attendants for his maintenance and repair.³⁷ The physical condition of Bors is important, as Dick links it directly with the robot’s ultimate failure to maintain his ‘rebellious’ government. Nevertheless, Bors has managed to unify some part of humanity in a government, and has equipped it with the trappings of society as the reader would understand it: with its own economic system, production and manufacturing base, and military. The organisation also possesses a high level of technology, achieved through the use of forbidden designs stored in Bors’ memory. This information is of course unavailable to anybody else in the story’s world. Bors, despite the fact that humanity turned on his kind long ago, still harbours a desire to help and protect them. However, the means by which he provides that protection and the philosophy behind it is at odds with the principles of the League.

In a later (1978) note to the story, Dick wrote:

Now I show trust of robot as leader, a robot who is the suffering servant, which is to say a form of Christ. Leader as servant of man: leader who should be dispensed with – perhaps. An ambiguity hangs over the morality of this story. Should we have a leader or should we think for ourselves? Obviously the latter, in principle. But – sometimes there lies a gulf between what is

³⁷ *Father-Thing*, 77.

theoretically right and that which is practical. It's interesting that I would trust a robot and not an android. Perhaps it's because a robot does not try to deceive you as to what it is.³⁸

Interestingly, the note does not make mention of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* in which Dick's 'trust' of Mercer is clear despite the character's revealed status as an android, in apparent contradiction of his statement here that androids 'deceive'. However, Mercer, like Bors, is a messianic figure and he reveals to John Isidore his innermost thoughts and motivations, which is sufficient perhaps to dispel Dick's doubts about Mercer's fidelity. What should be emphasised here however is Dick's question of whether or not humanity should have a leader, and specifically, a godlike leader which enacts a form of benevolent autocracy. That the note was written post-2-3-74 and is arguably influenced by his experiences during that period is not truly significant. What is important is that Dick wrote the story with these ideas in mind in 1954, and Bors was clearly designed to represent a deity, albeit a flawed one. This point is not in question; Bors commands the people that inhabit his domain, which is described as a 'valley', a 'vast bowl' in which Edward Tolby sees 'fields, houses, highways' and 'factories'.³⁹ Over this world in microcosm, Bors holds messiah-like authority. Dick's comparison of Bors to Christ in the 1978 note is not a later observation of an accident but a confirmation of earlier design. Bors is Christ, and like Christ he is ultimately betrayed and destroyed by the very people he has set out to 'save', including his own lieutenant and chief mechanic, Fowler. After Tolby destroys Bors he experiences a moment of guilt and remarks, 'Good God ... it was crippled. The poor blasted thing. Completely helpless. Sitting there and I came and killed him. He didn't have a chance.'⁴⁰ Tolby does not see his act as one of deicide of

³⁸ *Father-Thing*, 375.

³⁹ *Father-Thing*, 93.

⁴⁰ *Father-Thing*, 98.

course, but he does humanise Bors; he did not destroy or break a robot, but ‘killed him’.

‘The Last of the Masters’ ends with Fowler giving his reasons for his part in the betrayal that allowed Tolby to ‘kill’ Bors. Speaking to Tolby, Fowler states that Bors was ‘losing his control’ in a reference to the robot’s own decaying existence and need for constant maintenance. However, Dick then reveals another link to Christ beyond Bors’ representation as a suffering deity: an opportunity for the robot’s ‘resurrection’. Fowler retrieves and keeps safe three intact ‘synapsis-coils’, memory units from Bors’ shattered head. He justifies this in the story’s closing line, thinking: *Just in case the times change.*⁴¹ What is inferred here is that Bors will be rebuilt – in which case he would appear as a ‘second coming’, an incidence that would be welcomed rather than spurned, in the context of Fowler’s thoughts.

Dick writes in the 1978 note that ‘an ambiguity lies over the morality of this story’ and like all of Dick’s fictional agencies of control, Bors is flawed as a proxy for Christ. The implication here is that as far as Dick is concerned, Christ is also flawed. The note can be read as part of his more complex speculations about deific control in the world in his post-2-3-74 fiction and the *Exegesis*. A reader of ‘The Last of the Masters’ is left unsure as to who was right and wrong, as Dick observes. Bors and his faction, and the Anarchists, are equally autonomic in their own ways; both advocate a way of life that is simultaneously advantageous and damaging. Although the Anarchist League has effectively abolished war, it has done so at the expense of progress and learning. On the other hand, Bors’ progressive governance of his microcosmic world will lead ultimately to war (another reason for Fowler’s betrayal of his master: Amongst Bors’ last actions are the steps he takes to mobilising his

⁴¹ *Father-Thing*, 99.

military forces against the rest of the world). Governance, Dick is arguing, creates conflict; the form of government does not seem to matter, and the point here is that no deity (from Dick's point of view) is truly flawless. Dick's fictional deities, and the agencies he writes about in his *Exegesis*, make mistakes. They cannot unite humanity in a common cause without conflict and strife, and their inability to do so is a reflection of human limitations.

