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Empathy Will Save Us - Eventually:
A Reading of Nine Novels by Philip K. Dick.

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INTRODUCTION

*No one in the history of the SF genre - in which amazement alone buys new shoes for writers' kids - has been able to "What If?" as widely, wildly and convincingly as Philip K. Dick. (Lawrence Sutin, *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick*, 3.)*

*I have really not changed my view since... back in the fifties. It's not what you look like, or what planet you were born on. It's how kind you are. The quality of kindness, to me, distinguishes us from rocks and sticks and metal, and will forever, whatever shape we take, wherever we go, whatever we become. For me, "Human Is" is my credo. May it be yours. (Philip K. Dick on his short story "Human Is," from Notes in *The Collected Stories of Philip K. Dick*, Vol. 2, 380)*

In the short story, "Human Is" (publ. in *Startling Stories*, 1955) a woman prefers an alien, who poses as her husband, to her real husband because the impostor treats her with respect and kindness, whereas the real husband is, to put it mildly, an unfeeling, selfish, dominating workaholic, who has no respect for his wife's needs or longings; in fact, has no emotional understanding at all:

Jill Herrick's blue eyes filled with tears. She gazed at her husband in unspeakable horror. "You're - you're hideous!" she wailed.

...

"Hideous," he stated, "is a value judgement. It contains no factual information... Merely an opinion. An expression of emotion, nothing more." (*The Collected Stories of Philip K. Dick*, 257)

The husband, Lester, goes to another planet, called Rexor IV, in connection with his work. When he returns, he has changed into a loving, caring husband, who likes nothing more than playing with children, something he used to abhor. Later on the woman, Jill, discovers that the reason Lester is so changed is because an alien has supplanted Lester's body, and Lester - his "psychic contents", that is - is still on

Rexor IV. We then find out that the aliens on the aforementioned planet do this regularly with humans, because the alien race can no longer live on their decaying planet, and their only chance of survival is to escape in this manner to earth. This is, of course, illegal, and when it is discovered, the aliens are killed and the original human "essence" is retrieved. Jill, realising that in turning the alien over to the authorities she will be getting her original husband back, decides to pretend that the alien is her real husband, and thus saves the alien's life. The reader feels that Jill has made the right choice, and the ending is a happy one:

"I was thinking perhaps I will still call you Lester," Jill said. "If you don't mind."

"I don't mind," the man said. He put his arm around her, drawing her close to him. He gazed down tenderly as they walked through the thickening darkness, between the yellow candles of light that marked the way. "Anything you wish. Whatever will make you happy." (267)

What Dick is implying is that a human being may not necessarily be human, and, when he behaves more like a machine than a human being, he forfeits his right to belong to the human race.

Philip K. Dick's works have been grouped into three periods by most critics: the 50's, the 60's and the 70's. Patricia Warrick, in her article "Philip K. Dick's Answers to the Eternal Riddles," says: "The topics ... [Dick] treated in his fiction during those [first] two periods gained him a reputation as a writer of political and social science fiction" (108). On the surface, yes, but as Dick would have said himself: beware of surface illusions, they may not be authentic. In all his novels Dick is dealing with the topic of authenticity and religion, which include the eternal questions, "What is Human?" and "What is Real?" - two of his favourite subjects. Then in the last three novels, *Valis* (1981), *The Divine Invasion* (1981), and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (1982) he changes gear. These novels are completely religious in their outlook. On

top of that, Dick appears to be writing about himself. *Valis* presents a character called Phil, who is a science fiction writer. *The Divine Invasion* relates the second coming of Christ. *Transmigration* is, supposedly, about Dick's friend, bishop Jim Pike; it narrates the story of Timothy Archer, bishop of California, who loses his life in the Red Sea Desert, just as real life Jim Pike had.

At first it seems as if Dick has abruptly changed theme and setting for his fiction, so radically different are these three novels to the rest of his work. But, as Warrick says: "... a careful reader of Dick's extensive body of works can find seed for the ideas that emerge in *Valis* and *The Divine Invasion* scattered throughout his fiction, in both the first and second periods" (108). Here I absolutely agree, for in all of the novels I examine I find a religious motif: in *Counter-Clock World* (1967) there is the anarch Peak, a benevolent Christ figure; in *Ubik* (1969) Glen Runciter is analogous to God; in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965) the title alone suggests a connection with Christ and Christianity; in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) Mercerism is presented as a future "religion".

Most critics tend to favour the first two above the third and many even claim the 60's to be Dick's best period. It is true that some of Dick's best work was written in that period, novels like *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), *Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata*. However, I have to agree with Aaron John Barlow in saying that in the seventies, Dick reaches his climax, not only as a writer but as an original thinker whose vision knew no limits. Barlow observes that "Dick's final fervent Christianity... is his final conclusion," and that "[i]ts reflection, in his last four novels, is not a dramatic shift in focus, but the culmination of the searches that went into the writing of his earlier books" ("Reality, Religion and Politics in Philip K. Dick's Fiction" in *DAI*). Even Dick himself said something to that effect: "I am a fictionalizing philosopher, not a novelist" (Dick, as cited in Sutin, 5). I would not go so far as saying that he is not a

novelist, and yet there is a grain of truth in this statement. *Valis*, for instance is really an extended, philosophical argument on the nature and identity of God.

In a discussion of Dick's fiction, it is impossible to exclude references to his personal life. Gregg Rickman, in *Philip K. Dick: In His Own Words*, says: "An author's personal life is irrelevant to his critics save where it affects his creative work. Dick's life over the past several years has been the explicit subject of his latest work, hence 'admissible evidence'" (16). Philip K. Dick led a remarkable life, and it is hard not to notice echoes from it in the novels. In an essay titled "Myth and Archetype in Science Fiction," Ursula K. Le Guin comments on the Jungian concept of the "collective unconscious." She says that Jung "reminds us that the region of the mind/body that lies beyond the narrow, brightly lit domain of consciousness is very much the same in all of us" (79), and a little earlier she notes that "[t]o reach the others, the artist goes into himself. Using reason, he deliberately enters the irrational. The farther he goes into himself, the closer he comes to the other" (78), because deep inside we are all the same, and a writer that reaches inside himself, will touch his readers. This is relevant to Dick, for his life was difficult, to say the least. Le Guin comments further:

Pain, the loneliest experience, gives rise to sympathy, to love: the bridge between self and other, the means of communion. So with art. The artist who goes into himself most deeply - and it is a painful journey - is the artist who touches us most closely, speaks to us most clearly. (78)

Dick's private life has been a distinguishing factor in his work, which may be part of the reason why his fiction is so readable: The understanding he shows his characters, the tolerance with which he portrays them, make them sympathetic and easily identified with. Dick once said in an interview with Paul Williams (*Only Apparently*

Real), that his own painful experiences, like the four divorces, made him sympathetic towards his characters:

I never felt superior to my characters after screwing up myself... See, these people are no longer freaks to me, I mean in the sense of being incompetent and fucking up their lives. Because I had fucked up my life, I was completely incompetent, and I loved my characters for their incompetence, you see? (63-64)

Therefore, an examination of Dick's life is imperative to a study of his novels, if some coherent understanding is to be achieved.

Gregg Rickman claims in "Dick, Deception, and Dissociations: A Comment on 'The Two Faces of Philip K. Dick',"¹ that Philip K. Dick suffered from Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) as a result of child abuse. I do not pretend to know what the effects of child abuse are and therefore I will leave such speculations to those who are qualified to do so. Neither do I want to confirm Rickman's assertion, because I do not possess the knowledge required to decide on the truth of the suggestion.

However, I have to comment on Rickman's statement about Dick being a case of MPD. What I have gathered from my readings is that Dick was not schizophrenic and he did not have a multiple personality. He simply suffered from phobias and anxiety, and, at time, from manic depression. The pervading fear made him paranoid to the point of believing the FBI or the CIA to be spying on him. When an individual suffers from depression or anxiety, the results may be extreme mood changes, extreme to the point of being violent, so the person may appear psychotic at times. This creates a disturbing behaviour in the individual so that he may seem to switch personalities even within the space of one minute. A number of things can cause this: an alcoholic parent, divorce of parents, loss of a loved one, harassment in school. All

¹This is a response to Robert Philmus's article "The Two Faces of Philip K. Dick" also in *On Philip K. Dick: 40 Articles from Science Fiction Studies*, p. 246-57.

these things can do serious mental damage to a sensitive child. Dick's second wife, Kleo Mini, has an opinion on the issue. She believes that losing his father - when Dick's parents divorced, Dick nearly lost all contact with his father - affected him most deeply:

Philip figured his dad had abandoned them. It was a hurt that influenced everything he did... [H]e was perpetually sad and I think the father is why. (Mini, as cited in Sutin, 34)

My guess is that a combination of several incidents left in young Dick a seed of insecurity, and because it was not rooted out quickly enough, it grew into a massive tree, spreading its branches into every part of his life. What basically troubled Dick was fear of such magnitude that he had problems functioning "normally," i.e., like everybody else.

What saved Dick from going insane, was his sense of humour, and his work. Ursula K. Le Guin once said in a letter to Gregg Rickman: "I... [was] thinking about a line in a song, I can't remember if it's Willie Nelson or Waylon, 'I've always been crazy, it kept me from going insane' -- that's the only kind of crazy Phil ever was!" (Le Guin, as cited in Rickman's *Philip K. Dick: In His Own Words*, 105). Some critics regard the Valis trilogy an anti-climax to Dick's career. They claim he has gone religious, or that he has finally gone insane. *Valis* is, after all, a biographical account of what happened to Dick himself in February-March of 1974², when he claims God contacted him through a beam of pink light. He maintains that the pink light was filled with information about the nature of the universe, about the second coming of Christ, about time not existing, and about his son's undetected birth defect. The ravings of a

²In March, 1975, Dick wrote a summary of his visions, in which it says: "March 16, 1974: It appeared - in vivid fire, with shining colors and balanced patterns - and released me from every thrall, inner and outer. March 18, 1974: It, from inside me, looked out and saw the world did not compute, that I - and it - had been lied to. It denied the reality, and power, and authenticity of the world, saying: 'This cannot exist; it cannot exist'" (in Sutin, 6).

madman? Maybe, however, Dick never loses his ability to step back and laugh a little at his own "craziness".

Dick always feared he might be insane or schizophrenic, and considering what his life must have been like, he could easily have become mad, had it not been for his sense of humour. Several times he was committed to a mental hospital - he even committed himself, once or twice, to mental treatment. All his life Dick had a psychiatrist whom he went to regularly, just so that the doctor could tell him he was not insane. Dick's fourth wife, Nancy, says: "It seemed like he had this terrible fear of being crazy, so the psychiatrist would say you're not crazy. All the doctors would always tell him he was okay... He was never out of touch with reality" (Nancy, as cited in Sutin, 159). From reading *Valis, or A Scanner Darkly* (1977), it is easy to conclude that he was crazy. Only, the humour saves him. Sutin tells us that "[h]is sense of humour showed itself by deadpan assertions that left listeners wondering whether he was joking or revealing a strange new truth" (82). Which is really what *Valis* is partly about. He is trying, in earnest, to explain to us, and himself, his religious experiences, by discussing them back and forth. However, at the same time, he makes fun of himself. All his painful experiences - all our painful experiences - which make no sense to us, would drive us insane were we not able to laugh at them. Dick, in "Now Wait for This Year", an essay written in 1978, makes a few comments on the necessity of seeing the humour in the universe: "Our situation, the human situation, is in the final analysis neither grim nor meaningful, but funny. What else can you call it?" (218). And he goes on to tell about the time he was reading about Indian philosophy:

That night I went to bed laughing. I laughed for an hour. I am still laughing. Push philosophy and theology to their ultimate (and Buddhist idealism probably is the ultimate of both) and what do you wind up with? Nothing. Nothing exists (they also proved that the self

doesn't exist, either). As I said earlier, there is only one way out: seeing it all as ultimately funny. (227)

So, in the final analysis there is always the possibility that Dick's novels do not have any serious meaning at all; that he only intended his readers to have a good laugh at all the absurdity he could invent and write about. But as I have already said, there are many possible solutions to Dick's novels, and one of the solutions is to see them all as simply a big joke.