What the thesis has shown up to this point is that Dick's numinous thought is extremely difficult to unravel. This stems in part from his own desire to create an ontological argument out of many disparate pieces of information, some of them highly subjective and most of them speculative, being based solely on his own experiences (especially those of 2-3-74). His ideas consist of many highly detailed fragments which, expressed in cosmological and theological terms, add repeating and sometimes competing layers of complexity to an already complicated theme. No single religion is 'correct' for Dick; as described in previous chapters, he borrows and expands upon ideas from many different sources, including Taoism and Manichaeism. The *morality* that Dick wrote about in his 1978 note to 'The Last of the Masters' is basically secondary to the supposition that the world will ultimately become perfected (with mankind achieving apotheosis in a process highly reminiscent of Jacob Boehme's beliefs, as discussed previously).

The reason for this is that Dick was disturbed by the possibility that the human world could be flawed if it was governed by a perfect deity, and his mystical thought was driven by a great deal of intellectual energy designed ultimately to apologise for the existence of a deity or deities, in order to justify the existence of an imperfect world. As an example, Dick expresses this viewpoint in an undated fragment of

writing, which may or may not have formed part of his *Exegesis*. The ideas given in the following fragment are worth analysing because they give an insight into Dick's intellectual processes and demonstrate his desire to create a single, reliable cosmology. Dick wrote:

Christ is God the Voyager. When he appears, the ultimate mystery is revealed: the death of death (vision not of yang world but of superimposition of both yin & yang worlds by (into?) the Tao, or God's perfection (which by the way *MUST* lie outside of time; time has been "used up." The world of time (yin) ultimately reaches the "end of time," when everything (as in the Platonic form) has been brought to perfection. When a thing or state becomes perfect time ceases for it. But to lie outside of time is *also* to have *always already* existed – so yang world does not merely trail after the yin world. Suffering does not teach; suffering does not improve the sufferer. He is merely caught in the yin world of immutable cause & effect...⁴²

Although the fragment is undated, it is likely that Dick wrote it post-2-3-74, perhaps as part of an attempt to unify his mystical experiences with his fiction (which I will discuss in more detail later on). The 'death of death' is a theme which repeats throughout Dick's fiction, and 'The Last of the Masters' is an example of it. Bors effectively overcomes his own 'death', though admittedly through Fowler's safeguarding and (presumed) perpetuation of his intact memory. Fowler then effectively becomes Bors' foremost disciple by keeping the memory safe, despite his role as a 'Judas' figure (perhaps accepting that, without 'Judas', salvation could not exist). The *yin* world Dick alludes to in the fragment, as discussed in the second chapter as part of an analysis of *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), is our own, fallible human world. Dick argues the same point as Jacob Boehme, as discussed previously: that the world (and humanity) will eventually become 'perfect', or join to become one with God. In 'The Last of the Masters', the world is shown to be imperfect through two differing viewpoints, and for different reasons, but Fowler's closing thought suggests that it will one day change and be perfected. In this case, the

⁴² Philip K. Dick, undated fragment of writing, Philip K. Dick Science Fiction Collection, Pollak Lib., California State University, Fullerton. This is reproduced from a loose sample of Dick's handwriting which I have endeavoured to copy as closely as possible.

equivalent of yin and yang worlds becoming one would be the merging of viewpoints between the League and Bors, and the old governments he represents. In a more mystical frame, this would equate to the unifying of the deity (Bors) with humanity.

Dick's comments about 'suffering' in the fragment are also interesting. Here, Dick writes that suffering is of no consequence by itself. This seemingly contradicts what Dick writes as the fragment opens, when he states that 'Grief cancels evil' and that 'Grief = compassion'.⁴³ It is important to note though, as ever, that Dick's cosmological ideas constantly evolved (by subtle or significant degrees, and often within a single source), and so too his arguments. On this first page of the fragment, he also writes that 'God is evil' because He does not end suffering in our world. Dick then apologises for this by stating that God is *incapable* of entering our own world (as the Cathars believed), leading to the later comment about Christ being 'God the Voyager'. God cannot reach humanity, but Christ in mortal form, by suffering with us, apparently can. This leads Dick to comment that when Christ reappears, He will do so permanently and both *yin* and *yang* worlds will cancel out 'into an absolute state without time & space'. This in turn leads him to state that 'the gospels are correct; there is a day of Judgement coming'.⁴⁴

What Dick is basically asserting is a form of pantheism: God is manifest in many forms and will one day be 'reunited' in perfection. He is also a pantheist in that he believes in multiple deities that he equates with God and/or with Christ. For example, in a letter written in 1975, he emphasises the importance of names as ciphers, and affirms that John Allegro was 'right' to claim that the New Testament itself is a cipher. In the letter, addressed to Claudia Krenz Bush, a correspondent who was writing her thesis on Dick, he writes about a dream he has had:

⁴³ Fragment from Pollak Lib.