Dick is constantly afraid that what he conceives as reality may only be an illusion. In relation to that topic he delves into the nature of human beings and what distinguishes us from machines. The same motifs are prominent in all Dick's works: false realities, fake human beings, hallucogenics, psionic talents, God, demi-gods - all of these being encountered by a faltering, blundering protagonist; a knight in, not shining, but rusty armour, who has a hangover. As his career progresses, Dick becomes obsessed with analysing God; what he is and where he is. A close reading of Philip K. Dick's books will reveal that despite obvious differences, his earlier novels are thematically linked very closely with the Valis trilogy. Where the novels come together, and how they are connected with Dick's personal life, is in the faith they proclaim: a faith in people.

Throughout his novels Dick strives to understand the world, by exploring the questions that occupy his mind and trying out every possible answer to see whether it would complete the puzzle. Five marriage failures, fears and phobias, drug abuse, and lack of literary recognition - all these things combined lead to a pain, which again leads to the big question: why? In his quest for an answer, Dick writes novels; stories about ordinary, erratic people - little people - who do not comprehend the meaning of the cosmos; who find it baffling and often hostile; people who, despite the odds, refuse to give in to the controlling "system" because the system is the enemy. What do we do when reality turns out to be an imitation, created and controlled by the

enemy - be it an illegal hallucogenic drug, an evil demi-god or the dark recesses of the subconscious? What do we do when a human being turns out to be a humanoid machine plotting against mankind? What is there to do when the creator has abandoned his post and left the work to a substitute who does not care? We do as Dick: look until we find the most real thing there is, put our trust and faith in it and, defying all entropic forces, save ourselves and each other. So, what is most real to us? Human kindness and understanding, and we have to believe in that or else reality will continue to disintegrate and the world malevolently continue to bushwhack us at every corner. Dick, in "Afterword" to Daniel J. H. Levack's *PKD: A Philip K. Dick Bibliography*, concludes:

The redeemer exists; he lives... I believe in him completely. He is the friend who ultimately comes... in time... . [T]he positive little figure outlined against the universal rubble is, like Tagomi, Runciter [] gnatsized in scope, finite in what he can do... and yet in some sense great... . I simply believe in him, and I love him. He will prevail. There is nothing else. At least nothing else that matters. (Dick; in Levack, 154)

As Dick's reality continues to disintegrate and decay, he places his characters in positions where they have to reconsider their whole existence. Being unable to trust their basic surroundings, they have to find something they can trust, and, as Dick says, that something is "the friend who ultimately comes... in time".

In the Dickian world, chaos and decay are pushing reality further and further into a state of entropy, of which *Ubik* is the clearest example. Evil forces are steadily working against the characters, who do not stand a chance against an invisible, incomprehensible enemy, of which Palmer Eldritch is the ultimate embodiment. Carlo Pagetti, in an article called "Dick and Meta-SF," argues that Dick's novels disclose his "fundamentally tragic vision of life" (21), and that "[h]is pessimism is not

only social, but concerns itself with all of man's existence" (19). In fact, the gist of his argument is that

Dick's extraordinary narrative skill is manifested in his ability to adapt the principal themes and conventions of the American SF tradition to his own basically tragic and pessimistic conception of reality and American society. (18)

Pagetti fails to note that protagonists like Joe Chip (*Ubik*), Mr. Tagomi (*The Man in the High Castle*), and Leo Bulero (*The Three Stigmata*) do triumph over their antagonists, who usually are representatives of some evil force which is pulling the world further towards chaos. Their triumph is not big: they do not save the world, nor do they defeat the evil force in all its entirety (and as consequence procure heavenly bliss on earth, where the lion sleeps with the lamb). They triumph by refusing to budge; by sticking together; by believing in themselves, their own importance, no matter how small they are; by trusting in each other, and by having faith in the basic kindness of mankind. In the "Afterword" Dick summarises the entire contents of his work, and his words support my argument:

Some reviewers have found "bitterness" in my writing. I am surprised, because my mood is one of trust. Perhaps they are bothered by the fact that what I trust is so very small. They want something vaster. I have news for them: there is nothing vaster. Nothing more, I should say. But, really, how much do we have to have. Isn't Mr Tagomi enough? Isn't what he does enough? I know it counts. I am satisfied. (in Levack,155)

Kindness, as the prevailing human characteristic, is a constant theme in Philip K. Dick's novels. Tagomi, in *High Castle*, without a preconceived notion as to what will happen, saves two human lives. The price he pays is enormous. But his actions are an epiphany for us who watch it happen: the quiet greatness of this man shows us

what human compassion can do. Tagomi is the affirmative hero. Like Palmer Eldritch is the embodiment of evil, Tagomi is the embodiment of all that is positive and good. He is our most immediate reality and he will prevail. His are the redeeming characteristics. Empathy, kindness to and compassion for others, is what will sustain the human being and holding on to that premise, he will be delivered from evil, to use the Christian terminology. Little people, helping or saving other little people - this is salvation and salvation is what Dick believes in. As Dick would have phrased it himself: if we allow it, then empathy will save us - eventually.

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES.

Phil's plots didn't require much in the way of fancy space-exploration gear. For the most part he plops his characters on the nearby Martian colonies or a post-nuclear holocaust Earth. His future technology consists largely of flying 'flappels' and other talking homeostatic devices that try futilely to straighten out their hapless human owner's lives. When Phil really wants to shake things up, he introduces psi talents such as telepaths ("teeps") and pre-cognitives ("precogs"), or aliens of sinister and saintly persuasion, or brand-new drug that, regardless of what they promise, always make things ever so much weirder and worse. The characters confronting all this tend to be - as who wouldn't? - frantic, confused, fierce, broken, and sometimes even full of faith in human goodness. Voilà! The Phildickian world.
(Sutin, 129)

In a Dickian universe, there are many realities, most of them equally valid, but none of them an overview of the whole. If his plots sometimes seem contradictory, they are deliberately so. To keep all the loose ends tied up would violate verisimilitude in the service of consistency, for the Dickian universe has ambiguity and indeterminacy at its core. (Norman Spinrad, as cited in Bishop, 138)

Among Dick's trademarks as a science fiction writer is his novels' lack of closure: his novels are as open-ended as the world itself. Dick provides an argument for this: "As a writer builds up a novel-length piece it slowly begins to imprison him, to take away his freedom; his own characters are taking over and doing what they want to do - not what he would like them to do" ("Foreword to *The Preserving Machine*", 16-17). The world they happen to inhabit, no matter how strange or surreal, usually treats them cruelly and, as we will recognise from our own world, it is totally unpredictable.

Michael Bishop says in "In Pursuit of *Ubik*":

[] as Spinrad, Stanislaw Lem, and others have pointed out, and as the works themselves so starkly demonstrate, the ambiguity and

intentional irreality of Dick's fictional universes imbue them paradoxically, with an off-center *life-likeness*... (139)

Dick's novels are open-ended because they represent the real world which has no beginning and no end; that they are also strangely confusing in their contradictory, mixture of plots and sub-plots, most often internally unrelated, is because the world on which Dick models his novels is irrational and full of unexplainable coincidences. Dick never could accept the world, for he could not understand its cruelty; it made him angry. He comments on this in "Now Wait for This Year,":

I want to write about people I love, and put them into a fictional world spun out of my own mind, not the world we actually have, because the world we actually have does not meet my standards. Okay, so I should revise my standards, I'm out of step. I should yield to reality. I have *never* yielded to reality. That's what science fiction is all about... I want to show you, in my writings, what I love (my friends) and what I savagely hate (what happens to them). (218)

So Dick searched for meaning in the universe, and the truth about our existence - the most eternal riddles there are.

His search is a sincere one; it leads him everywhere, and it takes place in his novels. The result is that every novel contains several plots, thrown together seemingly at random, and yet with a purpose. The multitude of plots often tends to bewilder the reader and also tends to make the novel appear utterly chaotic. What may annoy some - and fascinate others - is that Dick throws in incidents which seem to have no significant value in terms of the main storyline. In his endless pursuit for meaning and truth, Dick feels he should not only look in high places but low places as well. The answer may not necessarily be in heaven; it just might happen to lie in the gutter instead. The random piling up of unrelated details is, as Dick has called it himself, his

"garbage heap". Consequently, no junk is too much junk to be discarded. So he puts it in.

The garbage heap is where Dick believed he would eventually find God, truth and the meaning of the cosmos. In his quest for answers, he stops to look into the occasional dustbin:

I do seem attracted to trash, as if the clue - *the clue* - lies there. I certainly see the randomness in my work, & I also see how this fast shuffling of possibility after possibility might eventually, given enough time, juxtapose & automatically overlooked in more orderly thinking [...]. Since nothing absolutely nothing is excluded (as not *worth* being included) I proffer a vast mixed bag - out of it I shake coin-operated doors & God. It's a fucking circus. I'm like a sharp-eyed crow, spying anything that twinkles & grabbing it up to add to my heap.

Anyone with my attitude just might stumble onto, by sheer chance & luck - in his actual life, which is to say, the life of his *mind* - the authentic, camouflaged God...

This kind of fascinated, credulous, inventive person might be granted the greatest gift of all. To see the toymaker who has generated - & is with or within - all his toys. That the Godhead is a toymaker at all - who could seriously [sic] believe this? ...

Too dumb to know you don't look for God in the trash of the gutter instead of Heaven. (Dick, as cited in Sutin, 154-55)³

All the plots muddled together with startling details sticking out, this is Dick's garbage heap. Some readers may, and probably will get lost trying to understand what it all means. Reading a novel by an author like Dick, who does not tie up his loose ends, can be frustrating. Until the reader realises he does not necessarily have to figure out hundred percent what it all means, he is going to remain dissatisfied. As Robert Galbreath says ("Redemption and Doubt in Philip K. Dick's Valis trilogy"), when it comes to Dick the writer there is no bullet-proof certainty about anything:

³This text is taken from Dick's *Exegesis* and my citation of it is a somewhat shortened version of Sutin's in *Divine Invasions*. Brackets within the text are as Sutin uses them; my own observations, if any, are italicised. Italicised citations, at the beginning of each section, follow reversed format.

"There are no grounds for certainty that are not themselves uncertain" (108). The best way is to simply face the fact that a typical Dick novel has a great number of possible solutions to it and every one will appear equally valid.

Every action and incident happening in the Dickian world, in fact, every Dick novel, is an answer to questions which Dick is asking himself and his readers. These are always the same questions, which, phrased by Galbreath, are along these lines:

What is the nature of the world and its creator, if any? How can I know what reality is?... How can I distinguish reality from illusion, the genuine from the fake, the original from the simulacrum? (105-106)

Dick searches for answers. Whatever he finds that he thinks may come to shed a light on the puzzle, he includes in his novels, whether it is relevant to the plot or not.