⁴⁴ Fragment from Pollak Lib.

I saw before me a few sentences from the New Testament which included the name Jesus. Then this was shown me (I'm not kidding you): the name or word "Jesus" was drawn open, literally reached down into and opened, to reveal that it was a cryptomorphosis, a code word, *made up* to conceal first the actual name of God, which was Zagreus, and then the word was reshuffled to show that Zeus was within it, too, so that Zeus and Zagreus were within (the Being, the ontology) the "mere" code cover or what they call plaintext cipher, "Jesus." In the early days the Christians who read the plaintext would know what "Jesus" actually referred to, and then I heard the aural explanation, which was by way of telling me why help from Zeus-Zagreus-(Jesus) had come to me in March 1974 [... But] *this* message? Zeus-Zagreus is the true name of the father-son god we worship? What a vast secret, and how well kept!⁴⁵

This, obviously, is yet another explanation for what happened to Dick during 2-3-74. At times, his mystical ideas regarding his experiences would replace rather than build on his previous theories. The significance this particular revelation had for Dick stemmed in part from the fact that Zagreus was a Greek god worshipped in Orphic cults who was identified with Dionysus; and Dionysus was one of the children of Zeus, in a parallel of God as the Father and the Son. It is not an easy theory to accept, and it is likely that Dick's fascination with ancient Greek philosophy and culture influenced it, and the dream that led to it. (The name 'Jesus' is the Graeco-Roman translation of 'Joshua', and its similarity to the name 'Zeus' is therefore not so surprising considering its source.) However, the identification of pagan gods with Christ, beyond simple similarity in name, is a significant step in Dick's cosmological thought. It indicates that, given what might seem even a specious reason, he was prepared to accept any non-Christian religious figure as a representation of God and Christ – which confirms his pantheistic belief system. Zeus as a pagan deity had human flaws and foibles, and Dick's fictional deities (or deific agencies), perhaps predictably, have these same flaws. Dionysus for example was a god of wine and revelry, but was also a god of madness – and this is hardly something that a traditional Christian would associate Christ with.

⁴⁵ Philip K. Dick, letter to Claudia Krenz Bush, February 16 1975, Philip K. Dick Science Fiction Collection, Pollak Lib., California State University, Fullerton.

In Dick's fiction, deities or deific agencies are often presented cosmologically in one of two ways. The first way they are represented is in a dualist cosmology. For example: *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), accepting Leo Bulero as the antithesis of Eldritch's evil; *The Divine Invasion*, in which Yahweh struggles to reclaim Earth and humanity from Belial; the struggle between the quasi-divine Glimmung and the forces of entropy in *Galactic Pot-Healer* (1969); the Taoist struggle between *yin* and *yang* in *The Man in the High Castle*, discussed in a previous chapter, and accepting in that case the pantheistic struggle between the hellish underworld (in this case the alternate world in which the Axis powers won the Second World War) and the real, hidden *yang* world; or *Eye in the Sky* (1957) in which a series of horrible realities are created in turn by a dominant mind within a group of people, each coming to play a Satanic figure similar to the Form Destroyer in *Maze of Death* (1970).

In *Maze*, Dick presents what Lawrence Sutin calls a 'quaternity' of gods as an 'admixture of Gnosticism, neo-Platonism, and Christianity: the Mentufacturer, who creates (God); the Intercessor, who through sacrifice lifts the Curse on creation (Christ); the Walker-on-Earth, who gives solace (Holy Spirit); and the Form Destroyer, whose distance from the divine spurs entropy (Satan/Archon/Demiurge)'.⁴⁶ However, the cosmological system is simpler and is essentially dualistic in nature: God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost act together to confound the Form Destroyer, which Dick also refers to as the 'anti-eidos' (*eidos* being the Greek word for 'form', as referred to by Dick in a letter written to Bruce R. Gillespie, editor of the science fiction fanzine, *SF Commentary*). The letter is cited earlier, in Chapter Two.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Lawrence Sutin, *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (New York: Harmony Books, 1989) 308-9.

⁴⁷ Philip K. Dick, letter to Bruce R. Gillespie, 8 June 1969.

The second way in which Dick represents deities is through a more direct comparison to Christian theology, by placing agents of salvation together in a father-son relationship. For example, in *Ubik* (1969), Glen Runciter and Joe Chip are arguably aspects of the same being; and in *The Divine Invasion*, there is a direct comparison to Christian theology through the representation of Yahweh and his son Emmanuel. In *Ubik* especially, Runciter, Chip and the eponymous Ubik spray are a kind of Holy Trinity: Runciter as Father, Chip as Son and the aerosol spray as Holy Ghost, which is also the Logos – the self-revealing thought and will of God. The enemy in *Ubik* is Jory, a character identical in function to the Form Destroyer of *Maze*. In all cases, these deities are somehow flawed or imperfect (often through human failings).

However, Dick's treatment of deities and deific agencies can also be markedly more subtle, as for example in the humanistic struggle between Jason Taverner and an all-powerful police state in *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said* (1974), representing a Taoist dualism similar to that of *High Castle*. His treatment of fictional deities can also be much more complex – which brings the discussion to Zebra, the artefact or demiurge responsible for maintaining an illusory world and discussed in detail in the Introduction, and in Chapters Two and Four of this thesis.

Less than a week after writing to Claudia Krenz Bush about the 'cryptomorphosis' of Zagreus-Zeus-Jesus, Dick wrote again about another dream he had had, and the theories he expounds upon seem to inform part of his concept for Zebra in the later *Valis*. In the letter he claims that he has just discovered the importance of the ionosphere, part of our own atmosphere. He denies in the letter knowing anything about the existence of the ionosphere prior to his dream and writes

a twelve-point list of what he considers to be important information about what his discovery represents.

His first point as he writes is that '[there] is a sentient entity in our ionosphere which behaves like an AI system, utilizing our own radio signals.' He also wrote (as the fifth point in his list) 'undoubtedly it resembles descriptions of gods and God, the Holy Spirit, Elijah, Christ, etc., from past cultures'.⁴⁸

This further justification for 2-3-74 was Dick's attempt to build on his earlier guesses. Now, Christ is not just Zagreus-Zeus-Jesus, but is also an 'entity' which resides in the ionosphere and communicates through radio signals. Later in the same letter, he affirms that the 'ionospheric entity' is the product Ubik (or at least its equivalent), from his novel. Because of this it becomes obvious that Dick's cosmology was developing layers within layers of complexity. Not only does he attempt to justify 2-3-74 in a mytho-historic frame, he also tries to justify it in a fictional frame by equating it to ideas and entities he has created in his writing prior to 2-3-74 itself. The consequences of this are twofold and exist in opposition to one another. Firstly, the evolving complexity of his cosmology caused Dick to generate ever more complex ideas and interpretations as a means of resolving his own theological concerns and crises, which he expressed through his writing (letters, *Exegesis*, novels). Secondly, that same evolving complexity prohibited any effective resolution of his ideas, being neither framed in the 'real', historical world, nor in a single, consistent, fictional creation.

This impossible position was the cause of Dick's problems, who was trying to build – in his own way – a 'Theory of Everything', not to set the boundaries of our physical laws, but to confirm the existence of a mystical entity within a contained and

⁴⁸ Letter from Dick to Claudia Krenz Bush, February 22 1975.

logical frame. The reasons why he tried this are, however, quite clear: he believed that his experiences of 2-3-74 confirmed (some of) his *earlier* ideas about the universe; and because of this, he felt that his experiences were significant. Not least in his mind was the fact that he felt that Valis, or Zebra, or Zagreus-Zeus-Jesus, or Ubik, was providing him not only with vital information about the state of the universe in general terms, but was also capable of seeding him with a form of cryptaesthesia – a capacity for clairvoyance. This cryptaesthesia was the means by which Dick felt that he was able to identify that his son, Christopher, was ill (as discussed in Chapter Four) and help him. Regardless of whether an outsider might credit the alleged phenomenon to a parent’s sensitivity to the wellbeing of their children, the point here is that Dick believed that this entity had helped him to save his son from a potentially fatal condition. Therefore, the significance of this entity or agency to Dick’s mind was that it was an agent of salvation; a form of Christ.

In admitting this, Dick had to find a way of explaining why Christ, or whatever the agency that was communicating with him was called, could not – or would not – directly intervene to change the entire world for the better. A dualist cosmological system seemed the most likely explanation; something, at all times, was working to thwart the Christ-figure. The system, of course, was not foreign to Dick’s mind, who had been describing religious dualism in his stories for years. Dualism required no great conceptual leap on Dick’s part because there are elements of it extant in monotheistic Christianity (from the idea that Satan can intervene directly in the affairs of the world by corrupting humanity). It is also a theme common to a great deal of fantasy and fiction writing aside from Dick’s own, where clear ideas of good versus evil (or opposites selected through another ethical or philosophical schism, for example the ‘law/chaos’ divide in Michael Moorcock’s fantasy fiction) are used to

differentiate heroic characters from the villains. Such a theme can be found in a great deal of fantasy and science fiction literature, as well as film. The *Star Wars* films are an obvious model to draw from here, taking the characters of Yoda and the Emperor as godlike opposites on the sides, respectively, of 'light' and 'dark' (*The Matrix* and its sequels are other unsurprising examples, given that they borrow heavily from Dick's ideas). And of course, 'good' and 'evil' as conceptual constructs are common even outside of fictional work created along quasi-religious lines (in other words, without each concept being attached to a specific deity or deific agency).