Warrick explains what the garbage heap is, which clarifies a little what I have just said: "Over his long writing career, he has remained intrigued with the same subjects, but the answers he gives to the questions he raises on these subjects are never the same. His mind is constantly in motion" (109). Every novel is a theory, or, to be more specific, several theories, on the same subjects. The subjects are always the same, the theories constantly change - no wonder the novels are a trifle confusing.

If "confusing" is the word for Dick's earlier novels, then the word for the Valis trilogy is "bewildering". After years of inquiring into the nature of reality and humanity, he turns to discussing theological arguments, debating more religious texts than is possible to enumerate, and in the process, creates a new personal cosmogony.

Turning his attention to religion does not mean Dick has abandoned his old subject-matter. Peter Fitting, in "Reality as Ideological Construct", says:

What changes from novel to novel is not the basic pattern, but the explanation which the characters and/or the author use to explain the

illusory nature of reality - an explanation which, in Dick's final three novels, is grounded in the mystical Gnosticism of the 2nd-century Alexandrian Valentinus. (105)

Dick's novels are a "vast mixed bag" of information, which he hopes will help him find the truth about the universe and the god who runs it. In *Valis* and *The Divine Invasion* Dick uses Gnostic theories about the creation of the world and the nature of the deity to explain why he finds the universe so completely irrational. In addition he has analysed Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and Islam texts, and, based on the similarities he finds in all those texts, he forms his own hypothesis, his "Two Source Cosmogony", explained in detail in his *Exegesis*⁴. Parts of the *Exegesis* are revealed in the two aforementioned novels. By discovering the truth about God, he hopes he will find the answers to his two obsessions, "What is Human?" and "What is Real?"

John Huntington in "Philip K. Dick: Authenticity and Insincerity" makes a comment on Dick's "profound understanding" when he suggests that Dick gives his theories importance, and an appearance of being profound by "simply contradicting himself," and in that he behaves as many SF writers before him: van Vogt, Heinlein and Herbert, for example: "The more clearly one side is affirmed, the more profound it seems later to find its opposite unexpectedly affirmed with equal unambiguousness" (Huntington, 172). However, things are never quite as simple as that in Dick.

Huntington refers to *Do Androids Dream?*, in which the attitude towards androids jumps from being negative to being positive and then to negative again, and adds:

⁴The *Exegesis* is a "diary" in which Dick wrote every possible explanation and theory he could think of concerning his religious experiences in February-March, 1974 (always referred to as "2-3-74" by Dick). These experiences troubled him deeply: were they authentic messages from God, delusions created by his possibly deranged mind, or results of his excessive use of pills of all sorts? The *Exegesis* is an attempt to put all this in perspective, and he worked on it almost every night for eight years, from 1974, until he died in March, 1982. By then he had written eight thousand pages of this diary, and in 1980 he sub-titled it *Apologia Pro Mia Vita*, which indicates its central theme. A selection from the *Exegesis* has been published as *In Pursuit of Valis: Selections from the Exegesis*. Lawrence Sutin, ed. Novato, CA: Underwood-Miller, 1991.

By moving without mediation from one moral perspective to the other, the novel gives the feeling of moral three-dimensionality, of depth. At other times, as in the whirligig of exchanges at the end of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, or in the baffling regressions and exhaustions in *Ubik*, the van Vogtian technique⁵ generates more perspectives than a reader can absorb, and the effect is not so much of depth as of a suggestive complexity. (172)

This may sound like a negative description, but it is not. Even Dick's "suggestive complexity" has depth. What makes it so confusing is that what is being suggested in such a complex manner, is not easily perceived at first glance. This is, after all, Dick's strong point - the elusiveness of his novels, all the loose ends that in the end connect not with each other but with everything else outside the novel. Another aspect of Dick's "depth" and "suggestive complexity" is his refusal to preach one definite moral. Huntington adds:

In Dick there is no telegraphing of impending change. There is no implication that the alert, understanding reader will see the correct reading and discard the false one. There is no period in which the reader must balance two antithetical possible readings and then choose which is the moral or true one. In this van Vogtian system the reader is simply yanked from understanding to understanding. (172)

Of course it is possible to argue this by saying that Dick refused to preach any moral because he had no moral to preach. Or that he refused it because he could not preach anything definite in such confusing novels. The best way to refute such an argument is to admit that, yes, Dick was contradictory all the time; he creates a theory and then discards it for a newer counter-theory. In *Valis*, Phil, the narrator, says of his alter-ego, Horselover Fat: "During the years... that he laboured on his Exegesis, Fat must

⁵Sutin, in his biography, relates a story about Dick meeting A. E. van Vogt at the 1954 Science Fiction Worldcon, where van Vogt explains how he plots his novels: "Well, I'll tell you a secret. I start out with a plot and then the plot sort of folds up. So then I have to have another plot to finish the rest of the story" (82), i.e., the "van Vogtian technique."

have come up with more theories than there are stars in the universe. Every day he developed a new one, more cunning, more exciting and more fucked" (32). The reason is personal: in every novel, Dick is dealing with a problem, every time, more or less, the same problem - that of authenticity and insincerity. Every novel is a theory and every time a new theory about the same old subjects. As soon as he feels he has domesticated the problem and put truth on a leash, he will doubt the validity of the answer and ask "What If?" all over again; flip the coin yet again and let truth loose just so that he can attack it again from the other side. On the one hand, he plays this game ceaselessly; always travelling, always arriving somewhere and always departing again. On the other hand, he always arrives at the same place, and whatever the original goal, he finds something worth offering: a new theory, a new answer, and a new novel, and still the result is always the same. There is truth in what he has to say, each and every time, although it may not be the whole truth and nothing but the truth: salvation is based on the individual - if he cares enough.

Philosophising about the nature of God does not sound very appealing, and *Valis* would be heavy going indeed were it not for Dick's incredible sense of humour. He shows that he can view his own most important and personal thoughts with a detached ironic cynicism. Warrick says about Dick: "... [H]e might not even want his reader to take his personal vision too seriously. As he once said to me with an ironic twinkle in his voice, 'You'd have to be crazy to do that!'" (125). His humour adds to all his theological meanderings a casual and sarcastic aspect, and he has a tendency to drop a punch line in unexpected places. According to people who knew Dick personally, he would never miss an opportunity to "crack" a joke or two. Roger Zelazny, when attending a science fiction conference in Metz, France, had a French student ask him if Dick intended to found his own religion with himself as Pope. When Zelazny answered that Dick was probably joking, the French student was not so sure because, he told Zelazny, Dick had given him "the power to remit sins--and to kill fleas"(Zelazny; Introduction to Rickman's *Philip K. Dick: In His Own Words*, IX).

Dick's humour, so prominent in all his novels, is an important element in making them as readable as they are.

In *Valis* Dick demonstrates his unique ability to combine irony and colloquialism with profound theological and dialectic one-man debates. Warrick discusses his use of this technique in *Valis*: "The writing is rescued from heaviness by humor and a sprinkling of street language. These are not scholarly discussions" (116), and she adds: "It is a strange combination - Gnostic theology discussed in California street language" (111). Colloquial language and even street jargon makes it possible for the man on the street not only to follow the argument but perhaps partake in it. It is a way of bringing the most serious and specialised discussions down to the level of not only understanding it but enjoying it as well.

In *Valis* the setting is that Horselover Fat has been through an encounter with God, and to try to explain it to himself, he writes whatever hypothesis he comes up with in a diary which he refers to as his "Exegesis". Fat and his four best friends have endless discussions and arguments about the experience. First, there is Kevin, the cynical sceptic, who continually makes fun of Fat. Secondly, we have David, the faithful Catholic. Third, we meet Sherri, also a Catholic, who is dying from cancer. Fourth is Phil, the science fiction writer, who narrates the story and who has no definite opinion about anything except he believes Fat is crazy. By presenting a group of four completely different individuals, Dick manages to argue all sides of the matter convincingly. Apart from that, the conversations are great entertainment, in an absurd sort of way:

We enjoyed baiting Fat into theological disputation... Our friend Kevin always began his attack one way. "What about my dead cat?" Kevin would ask... [He] liked to say, "On judgement day when I'm brought up before the great judge I'm going to say, 'Hold on a second,' and then I'm going to whip out my dead cat from inside my coat. 'How

do you explain *this?*' I'm going to ask." By then, Kevin used to say, the cat would be as stiff as a frying pan; he would hold out the cat by its handle, its tail, and wait for a satisfactory answer.

Fat said, "No answer would satisfy you."

"No answer you could give," Kevin sneered. "Okay, so God saved your son's life; why didn't he have my cat run out into the street five seconds later? *Three* seconds later? Would that have been too much trouble? Of course, I suppose a cat doesn't matter."

"You know, Kevin," I pointed out one time, "you could have put the cat on a leash."

"No," Fat said. "He has a point. It's been bothering me. For him the cat is a symbol of everything about the universe he doesn't understand."

"I understand just fine," Kevin said bitterly. "I just think it's fucked. God is either powerless, stupid or he doesn't give a shit. Or all three. He's evil, dumb and weak. I think I'll start my own exegesis." (26-7)

In absurd fiction, where the craziest things can happen - and usually do - humour provides necessary relief if the reader is not to give up on the work altogether. Dick's novels tend to outdo the most absurd and craziest fiction, and his zany humour saves them the reader from getting lost in the absurdity.

Dick's characters have a way of commenting wittily on a situation. Consider Joe Chip, our hero from *Ubik*, who is having trouble with the mechanical door on his conapt. In Joe's world all household appliances are money-operated:

The door refused to open. It said, "Five cents, please."

He searched his pockets. No more coins; nothing... .

From the drawer beside the sink Joe Chip got out a stainless steel knife; with it he began systematically to unscrew the bolt assembly of his apt's money-gulping door.

"I'll sue you," the door said as the first screw fell out.

Joe Chip said, "I've never been sued by a door. But I guess I can live through it." (23-4)

The absurdity of a talking, money-operated door added to the situation Joe is in - unless someone comes to rescue him he will be locked up in his conapt for the rest of his life - is modestly hilarious.

Dick's quick-witted remarks, uttered by his characters, echo Raymond Chandler's style in novels like *The Big Sleep*. Chandler's prose is famous for its cynical dialogue where characters, who are products of the Forties, speak hard-boiled slang.

Conversations are often metaphoric, always innovative and very funny. Philip Marlowe is answering the police captain's inquiry about what has been going on in *The Big Sleep*: "'There's been a lot of killings going on around me,' I said. 'I haven't been getting my share of it'" (196). By staying stoic in the face of the gravest of dangers, the character reduces the seriousness of what should by rights be nasty circumstances, and transforms the event into a joke. Moreover, Dick - like Chandler - always lets his protagonist have the last word. The last word is often a remark understating the plight he is in and is his way of outwitting the opposition. The protagonist remains somewhat indifferent and, within the context of what is happening - be it a battle with a money-gulping door or a personal trial conducted by a creature from between dimensions - his indifference is highly comical for it is the protagonist's method of refusing to be defeated - when in fact he is. The following passage from *A Scanner Darkly* relates the incident of Charles Freck's attempted suicide, which miscarries in such a way that it turns into a hilarious joke. Freck, a junkie, decides to end it all by swallowing an enormous amount of pills with the aid of red wine, bought especially for the occasion; a bottle of 1971 Mondavi Cabernet Sauvignon. He prepares himself by laying back on his couch with a copy of Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* because Freck finds it important that he be found with that particular book in his lap since it "would prove he had been a misunderstood superman rejected by the masses and so, in a sense, murdered by their scorn" (186). He also has an unfinished letter to Exxon gas company where he protests the cancellation of his gas credit card. However, Freck discovers, after he has downed

the barbiturates that they are in fact psychedelics; he has been burned by his dealer, and now he is "in for some trip."

The next thing he knew, a creature from between dimensions was standing beside his bed looking down at him disapprovingly...

"You're going to read me my sins," Charles Freck said.

The creature nodded and unsealed the scroll.

Freck said, lying helpless on his bed, "and it's going to take a hundred thousand hours."

Fixing its many compound eyes on him, the creature from between dimensions said, "... Your sins will be read to you ceaselessly, in shifts, throughout eternity. The list will never end."

Know your dealer, Charles Freck thought, and wished he could take back the last half-hour of his life.

A thousand years later he was still lying there on his bed... he could still see the multi-eyed, eight-foot-high being with its endless scroll reading on and on.

"And next -" it was saying.

Charles Freck thought, At least I got a good wine. (188-89)

Freck, in for the trip of his life, points out that things are not all bad, and the inappropriate comment becomes ironic because of the circumstances.

Dick's narrative talent and humour sparkle in *Scanner*. The subject-matter itself is not so funny, because it is about people destroying themselves with drugs. Using personal friends as prototypes for his characters inside a tragic theme that meant a great deal to Dick, he manages to carry it off with his irony and humour. The most tragic aspect of it is that Dick writes it in memory of his friends from his Santa Venetia days, friends who are either dead or permanently damaged by drug abuse. Dick adds a list of names as an epilogue to the novel, names of those people that he knew and cared about. Among the names on the list is Philip K. Dick.

Similarities between Dick and Chandler are not limited to dialogue only. Chandler's sparse and dry prose is filled with imaginative descriptions which take the reader by surprise by stating the not obvious - or sometimes the too obvious. Philip Marlowe (*The Big Sleep*) describes a situation: "Neither of the two people in the room paid any attention to the way I came in, although only one of them was dead" (38). Chandler has a tendency to say what his reader least expects him to say, as the example demonstrates. Dick's language has been described by Le Guin as "hasty" and "straightforward", and she has commented on his humour as being "dry and zany" ("The Modest One", 175). In this Dick is analogous to Chandler. In *Valis* Phil tells us how Horselover Fat escaped death: "The first thing that came along to save him took the form of an eighteen-year-old highschool girl ... and the second was God. Of the two of them the girl did better" (18). As I said, the humour lies in the surprise.

Valis, like *Scanner*, is also autobiographical; both novels relate incidents that happened to, or around Dick. Horselover Fat's religious experience is Philip K. Dick's actual experience. I have already commented on the fact that Dick wrote *Valis* in order to try to understand what happened. But there is something else to consider. Sutin includes a comment made by one-time girlfriend, Doris:

In a sense, religion became Phil's business when he started to write theological novels in the seventies. But it also had this quality of being useful - as material for the next book. Imagination was his stock in trade, and he tried out theories to see how people reacted. (Doris, as cited in Sutin, 239)

Dick is, first and foremost, a writer, and anything extraordinary that would happen to him, he made use of in his work.

Dick's use of humour adds to his novels a life-like appearance: the bewildering complexity of his plots, and often far-fetched ideas, are made real - and comic.

Comedy is often the best way to get a message across, for emphasising the hilarity of the topics involved makes them stand out too clearly to be missed. Also, it helps in bringing highly intellectual discussions down to earth, as is the case with *Valis*, and the reader realises that the author is not being patronising by "showing off" his knowledge; he is not way up there, out of reach, but down here with the rest of us. He is somebody the reader can relate to. Religion is a very serious and sensitive topic to write about, and it would all but have destroyed *Valis*, were it not for witticisms like Kevin's reply to David who states that the only thing that exists is God's Will: "I hope I'm in his will ... I hope he left me more than one dollar" (160). After all, the reader sees that he has something in common with the author: the appreciation of a good joke. It also eliminates speculations about Dick's possible madness, for anyone able to make this much fun of himself cannot be insane.

CHARACTERISATION.

I think very often I'm accused of writing my protagonist as an anti-hero... .

And I always think, well, the ultimate surrealism [...] is to take somebody that you knew, whose life ambition was to sell the largest television set that the store carried, and put him in a future dystopia, and pit him against this dystopia, or place him in a position of power. Like I like to take employers that I've had who've owned small stores and make them supreme rulers of entire... [g]alaxies []. That to me is very enjoyable, because I still see this person as sitting at his desk, looking at a lot of invoices for purchases that have never been made, saying who authorized this? (Dick, in a 1977 interview; as cited in Sutin, 54-5)

But the great merit of the human being is that the human being is isomorphic with his malfunctioning universe. I mean, he too is somewhat malfunctioning. [...]. He goes on trying and this, of course, is what Faulkner said in his marvelous Nobel Prize speech, that Man will not merely endure, he will prevail. (Dick, in the same interview as above; as cited in Sutin, 55)

As a teenager Dick worked in a record shop for a man named Hollis, whose inspiration was to have a lasting effect on Dick:

The values Hollis and his strange crew embodied - craftsmanship, loyalty, independence of spirit, the little guy over the soulless corporate carte - formed the social credo Phil held to through all the otherwise shifting realities in his fiction. (Sutin, 51)

"The little guy" appears in every novel by Dick, and his independence of spirit endows him with a stubborn quality, which makes him stay on the go and defy every opponent, be it Palmer Eldritch or reality itself. Michael Bishop claims Joe Chip (*Ubik*) is Everyman; that he is "a shaving off the fallen family tree of humanity: a chip

off the old but sometimes praiseworthy blockheadedness by which we and our progenitors have sought to insist upon the meaningfulness of our lives" ("In Pursuit of *Ubik*", 143). But the "little" company-owner, stubbornly producing whatever it is he produces, even when faced with imminent extinction, is also Everyman: for example, Glen Runciter (*Ubik*) and Leo Bulero (*The Three Stigmata*).

In the *Exegesis*, Phil comments on the fact that much of his work is "palpably autobiographical." It is no wonder, therefore, as Sutin points out, that

... characters based on Hollis can be found in several of Phil's mainstream and SF novels: The boss-employee relationships between... Leo Bulero and Barney Mayerson, and Glen Runciter and Joe Chip are the most notable portraits of the trust and tension that existed between Hollis and Phil. (Sutin, 53)

Hollis is not the only real life person to be used as a model for characters. To say that Dick does not create his characters but rather gives them life is very close to the truth, because so many of his characters are based on people he knew. In many novels he even uses himself; bases a character on himself and his personal experiences. This is true of countless short stories as well as novels. Among the characters in *Valis*, for instance, is Phil Dick, a writer of science fiction novels, who narrates the story. Horselover Fat is another character in *Valis*, whose name, it turns out, is a translation of Dick's own name: "Philip" in Greek means "lover of horses", and "Dick" in German means "fat". In addition, Fat has been through a religious experience identical to Dick's own. *A Scanner Darkly* includes a number of characters who are based on people with whom Dick socialised during that period in his life when he turned his house in Santa Venetia into a social centre for street junkies. One of them, according to Sutin, is Jerry Fabin in *Scanner*, whose character is inspired by "Daniel", who, like Fabin, believed aphids to be crawling all over him - a drug induced hallucination.

In his biography of Dick's life, Sutin relates how Dick's first short stories - the earliest surviving stories - are mostly written about people who were close to Dick. "The Father-Thing" (published in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, 1954) presents a character called Ted (Dick's father, Edgar, was called Ted). Another story from 1955, "Foster, You're Dead" is about society in near-future America which is threatened by the possibility of atomic war. Private bomb shelters are commercial commodities and, thanks to marketing strategies, everybody has to have one. School children are trained every day in what to do when the bomb drops, and how to survive after the explosion. Foster is a seven year old boy whose parents do not own a private shelter because they cannot afford one, and this leads to an extremely intense feeling of insecurity in the boy. He becomes obsessed with the thought that when the time comes he will not have the 25 cents required to enter a public shelter and so be "fried" in the explosion. Moreover, for a boy this age, it is almost equally threatening to be different from everybody else. Refusing to buy a shelter gives the Fosters a stigma which young Foster finds intolerable. Sutin's view is that the boy's feelings parallel Dick's own at the age of seven. Dick's parents divorced when Dick was five and two years later he moved to Washington D.C. The move took him away from his grandmother, who had been living with the Dick family since the death of Dick's twin sister, Jane. The grandmother had been a special favourite with young Dick. It has even been suggested that around this time Dick may have been sexually molested by his grandfather.⁶ True or not, young Dick liked playing inside boxes and in other isolated places, a tendency indicating insecurity. When he begins elementary school, he develops difficulties in swallowing, especially when eating in public places like

⁶From Sutin: "Barry Spatz, a psychologist who worked with Phil in the late seventies and early eighties... points out that Phil's life history shows tendencies characteristic of child incest victims, such as difficult relations with family; drug abuse; repeated suicide attempts; significant memory gaps; low self-esteem accompanied by guilt; a chaotic, crisis-oriented lifestyle; and pervasive mistrust, especially toward the opposite sex, alternating with strong attachments. These are certainly descriptive of aspects of Phil's life ... But such tendencies can and do manifest themselves in persons who have not suffered from abuse" (25). Sutin concludes that it is impossible to decide, with any certainty, on the matter.

the school cafeteria, which is another indication of a deeply felt insecurity in young Dick. The "eating" phobia would stay with him for the rest of his life.

This is one way of interpreting the story. Another way, and one I favour, is more in line with Dick's social views on life: the individual versus the indifferent system. In the Notes (written 1976) to "Foster, You're Dead," Dick says: "Here I just wanted to show how cruel the authorities can be when it comes to human life, how they can think in terms of dollars, not people" (*Collected Stories 3*, 476). To Dick, what always matters above anything else, is people.

Whether Dick's characters are based on real people or not they all have a very strong life-like quality to them. He is not creating some characters to serve his plot; he is writing about people he likes, and who become his friends, as he tells us in an interview: "... I have built a fantasy world, like little kids do... And my novels are my make-believe world, and they're full of my friends... I would create a race of people... not an ideal, perfect people, but a people that are real to me" (Williams, 67). The life-likeness of Dick's characters are precisely because they possess this quality; they are not perfect.

The typical protagonist in Dick's fiction is a fallible but well-meaning character. His life-likeness is achieved through his "anti-heroic" characteristics: erratic judgement, laziness, selfishness, but also his ability to sympathise with others. He is not our traditional hero who rescues the damsel in distress and slays the dragon. The Dickian hero finds himself in a tough situation he has to try to make better. Usually he is up against an antagonist, whoever or whatever he or it may be, whose strength outdoes by far our heroes. But the Dickian hero never gives up. He tries, he blunders; he tries again, blunders again; then he tries to save what is by now a far worse situation than before and, eventually, he succeeds in making the best of things. By that I do not mean saving the galaxy because Dick's novels rarely portray such unreal heroics. In

High Castle, Tagomi is one such hero: he does not save the world from the power-greedy Germans, but he saves two insignificant individuals, and that is what makes him a hero. As Le Guin expressed it: "Nobody ever saves the Galactic Empire from the Tentacled Andromedans. Something has indeed been saved, but only a human soul" ("The Modest One", 178). The hero is "little people". Like ourselves, he is striving to understand a world where he has neither power nor control; a world which he never asked to belong to in the first place. However, despite his having no power or control, he stands up when faced with injustice and refuses to comply. Peder Christiansen, in his article "The Classical Humanism of Philip K. Dick", says: "At the heart of each of Dick's works can be found the individual's struggle to do the right thing, despite opposing circumstances" (72). What makes the protagonist a hero is that he does try, to his utmost but limited capacity, to do his best; that he recognises injustice and oppression and feels a need to act, to do his best to do the right thing. We see this in *High Castle*, and also in *Counter-Clock World*, where Sebastian Hermes continually makes the wrong decisions in trying to save his wife, Lotta. Yet, he does not give up, despite the odds.