The complexities inherent in Dick's cosmology are occasionally reflected in other science fiction works, and are by no means unique to Dick's thought. In Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination* (originally *Tiger! Tiger!*, 1956), the character of Gully Foyle is presented as an amoral murderer and rapist (the original *Tiger! Tiger!* title of the novel referred to the character's striking facial tattoos). Over the course of the novel and due to a science fictional device, he becomes, effectively, one being with time and space. He is, as Neil Gaiman writes in his foreword to a later edition of the novel, forced to 'become a moral creature, during his sequence of transfigurations'.⁴⁹ Foyle is introduced as a man without qualifications or recommendations, and is as Bester describes him 'the stereotype Common Man'.⁵⁰ Foyle the man becomes Foyle the god, and his struggle to reconcile his human failings as an amoral creature with his increasing responsibilities as a ubiquitous entity that can manifest anywhere in time and space reflects religious dualism. If Dick had written for Foyle's character, he would have appeared as Ubik, the product; itself an instrument of salvation which, in its early incarnations at least, is ineffectual (frankly, pointless, as Foyle is first encountered in Bester's novel).

⁴⁹ Gaiman, Neil. 'Of Time, and Gully Foyle'. *The Stars My Destination*. By Alfred Bester. London: Millennium, 1999. x.

⁵⁰ Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination* (London: Millennium, 1999) 16.

Another example of dualism in non-Dickian science fiction is Frank Herbert's character Leto Atreides II in the novel *God Emperor of Dune* (1981), mentioned in Chapter Four. The complexities in Herbert's universe as presented in his original six-book cycle are mainly political, and the detail in the universe of *Dune* reflects Herbert's own varied career and education. However, a constant theme throughout the cycle is that of precognition and prescience, and beyond that the ability to wallow (to take 'mental safaris') in the past of one's own ancestors, effectively living their lives over again for intellectual stimulation or simple entertainment. Leto Atreides II, the son of the protagonist Paul Atreides from the original *Dune* novel (1965), is introduced as the eponymous character in *God Emperor of Dune*. Three thousand years old, he is preserved both by intake of spice melange (a drug which prolongs life and expands conscious thought) and by his willingness to mutate into a hybrid between man and monster, between himself and a creature of the planet Dune known as a 'sandworm'. Leto's lieutenant Moneo both fears and respects his 'God Emperor'. With almost limitless prescient ability, nothing is truly capable of surprising Leto, unless he specifically wishes to be surprised (by refusing to inspect a certain point in the future). He is in this sense omniscient; a god, as many of the novel's characters believe. However, he is also a monster, and his monstrous, animalistic side occasionally becomes dominant over his sapient human side. At one point, Leto loses control and, thrashing around with 'monstrous violence', almost crushes Moneo to death.⁵¹ Leto's role as a god, as a tyrant who exerts absolute authority and control over humanity, is designed to teach human beings to revel in their freedom, and in their problems; and to shun security, which leads to stagnation. In a section of text

⁵¹ Frank Herbert, *God Emperor of Dune* (London: New English Library, Hodder & Stoughton, 1988) 329.

that Herbert presents as a fragment from amongst Leto's journals, Leto describes human existence:

[Humans] say they seek security and quiet, the condition they call peace. Even as they speak they create the seeds of turmoil and violence. If they find their quiet security they squirm in it. How boring they find it. Look at them now [...] I give them enduring eons of enforced tranquillity which plods on and on despite their every effort to escape into chaos. Believe me, the memory of Leto's Peace shall abide with them forever. They will seek their quiet security thereafter only with extreme caution and steadfast preparation.⁵²

Leto is both monster/human and god, an expression of dualism in one being.

Unlike many of Dick's deities or deific agencies however, Leto has a human side, and is therefore more approachable; he can explain himself, as through his journal entries. There is nothing cryptic about him. In the above extract, Herbert writes that humans 'seek security and quiet' and thereafter 'squirm in it'. By contrast, Dick's characters – and Dick himself – strive to achieve a condition whereby security is achieved, in that the world starts to function properly once again. The 'lesson' learned by Dick's characters is different to that learned by Herbert's, despite the portrayal of controlling agency or deity being flawed. As with the 'machine god' Omnius discussed in Chapter Seven (as featured in the '*Dune* prequel' books written by Herbert's son, Brian Herbert, and Kevin J. Anderson) Leto exists to teach his subjects. One similarity is evident: that the revelations both teach, through exerting a system of tight control over their human subjects, are essentially the same revelations as Dick's characters experience. That is, freedom from a tyrannical world comes through human struggle, not through the intervention of a *deus ex machina*. In essence, in order to find meaning in life or 'reality', however that is expressed, the human must either overcome the deity (as for example in *Three Stigmata*) or must find enough faith to adhere to its dogma (as in *Ubik*).

⁵² *God Emperor*, 196.