In *Counter-Clock World* we also witness Officer Joe Tinbane, Hermes's friend, fighting an internal battle: should he help Hermes to hide the anarchist Peak or should he betray his friend in an attempt to win Lotta over as his mistress. He argues with himself whether to fight for the "cause" or whether to cop out and fight for his own selfish interests and needs:

But if the police seized the Anarch, Sebastian would know how they found out; he would track it, with no difficulty to Lotta. I must consider that, he realized, in view of any plans I might have in her direction. as regards my relationship - or potential relationship - to her.

...

I can blackmail her, he found himself thinking, and was horrified; yet the thought had been clearly there. Simply tell her, when I can

manage to get her off alone for a few minutes, that - she has no choice. She can be -

Hell, he thought. That's terrible! Blackmailing her into becoming my mistress; what kind of a person am I? (C-CW, 47-8)

The result is that he follows Lotta, who has been captured by the "enemy", saves her and wins her love by becoming her hero. Instead of being happy, Tinbane feels guilty for having caused Hermes the pain of losing his wife. In Tinbane we see a character who is basically a decent human being, but his weakness blurs his judgement; ergo: he becomes real. The same can be said about Sebastian Hermes. Hermes is a middle-aged man who leads a harmless, quiet life. He loves his wife dearly, which is his weakness, and when she is kidnapped, no rational reasoning will stop him from going after her. He is, however, not the right man for the rescuing job, having no experience in such matters, and so every attempt he makes fails miserably, and only serves to make things so much worse and complicated. His dilemma is one most of us will recognise, the fight between reason and emotion being a battle inseparable from the human race from day one.

Joe Chip in *Ubik* is another hero who is, unwillingly, thrust into a life-threatening situation where the antagonist appears to be reality itself and unless he can come up with a solution to what is happening, he will die fairly quickly. His surroundings are gradually deteriorating and his colleagues are turning up dead, one after another. Aside from the fact that the circumstances force him to act, he senses the injustice in what is taking place, like someone or something is playing some sort of perverse game with reality and the human lives depending on it. He cannot accept this - he must not accept it for otherwise he will turn up dead too. Even when he has tried - unsuccessfully - to get a grip on the "new" reality, and is himself being attacked by the mysterious force that is killing his friends, he does not give up. Knowing he can do nothing to prevent his horrible death - the other victims have been found shrivelled as if dehydrated - he still feels he must not give up. Bishop says of Joe:

Dick sends Joe into the fray as his personal representative - our personal representative - and this poor, hard-beset, pertinacious puppet does us all proud. In his efforts to cut or at least to tangle the metaphysical strings by which the faceless Marionette Master yanks him about, Joe Chip inevitably reinforces the apron strings of his own humanity, binding himself to all of us by the heroism of his persistence. ("In Pursuit of *Ubik*", 22)

Even when he appears to be defeated, and unfairly so, he refuses to give in. The same can be said about all of Dick's heroes: Rick Deckard in *Do Androids Dream?*, Herb Asher in *The Divine Invasion*, Bob Arctor in *Scanner*, and Barney Mayerson in *The Three Stigmata*. They are all more or less cut from the same cloth and we cannot help but feel sympathetic towards them. For us to be judging them for their weaknesses, or their inability to handle difficult problems without effort, would be hypocrisy on our part: they are not perfect because the average human being is not perfect; we are not perfect.

Dick's female characters, especially in his earlier novels, tend to be type-cast. Of the two types Dick creates, the dark-haired, beautiful, sexy and incredibly dangerous heroine is more prominent. We see Rachel Rosen in *Do Androids Dream?*, Roni Fugate in *The Three Stigmata*, and Pat Conley in *Ubik*. Pat is an almost nightmarish vision of the *femme fatale*. She possesses an extremely dangerous precognitive talent: she can alter an incident after it has happened, without anybody being aware of the change. She also happens to be an agent from an enemy firm, sent to destroy Joe Chip and his colleagues. She is presented as completely cold-blooded and heartless. The scene where Joe Chip is crawling up the hotel stairs, dying, creates a feeling of utter hatred for the woman:

"I'll go by the stairs." He started away, seeking to locate the stairs

... The weight on him crushed his lungs, making it difficult and painful to breathe; he had to halt, concentrating on getting air into him - that alone. Maybe it is a heart attack, he thought... .

"There we are," Pat said. She guided him, turning him slightly to the left. "Right in front of you. Just take hold of the railing and go bump-de-bump upstairs to bed. See?" She ascended skillfully, dancing and twinkling, poising herself, then scrambling weightlessly to the next step. "Can you make it?"

Joe said, "I - don't want you. To come with me."

...

Pat said, "May I watch you climb? I'd like to see how long it takes you. Assuming you make it at all." (174-75)

The evil character of Pat is supposedly based on either Dick's mother, Dorothy, or his third wife Anne, or a combination of both. In Sutin's biography we learn that Dick accused Dorothy of letting his twin sister, Jane, die of malnutrition at the age of one month; Dick himself barely survived. Dick believed that Dorothy's failure to provide adequately for the twins, and to recognise their need for medical treatment, was intentional. He hated her, but at the same time relied on her for financial help and moral encouragement. Dorothy was the only one who supported Dick and constantly believed in his talent for writing. Moreover, from what Sutin tells us about Dick's life and his relationship with Dorothy, it seems that he had inherited his inquisitive mind and artistic talent from her. Whatever else might be said, she always understood his need to write, as Sutin tells us: "Throughout his life Phil turned to her for money, advice, even critical response to his manuscripts, and Dorothy never faltered in her encouragement of Phil the artist" (16). Dick's strong hatred for Dorothy may possibly be due to the ambiguity of his feelings towards her.

Carlo Pagetti, in his article "Dick and Meta-SF," points out a characteristic of Dick's writing: "the presence of couples in a perpetual crisis, unable to live together..." (20). The failure, in the typical Dick novel, to portray successful relationships between men and women can be traced back to Dick's personal inability to relate to women successfully. Every novel included in this discussion presents an instance of the

"couple in crisis"; Barney Mayerson (*The Three Stigmata*) and Frank Frink (*High Castle*) both continually regret having let their wives go; Joe Tinbane (*Counter-Clock World*) desires another man's wife; Bob Arctor (*Scanner*) is in love with Donna, who only wants to be his friend - and nothing more. The resemblance to Dick's own life can hardly be a coincidence. Aside from being married five times, Dick had numerous girlfriends, all of whom he wanted to marry, and when he was not trying to get some girl to marry him, he was falling in love with some other girl he accidentally met in a shop or at the hospital's psychiatric ward, or who happened to be married to one of his best friends. Most of Dick's relationships never quite worked out, partly because he was too demanding emotionally, and because living with a paranoiac suffering from all sorts of phobias is a hard task for any woman.

The other type of heroine in Dick's novels is considerably more agreeable, and more in keeping with the male characters: fallible, but good-natured and well-meaning. Although she becomes more prominent in the last novels, in which the malevolent female type has no place, she does appear in earlier ones. The positive heroine may be interpreted as a portrayal of Dick's twin sister, as he imagined her. He often pictured Jane as a brave, energetic, and willful girl. As a boy, Dick had an imaginary playmate called Jane ("cowgirl Jane") who often challenged the frightened Dick into mischief. The pain and loneliness he felt at the absence of his twin sister and the life-long yearning for her, took many forms in both life and fiction. It is a documented fact that the loss of a twin creates a void in the surviving twin's life, which he tries to find ways of filling and which will always prevent him from having a normal, successful relationship; this sense of lacking something has been termed "twinning"⁷. Sutin says: "Studies of surviving twins point to a sense of incompleteness that can make relationships, particularly with the opposite sex, very difficult" (16). In *High*

⁷The constant awareness of not being complete is termed "twinning" by Dr. George Engel in "Death and Reunion: The Loss of a Twin" (*Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, June 1981), where he says: "The drive is always to be two, yet unique from all others." Sutin, in *Divine Invasions*, (15-19), discusses this phenomenon in connection with the recurring motifs in Dick's fiction.

Castle, Juliana Frink represents the positive female character who develops even more complex characteristics as Dick's career progresses. She appears again as Emily Hnatt in *The Three Stigmata*, as Iran, Rick Deckard's wife, in *Do Androids Dream?*, Donna in *Scanner*, Rybys Rommey in *The Divine Invasion* and at last as the superbly portrayed Angel Archer in *Transmigration*, Dick's greatest achievement in female characterisation.

Dick's finest and most empathetic male character is the Japanese business man, Tagomi, in *High Castle*. Dick's portrayal of the calm, careful and sympathetic Japanese who, in trying to behave correctly in a society he understands not too well, appears at times mildly comic. Yet the comedy is never cruel because Tagomi, through his compassion and tolerant attitude towards all things, is too lovable. He treats everybody with courtesy and respect and strives to understand them and their actions even when they appear irrational to him. Being Japanese, he has been raised in the Buddhist belief, which explains some of his behaviour. However, Buddhist or not, his view is in essence humanistic, a view that Dick's fiction centres on: a reverence for life, whatever form it may take.

Tagomi is also a decisive and firm man; he is, after all, a successful businessman in a top position at the Imperial Trade Mission. As Japan and Germany have won the Second World War, the two countries have divided the United States between them and as joint rulers of the world, they have to work together. As the story unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that the supposed "teamwork" between the two nations is more on the surface than at the core. Japan dislikes Germany's policy of racial clearances - i.e., the wiping out of all non-white races. However, to preserve peace, Japan does not interfere in German politics. Germany, however, although this is never explicitly voiced, seems to be plotting to gain total rule - without Japan's alliance. Germans are depicted as insane *übermensch* with a superiority complex, while the Japanese are shown as quiet, civilised, and tolerant but also cold, unfeeling

with a mentality that is completely incomprehensible to the average American. They are generally admired but just as generally resented, in both cases for being so different from Americans. The Japanese are portrayed as the ultimate compromisers who never say directly what they mean, and who bow to the Germans even when the Germans are pursuing a policy disagreeable to them. After all, systematic actions aimed at eliminating all non-arian people, as the official policy of the Third Reich, is a subtle insult to Asian people, that is, Japanese. Yet they allow it, which generates in Americans an attitude of contempt for the "weak" and cowardly Japanese and an awesome respect for Germans, whose aggressiveness is impressive.

Still, the hero of the book is a Japanese businessman who performs an act which is in direct opposition to his most fundamental belief. As General Tedeki, the old army official, says to Mr. Baynes, whose life Tagomi has just saved by killing two German "thugs", Tagomi's vision is fundamentally Buddhist and to a Buddhist all lives are holy. Tagomi's emotional reaction is despair: "To save one life, Mr. Tagomi had to take two. The logical, balanced mind cannot make sense of that. A kindly man like Mr. Tagomi could be driven insane by the implications of such reality" (192). Still he has to do what he does. He can not stand idly by and watch injustice being done. His action is not planned as such; he simply sees a situation arise which he cannot accept and acts on initiative. This initiative is the quality that Dick likes to call empathy and is what distinguishes humans from machines and will lead to our redemption, each and every time it happens.

It is not in keeping with Dick's style to treat people collectively. Heroism, for Dick, does not happen on a nationwide scale. As I have so often emphasised, it is the individual that matters and no matter how small the individual, his actions matter and affect everybody around him. For the three men involved, Tagomi's actions change their lives forever. This is even more true when it comes to Frank Frink, and how Tagomi saves his life - without Frink knowing it. Frink is a Jew, and he is about to be

deported to Germany, where he will no doubt be executed. Since the Japanese are the rulers of that part of the States where Frink lives, Tagomi has to sign the papers legalising the action. By refusing to sign, Tagomi saves the life of a person he has never seen, does not know and will most likely never meet. Moreover, Frink never knows what or who saves him. Dick, in "Now Wait for This Year", says of Tagomi that he

... in a moment of irritation and awareness of suffocation, refuses to sign a form which will transfer a certain Jew from Japanese authority to German authority - one life is saved, a small life and saved by a small life. But the enormous process of decline is pushed back slightly. Enough so that it matters. What Mr Tagomi has done matters. In a sense, there is nothing more important on all Earth than Mr Tagomi's irritable action. (154)

The price Tagomi pays is more than any man should have to pay for a simple humanistic action, but as he is carried out of the Nippon Times Building on a stretcher, he is at peace with the universe, knowing he has done the right thing. Christiansen adds: "Justice and kindness, as correct action, are the key actions in ... *The Man in the High Castle*" (77). The aftermath is sad, for Tagomi dies of a heart attack. But in the end this extraordinary man's triumph against the evil forces in the world is an example of the little man's victories which in the final analysis make him big.

Ursula Le Guin comes right to the point in her essay "The Modest One" when she says: "[] Mr. Tagomi ... when put to the test, sacrifices himself by refusing an act that would harm another man though not himself. He sees evil and, nervously and unhappily, he says no to it" (176). What makes Tagomi a hero is that normally he is not in the business of performing heroisms but his instinctive compassion for another man, and a stranger at that, makes him stand up and protest. The emphasis is on the

invisible goodness of people such as Tagomi, a quality that only becomes visible in an hour of need and then reveals itself in all its humble magnificence. I leave it to Le Guin to add the final analysis:

... what counts is the honesty, constancy, kindness, and patience of ordinary people. The flashier qualities such as courage are merely contributory to that dull, solid goodness in which - alone- lies the hope of deliverance from evil. ("The Modest One", 176)

In Christiansen's words, Philip K. Dick is "acclaimed today for his humanistic science fiction" (72), and the largest part of this humanistic aspect is the sympathetic character: the hero. No one will deny that heroism in traditional tales means killing the monster that is destroying the universe. However, there does exist another type of heroism and anyone who reads a novel by Dick will become, if not convinced, at least aware that for us everyday creatures, heroism lies in personal victories over little things and above all, in not giving up. Bishop compares Joe Chip to Sisyphus, and Sisyphus to the workman of today, and in doing so, equates Chip with Everyman: "... both Sisyphus and Joe Chip achieve an existential victory over their fates by staying scornfully on the go" (145). Simply keep on trying and never give up and we will overcome, even if it be only in a minor way. Yet, a minor victory is better than no victory, and in a sense, the only victory we can achieve as individuals.

THEMES

*Here is my first story on the topic of: Am I a human? Or am I just programmed to believe I am a human... It's an important theme because it forces us to ask: What is a human? And - what isn't? (Dick, on his short story "Impostor", in Notes to *Collected Stories 2*, 381)*

Turning the cards face up, seeing reality whole - Phil had no deeper yearning than this. (Sutin, 150)

The two questions, "What is Human?" and "What is Real?" are a constant obsession with Dick and he repeatedly examines them, searching for answers, and his novels are attempts to answer them. Dick's urgency to find answers makes him look everywhere, from the Church down to the gutter; from Kant and Jung to a Beatles song. His novels are, therefore, most often a confusing mumbo-jumbo of the universe's flotsam and jetsam, and the chaos it presents may certainly scare people away. The reader who has a need to fit all things into their appropriate boxes may quickly run into a dilemma with Dick because, as Lou Stathis says: "He fits nowhere conveniently..." (46). Just because we, the ordinary human beings, believe that what we see is real - that reality is really reality - does it necessarily follow that it is real? In Dick's mind there is an endless nagging doubt. When he was fifteen, a magazine editor, to whose magazine Dick had sent some short stories, said that "'little authors' shouldn't write about the big unknown - just things they know about!" This made young Dick furious. Thirty years later, he had been told over and over to leave the reality theme and go onto something else, to which he always had the same reply: "As if... there was a *real* reality out there ready at hand" (Sutin, 41).

For a man like Dick, who suffered from numerous phobias and anxieties along with paranoia, the possibility of reality disintegrating before his eyes was very real. His daughter, in Sutin's biography, commented: "He was one of the most frightened

people that I have ever known. He wanted to make people happy. He was brilliant and empathetic. But he was trapped by his fears" (Laura, as quoted in Sutin, 262). Because of his fears Dick had trouble functioning in the real world. The psychological disorders caused him to experience frightening attacks, when he was in certain situations. As I have already mentioned, he had a terrible fear of eating in public. When he was young, attending school was even more of a problem. He would have attacks of agoraphobia and vertigo which were so serious that he finally gave up school, something he always felt guilty about, being a native of the Berkeley college community. A school friend remembers Dick's descriptions of these attacks:

The whole bloody world collapsed on him psychologically as he was walking down a classroom aisle. It was something of such pain... like the whole world disappeared in front of him and he was turned into this painful, vulnerable, embattled thing, and where at any moment the floor might open up and he might be canceled out as a living entity. (Sutin, 63)

If the world was like this to Dick, it is no wonder he became so obsessed with the deceptiveness of reality. As he used his own experiences as ideas for his novels, the novels tend to be deceptive on the surface, but very life-like at the core.

The real difference between the earlier novels and the Valis trilogy is a shift in focus and emphasis. Although he deals with religion in all of his books, he has never engaged in theological discussions, nor has he demanded of his readers that they debate his religious arguments. That Dick should leave the more political and social topics to focus entirely on religion is a natural transition in his career. In the Valis trilogy, he no longer approaches the religious themes from the side but turns to Christianity, as well as all other religions, directly. He delves into religious texts - be it the Bible, the Kabbalah, the Torah, the Talmud, Tao te Ching, or the Dead Sea Scrolls - draws them all together on their similarities and out of the mixture creates

theory after theory in an attempt to arrive at the truth; the truth about life, the universe, reality, and God. Although there is no question that the 2-3-74 experiences triggered this transition, I have no doubt that he would have, as a novelist, gradually moved in that direction. Eventually he would have arrived at the point of dealing with religion directly in his search for an understanding of what the world is all about.

Dick felt a need to blame somebody for his twin sister's, Jane's, death but he also felt a need to understand a world that showed such cruelty. In view of the twinning motif, it hardly comes as a surprise that he should turn to Gnostic teachings and other related doctrines, for the Gnostic theory about the split in the Godhead (see "Gnosticism" and "Valentinus and the Valentinians") answered his need for understanding Jane's death. The Godhead, at the time when the world was created, was dual (similar to Yin and Yang in Buddhism). Then an accident occurred, and the Godhead split in two and the female half, Sophia, fell into a lower realm. She then spawns a creature, the demi-urge, sometimes called Yaldabaoth, who creates the material world we now live in, and believes himself to be the true God. But actual, true reality, created by the actual, true God, is hidden behind the material world, just as the true God is also hiding. Our reality is therefore a false manifestation of the real thing. The Godhead must be healed for the true, united God to be able to, once more, assume control over the world he created, and when that happens, true reality will be revealed. The Valentinian system, one among many Gnostic systems, centres on the myth of the redemption acquired through the union: "[r]edemption is essentially accomplished through the union of the heavenly Soter with the fallen Sophia" ("Valentinus and The Valentinians"). Dick, combining Gnosticism with his yearning for his lost sister Jane, creates his own cosmogony, the "Two Source Cosmogony", expressed in detail in the *Exegesis* and, gives it life in *Valis* and *The Divine Invasion*. In the Appendix to *Valis*, Dick presents the *Tractates: Cryptica Scriptura*, which is a summary from the *Exegesis*, explaining Dick's/Fat's "Two Source Cosmogony":

It tells about the death of a woman. This woman who died long ago, was one of the primordial twins. She was half of the divine syzygy... The record of her existence and passing is ordered onto the meanest level of reality by the suffering Mind which is now alone. (233)

"The suffering Mind" is Dick and he brings Jane back to life on the "meanest level of reality": in the science fiction novel.

Dick's cosmogony is complicated, created out of even more complicated religious doctrines. He searches the ancient Gnostic texts - plus Christian, oriental, and Jewish ones - in order to explain the world and find an answer to his themes of "What is Real?" and "What is Human?". The answer Dick gathers from his religious studies is revealed in the Valis trilogy, and as it happens, is the same answer he always found and revealed in all his novels: that human beings are not meant to live in single units but in pairs, because caring for another person brings out the humanity in us. Even the authentic God is not a single being, but a unit of two, where one balances the other. In *The Divine Invasion* Dick emphasises this point through the Christian myth about the Advocate and the Accuser. On the day of judgement the Advocate offers his help, to defend every person who asks for it against the Accuser. He defends them with his own innocence and wins every time. Robert Galbreath ("Redemption and Doubt in Philip K. Dick's Valis Trilogy") comments:

Just as there are cosmic Advocate and Accuser, so are there an individual Advocate and Accuser, a good spirit... and a bad spirit... in each person. A struggle between the contending spirits takes place in us all. Those individuals who choose the Advocate, the good spirit, are saved; those who do not are doomed... (112)

He also mentions the Greek word *paraklein*, "to call to aid", from which the English word "paraclete" is derived, a term in Christian doctrine for the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Out of these myths Dick has created the concept of the Beside-helper.

Every person has his Beside-helper, and in *The Divine Invasion*, Linda Fox is Herb Asher's Beside-helper, and she saves him from the evil Belial (the devil).

Bishop's words, that Ubik is "private as well as universal" apply here: Linda and Herb are the two halves of the Godhead, on a private level, joined together for the equal benefit of both. In the words of Galbreath: "He cares for her and wants to protect her... [s]he in turn protects him from Belial" (110). Emmanuel, the Christ reborn, finds his missing half in Zina, thus repairing what was broken on the universal level, or as Emmanuel says about Zina, in the novel: "You the kind side, he thought; the compassionate side. And I the terrible side that arouses fear and trembling. Together we form a unity. Seperated, we are not whole; we are not, individually enough" (224).

Dick was an explorer of ideas, an analyst, and through his constant analysing he developed more hypotheses than is possible to enumerate. Barlow says: "Writing was, to him, a method of exploration and he used it so, extensively, even at the expense of 'craft'." I have to disagree that the constant explorations impoverished his fiction but it is true that in his writings Dick found a way of expressing the complex theories his over-active and ceaselessly analysing mind created.

What, then, is this truth? There is no single, simple answer to that question; however, Dick presents intriguing theories, opens up a whole new world of speculation, offering a diversity of answers - none of which may be correct - from which the reader can choose and pick. If he wants to. But choosing is difficult, for following the creation of a new theory is a counter-theory, contradicting the first and dissolving it into doubt. Consider Warrick's statement: "His method is a dialectic of the imagination. He creates an image of assertion and then deserts it as he creates an image portraying a counterassertion" (111). Dick can never be certain that the answer he has arrived at is the ultimate answer, for, like Warrick commented on earlier, "his

mind is constantly in motion," and he always finds new aspects of the problem he has forgotten to consider, and in contemplating it, he creates yet another hypothesis.

Valis is crowded with these, and *The Divine Invasion* is even more so.