For example, in *Three Stigmata*, the bleak outcome for humanity seems to be that all humans will become Palmer Eldritch through the drug Chew-Z, each human being afflicted by the stigmata of metal arm, metal eyes, and metal teeth. This same theme was in fact present in Dick's earlier short story 'Upon the Dull Earth' (1954), in which the protagonist, Rick, finds that everyone else in the world is becoming like his wife following her apparent abduction and subsequent return by alien creatures. Eventually, Rick himself transforms into and becomes his wife, Silvia. The final line of the story features Rick/Silvia saying to him or herself, 'Please, Rick, I thought everything was all right'.⁵³ Silvia, then, has at least one quality of godhood as Eldritch had: the quality of omnipresence. However, the conclusion of *Three Stigmata* is more positive than this earlier work, which Dick confirmed in a letter to Leland Sapiro, editor of the science fiction fanzine *Riverside Quarterly*. In the 'squib' (as Dick describes it in the letter) preceding the opening chapter of the novel, Leo Bulero's comments are given as part of an 'audio-memo' and are revealed to have been made after his return from Mars – in other words, following his encounter with Palmer Eldritch, and after he and everyone else has been afflicted with the three stigmata. As Dick writes in his letter:

[The] memo is in Leo's style; it is idiosyncratic of him, and this fact [...] proves that Leo did indeed beat Palmer Eldritch. So, by reading this squib, we know that Palmer Eldritch was defeated, and Leo Bulero went on being himself. Which, when extrapolated, means that we [go on being] ourselves.⁵⁴

What is clear is that it was of paramount importance to Dick that Bulero should defeat the machinations of Palmer Eldritch (especially given Lawrence Sutin's assertion that the book 'terrified' Dick).⁵⁵ The novel conveys what Dick, writing in a 1973 biographical note, most wanted to express: that 'the ordinary citizen' is 'the hero

⁵³ *Father-Thing*, 220.

⁵⁴ Letter from Dick to Leland Sapiro, 18 December 1967.

⁵⁵ *Divine Invasions*, 132.

of all [Dick's] novels' and that that hero is Dick's 'hope for the future'.⁵⁶ In other words, human beings are not necessarily 'doomed' in Dick's fictional worlds, despite the omnipresent influence of a controlling, malfunctioning deity. Humanity has the means to overcome adversity and possesses the ability to retake control of 'reality'. There is in Dick's fiction a motif or style that represents for many of his readers a profoundly humanistic quality, and importantly one that is ultimately discovered only through a sustained dialogue between Dick's characters and the worlds which they inhabit; it is not immediately apparent when a character (being one of Dick's underdogs, or a 'Common Man' as Bester might put it) is first introduced in a given short story or novel. However, and as Gaiman puts it, 'keep all heroes going long enough and they become gods'.⁵⁷ When Leo Bulero defeats Palmer Eldritch and overcomes the twisted, 'dark counterplayer' god, he effectively becomes an agent of salvation, a 'Christ' figure to the Eldritch 'antichrist'. In becoming a deity himself, Bulero is not without his own flaws; but they are human flaws, and as such they can be overcome when it matters most.

The questions that Dick's fiction poses hold acute relevance to our own world and demand from Dick's readers answers of apposite gravity, specifically in the frame of the 'malfunctioning deity' or at least, the malfunctioning agency of control. This quality, in tandem with his engaging if disorientating portrayal of flawed and fragile worlds, is part of the reason why he is becoming increasingly popular as a writer, especially as he is interpreted by the film industry in Hollywood, where – at the expense of some of the subtler elements of Dick's writing – his stories are largely restaged as fast-moving 'action movies' (*Blade Runner* in 1982, *Total Recall* in 1990,

⁵⁶ Philip K. Dick, 'Biographical Material on Philip K. Dick', 1973, Philip K. Dick Science Fiction Collection, Pollak Lib., California State University, Fullerton.

⁵⁷ Gaiman, Neil. 'Of Time, and Gully Foyle'. *The Stars My Destination*. By Alfred Bester. London: Millennium, 1999. x.

Minority Report in 2002 and *Paycheck* in 2003). Richard Linklater's recent film adaptation of *A Scanner Darkly* (2006) and the projected future release of *Next*, which is based on Dick's short story 'The Golden Man' (1954), have confirmed filmmaker and audience interest in his work, for the reasons outlined above. The themes that Dick wrote about have a timeless quality, even in the frame of science fiction stories set in the 'near future' (as in *Ubik* and *A Scanner Darkly*, both of which are set in the 1990s). Those qualities are immediately obvious in Dick's stories, but perhaps not in the cinema. Yet, the opportunity of translating his work to the screen allows filmmakers to riddle their movies with enough visual effects to satisfy the expectant 'sci-fi' cinemagoer, and arguably the best of the films so far – *Blade Runner*, *Minority Report* and *A Scanner Darkly* – bear enough of a resemblance to Dick's stories that they retain the essential message of what Dick was trying to communicate.

After typing a typically long and rambling letter to Claudia Krenz Bush in 1975, Dick handwrote a postscript that reads 'I am trying very hard here to understand and then express my experiences'.⁵⁸ Dick chose to express those experiences, in the main, through his fiction; and they were experiences that, for whatever reason, reflected his very early (1950s) observations on the human condition, on the state of the world, and on the comprehension of deities; which brings the argument back to the opening question of this conclusion.