Reality, as seen in the novels, is sometimes presented as a living entity out to get everybody. In novels like *Ubik* and *Three Stigmata* it appears to have a will of its own. Dick's method of giving credibility to reality - as an evil-minded, trap-setting character - is to dress it in such clothing as he finds in the SF wardrobe. In *Ubik* the shifting reality may be the result of some nasty chemicals released by the explosion on Luna. In *Three Stigmata* a strange and alien drug may be the cause.

I consider Dick's two themes - "What is Human?" and "What is Real?" - a search for authenticity, for that is what he searches for: to discover the authentic reality because he believes it to be hidden from us by a veil of illusory, not-real reality, and in the same way he wants to discover the authentic human characteristic; i.e., what constitutes a human being as opposed to an artificial, mechanical being. His novels are theories, attempts to probe into the problem. They are possible answers, each one valid until the next novel is completed. The more he probes, the more answers he comes up with and the infinity of theories are a maze in which anyone can get lost - and usually does. As Dick never leaves off inquiring about authenticity, it ultimately leads him into religion, the theme he becomes obsessed with in the 70's.

The central theme in *Do Androids Dream?* is "What is Human?", and it plays with the possibility that an android may not know it is only a machine and not a human being. The novel is set in a post-nuclear San Francisco, in the year 1992, when most "normal" people - normal meaning healthy and productive - have migrated to the Martian colonies. Population on earth being scarce by this time, people live in isolation from one another; most buildings house only one or two persons. Android-manufacturing has become big business since the colonies need slaves to do all

outside work. Android designs have reached such an advanced level that distinguishing them from humans is becoming a problem: the latest type, the Nexus-6, is perfect except for the built-in four-year life span and the inability to feel emotions. Occasionally, robot-slaves on the colonies revolt and escape to Earth. Since runaway androids are illegal on earth, they must be hunted down and killed. The police force has a special squad solely for this purpose, and the protagonist in the story, Rick Deckard, is one of the best "bounty hunters", as they are called. The event that gets the story going is a revolt, followed by an escape to earth, by four "andys". Deckard is given the assignment of "retiring" them, which is the term applied to killing an android.

Early on in the novel, we learn that Deckard is having problems retiring some of the runaway andys; his conscience has started bothering him concerning the ethical justification of the deed. For example, Deckard can see no logical reason for retiring one android, Luba Luft, the opera singer, for she does no harm. In fact, she has something to give to society: her voice. When he meets Rachel Rosen, The Rosen Association's typical pleasure model, he falls in love with her, which generates a loss of faith in himself. This occasions a nagging doubt in Deckard's mind as to the justification of his profession. His feelings, he realises, are in direct opposition to what he is required to feel: humans, and bounty hunters especially, are required to feel no emotions towards androids. Moreover, there should be a certain hostility between the two "races" as androids are mechanical beings, made by man and in that sense an inferior species. The main difference between the two is that, although perfect in every sense, androids cannot feel compassion for another being, not even for each other. Deckard's discovery, that he feels sympathy for the androids, or at least some androids, frightens him: he fears he may be an android programmed so as not to know it.

So, Deckard begins to seriously doubt his own authenticity. He meets another bounty hunter called Phil Resch, whom he has never met before. Resch works for a puppy police force - a "cover-up" department - set up by the andys themselves in order to protect them. Resch and Deckard join forces for a while, and Deckard discovers a totally different attitude towards bounty hunting. Resch's ruthless view stuns Deckard; Resch's complete lack of emotion and guilt when retiring an andy - the two feelings that Deckard is burdened with - makes him suspect Resch of being an android. A special test, the Voigt-Kampff Empathy Test, has been designed to certify whether the suspect is an android, and as it tests empathetic responses, Deckard tests Resch. When Resch passes the test, Deckard has no option but to test himself. When he passes the test as well, he has to rethink the situation:

"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 emphatic, role-taking ability. One which we don't test for. Your feelings toward androids."

"Of course we don't test for that."

"Maybe we should."

...

"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 wouldn't be able to protect ourselves."

"Absolutely. These Nexus-6 types... they'd roll all over us and mash us flat. You and I, all the bounty hunters - we stand between the Nexus-6 and mankind, a barrier which keeps the two distinct." (108-109)

What Deckard understands is that Resch has the right attitude, and he the wrong one: "There's nothing unnatural or unhuman about Phil Resch's reactions; *it's me*" (109). Resch has no feelings about his work; his attitude is unsympathetic towards androids. He believes they should be killed in order to protect humans. Deckard's position,

however, is that because of the human appearance and behaviour of andys, he hesitates to retire some of them because he cannot help seeing them as humans, and identifying with them as such. Feeling bad about killing a machine as if it were a human being bothers him. He discovers that he actually feels guilty; he has feelings of empathy towards the andys, which, as he can rationally see, is not rational at all. How can anybody be sympathetic towards something that is not human? They are, after all, machines, without feelings.

By pitting Deckard and Resch against each other, Dick poses an important question about human nature. Where Resch is concerned, there does not seem to be much difference between the human and the android. Resch's answer to Deckard's doubts is: it is only sex. That is, Deckard's guilt stems from his feeling attracted to the female androids. Resch explains that he himself was once faced with the same dilemma, and he solved it by having sex with a female andy. He advises Deckard do the same:

Rick stared at him. "Go to bed with her first--"
"--and then kill her," Phil Resch said succinctly. His grainy,
hardened smile remained.

As simple as this sounds, it may not be so in actuality, and Deckard realises this after having had sex with Rachel Rosen: "This is my end, he said to himself. As a bounty hunter. After the Batys there won't be any more. Not after this, tonight" (149). The intimacy with Rachel has only made things worse for him. As we later learn, the android Resch had sex with - as a therapy, which cured him of his empathetic attitude - is Rachel. It is no coincidence that it happens to be the same android, for Rachel practices a game, so to speak, which is to have sex with bounty hunters so they will not be able to continue retiring androids:

"You're not going to be able to hunt androids any longer," she said calmly. "So don't look so sad. Please."

He stared at her.

"No bounty hunter ever has gone on," Rachel said. "After being with me. Except one. A very cynical man. Phil Resch. And he's nutty... ." (149)

So it seems, after all, that Resch's reactions are unnatural and unhuman, for he is the exception to the rule: the only bounty hunter, not only able, but willing to go on retiring andys after being with Rachel. He passes the empathy test, which means he is a human being, as opposed to a machine, but does that make him human? It is, as Dick says in the quotation at the opening of this section, an important theme - the theme "because it forces us to ask: what *is* a human? And - what isn't?" Resch is so devoid of all feelings that, although the Voigt-Kampff certifies his humanity, in what way is he different from an android? Is Deckard right when he claims that his own reactions are not human and Resch's are? We may find it unnatural to be sympathetic towards a machine, but when the machine looks, sounds and acts exactly like a human being, the empathy may be justifiable. After all, appearance is what triggers our first reactions, and if we see what we believe to be a human being, our first response will be to identify with it as a fellow human being, and a certain understanding is established.

On the most fundamental level the question being asked is: what constitutes a human being? In analysing what an android is, and seeing them posed as the opposite to a human being, we start to get close to the answer. Androids have no emotional components in their brain circuits, so they cannot feel sympathy. This is what distinguishes them from human beings, as Sergeant Garland says to Deckard:

"You androids," Rick said, "don't exactly cover for each other in times of stress."

Garland snapped, "I think you're right; it would seem we lack a specific talent you humans possess. I believe it's called empathy." (95)

Then we are confronted with Phil Resch, a certified human being, who has all the required hostility for androids, and Rick Deckard, who doubts his own humanity because he cannot kill androids in cold blood, and he thinks only an android could be sympathetic towards another android. So what constitutes the human being? The question we should ask ourselves here is not 'towards what do we have sympathy?' but 'do we have sympathy at all?' In a lecture called "Man, Android and Machine," Dick discusses this theme, and he says: "... does the composite entity... *behave* in a human way?... 'Man' or 'human being' are terms which we must understand correctly and apply, but they apply not to origin or to any ontology but to a way of being in the world..." (202). In other words, Resch's behaviour makes him no more human than any of the androids he retires, because he lacks empathy.

Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner*, although in many ways altered from its source, *Do Androids Dream?*, poses the question of humanity through the relationship between Rick Deckard and Rachel Rosen. Deckard, at the opening of the film is shown as the life-weary detective and the ruthless killer. He is good at his job because he keeps his feelings out of the job. In fact, he seems to have no feelings at all, which makes him in that respect no different from the androids, or replicants, as they are called in the film. Early on Deckard even remarks: "Replicants weren't supposed to have feelings. Neither were blade runners" ("blade runner" is the term used for bounty hunters). Rachael, however, is a replicant, who believes she is a human. When she finds out from Deckard what she actually is, her reaction is thoroughly human: first she tries to deny it, because she has a picture of herself with her mother. Then, as Deckard reveals to her that her memories are somebody else's, planted in Rachael's mechanical brain, she cries. Rachael's human behaviour disturbs Deckard, and brings out some feelings in him. Hiawatha Bray, in a review of *Blade Runner* says about Deckard:

"He comes to love one of his targets [Rachael], the first strong emotion he has felt in years, except for fear."⁸ And now we have come to the point: in falling in love with one of his "targets", Deckard's deeply buried feelings are stirred. His empathy awakens and he rediscovers his humanity through caring for Rachael.

Kevin, in *Valis*, says, "condemn the deed, not the doer, and Dick in "Man, Android and Machine" claims that the terms "human" and "android" apply not to origin (the doer) but to a way of being, or behaving, in the world (the deed). Consider Rachael: her memories are implants - somebody else's memories - planted inside Rachael's brain as an experiment. Ultimately, she does not know she is a replicant and that her past is not hers. But the memories are in her mind, just as vivid as our own, building up a past just as concrete to her as ours is to us. The fact that what Rachael remembers is not authentic, i.e., not her own visions of childhood - since she never had one - does it make them any less real? If she has a past (she carries a photograph of herself as a little girl with her mother), is she in any way different from a human? Which is more real, and closer to the truth, our knowledge that she is a mechanical construct clothed in flesh and blood and nerves, with implanted memories, or her knowledge of her past, her experiences as a child and adolescent; her "knowledge" that she was born and raised by a mother, 20 or 30 years ago, and not made in a factory two or three years ago?

In *Do Androids Dream?* we see the reality theme also at work. Rick Deckard is sent to arrest the opera singer, Luba Luft, who is a runaway android. She calls the police, who show up and arrest Rick Deckard instead, claiming they have never heard of him or his police department. Likewise, Deckard neither recognises the police officers nor is he familiar with the name of their sergeant. He is brought to the station, where he

⁸Hiawatha Bray, "Review of Blade Runner". Christianity Today 26, No. 14 (3 September, 1982): 97. Here used as cited in W. M. Kolb's "Bibliography" in Kerman's book *Retrofitting Blade Runner*, 234.

meets Sergeant Garland, who claims Deckard is an android, masquerading as a human:

"This man - or android - Rick Deckard comes to us from a phantom, hallucinatory, nonexistent police agency allegedly operating out of the old departmental headquarters on Lombard. He's never heard of us and we've never heard of him - yet ostensibly we're both working the same side of the street. He employs a test we've never heard of. The list he carries around isn't of androids; it's a list of human beings." (92)

This statement comes as much of a shock to the reader as it does to Deckard. As the reader has been following Deckard around; has become familiar with his job and routines, the facts, as stated by Garland, are like a parody. It is simply funny - in a hysterical sort of way. For we know the truth - or do we? An uneasy sense of doubt makes us wonder whether we have been falsely informed all along. There is, after all, no guarantee that Deckard is telling the truth. He thinks he does, perhaps because he knows no better. This may be an instance of Dick's favourite topic in regards to human vs. machine - and one of the original ideas he contributed to science fiction as a genre: that Deckard may be an android without knowing it.