Deities malfunction in Dick's fictional worlds because they must. An infallible deity in a Dickian universe – that is an all-powerful one – could not be essentially outsmarted or otherwise defeated by a human being. However, it would have to be in order for the human spirit (or in ethical terms the quality of 'good') to triumph over adversity. In staging and restaging his cosmological ideas as science fiction (albeit

⁵⁸ Letter from Dick to Claudia Krenz Bush, 27 February 1975.

borrowed, bastardised and then rearranged and recreated) he began to ask questions about our own 'real' world. In his writing, from whatever source, it is clear that Dick acknowledges the presence of both 'good' and 'evil'. In order to make sense of both the 'real' world and his own fictional worlds, it was necessary for Dick to justify why evil had to exist. It was not enough for him to say that it was God's (or a god's) will, because that would imply that God Himself was evil. Likewise it was not possible to state that God was good, because if that were the case, then evil would not exist.

A form of pantheistic dualism, then, became the means by which Dick reinterpreted extant cosmological ideas and remade them as his own, expressed in – especially – his personal writings and in his fiction. Using dualism, it was possible for Dick to explain why God, or the benevolent agency, was hindered: as the Gnostics and the Cathars believed, God was apart from the world, in a higher realm. Evil, or Satan, or Mammon was present in the physical, earthly realm and therefore held more direct influence.

The dualism in Dick's fiction is not always obvious, but it is always present in some form; and so too are the 'deities' which represent it. In *A Scanner Darkly* (1977) for example, Bob Arctor becomes a victim of Substance D, which Dick describes through the character of Mike Westaway as '*mors ontologica*. Death of the spirit. The identity. The essential nature.'⁵⁹ Evil in the book has its agents; certainly including Donald Abrahams, the 'Executive Director of New-Path Foundation'.⁶⁰ The company is responsible for helping those addicts who have been damaged or destroyed by Substance D, and yet, Abrahams is also revealed as being responsible for growing the crop from which Substance D is eventually produced. With such control at his disposal, he becomes both an agency of 'salvation' and an agency of death; but his

⁵⁹ Philip K. Dick, *A Scanner Darkly* (London: Millennium, 1999) 202.

⁶⁰ *Scanner*, 213.

main aspect is as Dick's *anti-eidos*, the 'Form Destroyer'. He is a mere human, but his powers over life and death are almost godlike given his control of the fundamental agencies as they are presented in the novel: the clinics for recovering addicts, and the farms for producing Substance D. His enemies are also humans, but only one exhibits any ability to offer salvation, or at least comfort, to Bob Arctor: Donna Hawthorne, who is revealed at the end of the novel as a federal agent.⁶¹ Abrahams does not have total power and is therefore flawed; but so is Hawthorne, who proves unable, in the end, to save Arctor. This despite the fact that the novel suggests that Arctor will at least return to his fellow patients at Thanksgiving with a sample of the *mors ontologica* and perhaps provide Hawthorne and Westaway with the evidence they need to shut New Path down.

Despite his many achievements as a writer, Dick fell short of his goal of discovering and expressing a final, meaningful cosmology that would answer his own questions, as they pertained to his own stories, and as they pertained to the 'real' world. As if constructing a quasi-pagan religion, Dick gave his fictional deities, and his interpretations of extant deities, human flaws, and he did so in an attempt to understand them. However, the process of ascribing human flaws to something that is represented as a deity stems from a human perspective on the world; it could be no other way. In the end, any human thinker is incapable of describing deific interests and the very process is pointless except as an intellectual exercise. To Dick however, it was not simply an intellectual or literary exercise; it was an ontological one that carried significant meaning. However, attempting to understand true 'godhood' yields no meaningful answers.

⁶¹ *Scanner*, 186.

Dick's characters, in sundry of his worlds, could reach or reclaim 'reality' through acts of faith. Dick himself could not. This was the mystery that puzzled him, and which caused him to construct so many short stories and novels in an effort, as he wrote to Claudia Krenz Bush, to 'express' himself. It was an attempt to justify his own existence, and that of the world.

What, then, is meant by 'malfunction of the deity?' In Dick's work, 'deity' means 'agency.' It can be a supernal or otherworldly intelligence (as in Chapter Two) trying to break through to our level of 'reality' or encouraging human beings to reach out to it in the same way as Jacob Boehme's 'Ungrund'; or the very force or anti-force of entropy written about in Chapter Three represented as a malfunctioning being or entity of some sort. It is hidden, representative of the human world and its 'true' Creator (Chapter Four); it is codified and masquerades as other than it is (Chapter Two, Chapter Five). It can be, as the reader will have gathered from Chapter Six, a machine, an 'artefact' literally capable of malfunction. In other words this 'agency', despite everything and all of Dick's claims that he wrote 'truth', is essentially unknowable and exists in sundry forms. This is itself of course one possible interpretation of 'God' or a 'god-like being,' possessing an omnipresence representative of that being's incarnation in any one of these sundry forms.

In a letter to Ray Browne, a member of staff at Bowling Green University in Ohio, Dick wrote about the principles which drove him to write and the means by which he developed his novels. What he reveals in this letter is perhaps most pertinent to any study of the Dick's thought and writing, quite apart from his cosmological and theological ideas and beliefs. Dick wrote:

A premise or idea, call it what you will, pops into my head for no reason. For example I suddenly think, "What if there were only nine men in the world and all were blind except one. And an attempt is being made by the other eight to see which of them is becoming sighted. [If I] continue, the next step is, "Why? Why only nine men left in the world? Why are they blind? Why does the one who is developing sight need to conceal it? [...] So the second step is to

justify the first step. Answers come to me such as, "They are not men; they are superior entities from another star system [...]"⁶²

What Dick is describing here to Browne is not exclusively the way in which he approached and wrote his novels. He is describing his own thought processes as he attempted to apply them to his own private thought and to the human world around him. Dick answered his own questions in the same way as one of his characters. When Dick wrote: 'Answers come to me such as, "They are not men; they [...] from another star system,"' he was addressing himself. What Dick could not satisfactorily explain to himself through what to other people would be termed 'real' experiences, he turned to mystical and science fictional explanations, married with a bizarre mix of theological ideas, to provide him with the answers he craved. What makes Dick's work so important is that the questions he staged (and restaged) in effect are a part of an ongoing human search to find what must be the 'ultimate' answers to the questions of existence. Dick saw it as his duty or obligation to 'educate' his readers because he was, perhaps, afraid that they would fail to benefit from the 'wisdom' he felt he had acquired. In the same letter to Browne, Dick wrote:

I admit that I have no messages to offer. The best I can do in a novel to 'educate' a reader is to introduce him to some area of knowledge (e.g. the nature of schizophrenia, or of child autism) which he may never have stumbled over.

Two things are important about this statement. First of all, Dick's insistence that he has 'no messages' to offer is false. He writes this as part of a desire in Browne's letter to appear older and wiser than he was ('I am now forty years old, not twenty-two any longer').⁶³ He writes that novels are supposed to have a 'theme and also a message' and mentions to Browne that the theme and the message convey the belief systems of the author. Dick, as has been demonstrated, attempted to communicate his

⁶² Philip K. Dick, letter to Ray Browne, 21 March 1969.

⁶³ Letter to Browne, 21 March 1969.

belief systems – in his personal writings and in his fiction – whenever possible. He did this because rightly or wrongly he genuinely believed in the visionary quality of his own thought.

Dick's didactic tenor (in his letter to Browne he writes the word 'education' with irony but means it earnestly) and attempt to communicate his own revelations with his readers is part of what can be rightly called the *malfunction of the deity*. Dick's disappointment in 'failing' to find a single, apposite answer to his theological questions is not itself indicative of intellectual, spiritual or mystical 'failure.' It is the failure of perception, and a failure of Dick and Boehme's demonstrable mystical relationship that humanity shares with a Creator being or agency. The 'true' world, the one beneath the ersatz reality, is what Dick sought to find in both fiction and life.

The 'deity' that malfunctions is itself false. The dark forces of evil that Dick perceived in the human world masquerade as deities or deific agencies precisely because they are evil. Dick's only true failing, in engaging with the mystical on largely mystical terms, was that he missed the essential point of the 'teachings' he thought had been revealed to him: that *knowing* in matters of faith is enough, and that questioning what is unknowable is at best ineffective. It is ineffective for Dick as an intellectual, because whatever 'mystical' information he thought he had gained had to be backed up, essentially, by reason and logic. Applying reason as a tool to unlock the 'secrets' of unknowable supernal agencies does not function as a means of attaining wisdom. It functions solely as a means of writing effective and thought-provoking fiction. Dick called himself a 'fictionalizing philosopher' and perhaps in this was his own realisation that his own cosmological beliefs, however much internal consistency they possessed in terms of 'mystical' import, were themselves fictions. The frustration

Dick felt in failing to discover what Stephen Hawking might call a ‘Theory of Everything’ was what drove him to write, and to communicate.

Dick’s work remains important, specifically to the field of science fiction but also more generally, due to an ever-increasing awareness of ‘conspiracy theory’ in the public mind and a universal engagement with a current fascination for paranoid thought. Dick’s work will continue to grow in popularity because it engages with that primeval curiosity in his readers. Arguably the ‘sense of wonder’ evoked by so much (generally more prosaic) science fiction and fantasy literature is not so much extant in Dick’s fictional worlds, but in the bedrock of the *ideas* on which those worlds are based, driven by a genuine fascination with *meaning* and the search for what is unknowable and unreachable, malfunctioning or not.

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