Ubik is Dick's best and most startling tour of the possibilities of reality being a fake. Glen Runciter, and his crew of inertials, are tricked to Luna where they are hit by a bomb. In the explosion, Runciter dies and his crew hasten to bring his body back to earth in order to get it into cold-pak. A person kept in cold-pak is maintained in a state of half-life; he is virtually dead but his mind can be contacted and discoursed with, being only half-dead. Following the incident on Luna, the crew start experiencing strange phenomena in their surroundings: the world appears to be moving backwards in time. Everyday objects, like cars and toasters, dissolve into their older models, again and again, each time becoming an older model than the one before. Moreover, the same objects do not function properly; they break down or do

not function at all. there is a sense of decay in everything: food rots within the hour, and cigarettes crumble even as they are being bought. As if that is not enough, messages from Runciter start appearing in the most unexpected places: Al Hammond is with Joe Chip in The Lucky People Supermarket in Baltimore, where they pick up a carton of cigarettes, containing no cigarettes but a piece of paper.

A scrawled note. In handwriting familiar to him, and to Joe. He lifted it out and together they both read it.

Essential that I get in touch with you. Situation serious and certainly will get more so as time goes on. There are several possible explanations, which I'll discuss with you. Anyhow, don't give up. I'm sorry about Wendy Wright; in that connection we did all we could.

...

"A random carton of cigarettes," Joe said, "at a random store in a city picked at random. And we find a note directed to us from Glen Runciter." (*Ubik*, 112-13)

Joe and Al try desperately to find out what is happening, especially after the members of their group start turning up dead. Naturally, they find no solution to the dilemma, until Joe is finally contacted by Runciter. It turns out that Runciter is the one who survived the bombing on Luna, the crew is in cold-pak with Runciter trying to contact them. A strange story with an even stranger twist and everybody is happy with the solution. Except Philip K. Dick, so he adds a little something right at the end. On the last page, Runciter discovers the money in his pockets all have Joe Chip's face on them. Earlier in the novel, Joe had experienced the same, except his money had Runciter's face on them:

Runciter took a good long look at the fifty-cent pieces...

It was the first Joe Chip money he had ever seen.

He had an intuition, chillingly, that if he searched his pockets, and his billfold, he would find more.

This was just the beginning. (*Ubik*, 216)

So, the happy-solution-ending crumbles before our eyes, leaving us asking: why? We now have to begin working all over again on what it all means. *Ubik* is the ultimate "nothing-is-what-it-seems" novel by Dick, and the most difficult because it appears to have no actual answer. Michael Bishop ("In Pursuit of *Ubik*") comes close to the truth when he says that pursuing the meaning of *Ubik* is more exciting than arriving at it: "It invites our continued pursuit by its very elusiveness. Further, I'm convinced that three-quarters of the fun of *Ubik*... just happens to lie in the pursuit" (138). He does, however, arrive at a definite conclusion:

If *Ubik* seemingly thwarts our each and every attempt to give it a more specific christening, it does so because *Ubik* is multitudinous as well as singular, private as well as universal. Moreover, as the entire thrust of Dick's novel implies, *Ubik* operates at full potency only when a person conjures its unique qualities as a "reality support" from inner, or spiritual, resources rather than from external, or material, ones. (Bishop, 147)

Michael Bishop argues that *Ubik* demonstrates a lack of faith, resulting in escalation of entropy in the universe. Materialism has supplanted "spiritual resilience" as our reality support. Faith has retreated; physical and social hungers have taken its place. This change is pushing mankind closer to chaos; entropy gradually takes over. Materialism, realised as consumersim, in and through television commercials, which are ubiquitous. *Ubik* - a derivation of the word "ubiquitous" - is presented, at the beginning of each chapter, as everything from a breakfast cereal to a Savings and Loan firm, from sleeping pills to hair conditioners, in the form of an advertisement:

We wanted to give you a shave like no other you ever had. We said, It's about time a man's face got a little loving. We said, With Ubik's self-winding Swiss chromium never-ending blade, the days of scrape-scrape are over. So try Ubik. And be loved. Warning: use only as directed. And with caution. (61)

Ubik is our daily consumer product, the things we buy every day - our daily bread. The ads are everywhere, *Ubik* is everywhere, for every object is *Ubik*. *Ubik* is the pervading element:

I am Ubik. Before the universe was, I am. I made the suns. I made the worlds. I created the lives and the places they inhabit; I move them here, I put them there. They go as I say, they do as I tell them. I am the word and my name is never spoken, the name which no one knows. I am called Ubik, but that is not my name. I am. I shall always be.
(*Ubik*, 215)

This final "ad" is analogous to the beginning of the Book of John and, as Bishop puts it, equates *Ubik* with the Christian God. He then continues and states his analysis of *Ubik*: "Ubik is the affirmative principle. To put it another way, *Ubik* is whatever helps John Doe or John Foe make it through the Dark Night of the soul" ("In Pursuit of *Ubik*", 146-47). *Ubik* is not the Christian God, and yet it is. It is the Absolute, the Godhead. It is the almighty power, represented in every religion by various names. But the name does not matter. Understood this way, *Ubik* is affirming what *Valis* and *The Divine Invasion* are all about: Jory, the Adversary, the evil, reality destroyer - or false reality maker. Ella Runciter is the Beside-Helper and Runciter is the Saviour, saving Joe Chip with a spray can of *Ubik*. *Ubik* is Yahweh, Buddha, *Valis*, Zebra, whatever name it has ever been given.

Fitting in "Reality as Ideological Construct" says about *The Three Stigmata*, that the drug-oriented culture on Mars echoes the Television oriented society we inhabit, and since Can-D/TV is what People have come to believe in, the road is paved for entropy to enter into every corner of our lives:

As can be seen in the key image of the colonists huddled around their layouts, the Can-D experience is not so much an indictment of drug abuse... as a critique of the role and function of television in our lives... This future Earth is our own present, where the emancipatory and utopian potential of the media and of technologies... has been diverted to the trivialized products and ideological practices of manipulation and representation which characterize consumer society.
(101)

It is basically a lack of faith in spiritual things. In *Do Androids Dream?* technology kills God: Buster Friendly, the android, scientifically proves Mercerism to be a fake. Androids discard empathy because it cannot be scientifically proved. Our technologically oriented society refuses to believe in mental and spiritual experiences because we cannot literally place our hand on it; we cannot take it up, point at it, and say: this is it! By denouncing the spiritual, and embracing the material, external world, we place our faith in dead, unsubstantial things. The living ceases to matter as much. Androids represent the unfeeling intellect as opposed to human compassion. The inhabitants of the Martian colony in *The Three Stigmata* seek human compassion through, first, Can-D, and then Chew-Z. Fitting says: "[] we must recognize that the novel's starting point lies with the characters' need for illusion..." ("Reality as Ideological Construct", 100), but they seek it in the wrong direction, bringing about increasingly worse illusions and, eventually, a worse reality. They turn to false solutions to the meaningless of their lives, bringing about ever increasing chaos to their universe. Dick's kipple (*Do Androids Dream?*) represents entropy, which reaches ubiquity or all pervasiveness with Chew-Z, Palmer Eldritch's ploy to gain power as the demi-urge.

The typical Dick novel explores the possibilities of reality being an illusion. To Dick, the world is many different realities existing simultaneously, side by side. Everyone perceives the world differently; every human being has a separate version of reality because of the different perceptions. Dick, in a 1981 interview, comments on his use

of the multi-foci viewpoint: "Since I do not hold there is one reality, I hold that each person has their own, somewhat unique reality, it would be natural for me to use a multi-foci type thing" (Rickman, 140).

A Scanner Darkly is not so much a science fiction novel as a semi-mainstream one. Bob Arctor is a drug addict who is slowly killing himself on the futuristic drug, Substance-D (D for death). He is also Fred, a narcotics agent, whose newest assignment is to focus his attention on an addict and possible pusher named Bob Arctor. The protagonist leads two separate lives which he manages to keep distinct from one another until the pressure of the situation, plus the growing brain damage from the use of Substance D, splits his brain so his two identities cease to be aware of each other. As in *Ubik* and *Do Androids Dream?*, Dick investigates the familiar topic of "What is Real?" in *Scanner*, only now from a different angle. The factor creating a shifty reality this time, comes not from the outside, but from the inside. Dick, in an interview, remarks: "Only instead of it being a question of what is real externally, it now invades the inner psyche" (Williams, 82). *Scanner* portrays the existence of separate realities as a tangible fact: the result of drug abuse and schizophrenia. The main characters in *Scanner*, Barris, Luckman and Bob Arctor, are all "junkies". Their conversation, most of the time, is absurd to the point of being silly, showing a typical junkie mentality. At one time, Luckman gets the idea that maybe there is another Robert Arctor, aside from the one they know, and Bob starts to wonder:

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?* (*Scanner*, 96)

It is a good question, for fairly soon after this, Fred loses touch with his other self, Bob. In fact, when he - that is Fred - is told that he is actually Bob Arctor, Fred finds it too incredible to believe. To inquire which he is, Bob or Fred, is to inquire into the nature of the two worlds he inhabits. In one he is a cop, a narcotics agent, whose job it is to apprehend pushers. In the other he is a drug addict, whose main enemy is the police. Arctor cannot exist in both worlds at once. As Fred he is a different personality from himself as Bob. So which is the real him?

We might say, and it might be true, that many different perceptions of the world exist. However, the human being does not perceive his view as a mere perception of the world; he conceives it as reality itself. The cosmogony in the mind of the individual is his reality, and thus, for him, it is authentic reality and nothing less. Assuming that every individual possesses his own unique reality, what happens to the external reality of the world itself? Can we say that a single, external, actual reality exists when nobody perceives it the same way, and therefore nobody agrees on what it is like? It is too mind-boggling to think that perhaps external reality does not exist. So we assume that it is really out there. Then it may just be possible that it is something totally different from what we think it is, and if so, where does it leave us? What would we do if discovered this to be the case? Questions like these are constantly being asked in Dick's novels by drawing up a world where reality is as eccentric as an old man, and its behaviour is utterly unpredictable. Paul Williams notes:

... Dick's world is a world of specific ambiguity... a sinister paranoid world where each thing seems to be one way and then turns out to maybe be another, and eventually it becomes clear that you can't be certain of anything - since each of us perceives a different world, really large-scale communication breakdown and even sanity breakdown are possible and, in a Dick novel, probable. (17)

Take for example earthquakes. You go through life with the assurance that nothing is more solid and stable than the ground under your feet. If there is anything you can rely on, this is it. Then one day you experience an earthquake and in a flash your faith is destroyed. The earth has failed you once, it might do so again. So you realise you cannot trust the world around you; it may change, fall apart or even vanish in the blink of an eye. Your perception of reality has changed; the world has let you down when you thought you could trust it and the result is that you are now living in an altogether different reality. So, you could say with Dick, the world as we perceive it, is an illusion. But then again we might also join in with Herb Asher, our hero from *The Divine Invasion*, when he says that the illusionary world is only "a way of seeing the real world... An occluded way. A dreamlike way. A hypnotized, asleep way. The nature of world undergoes a perceptual change; actually it is the perceptions that change, not the world. *The change is in us*" (DI, 199).

Which brings us back to *Ubik*. If we stick to the explanation that Joe Chip and friends are "half-lifers", in cold-pak, then their perception of the changes taking place in their surroundings is "[a] hypnotized, asleep way" of seeing the real world: they are only dreaming. Runciter tries to wake them up to an awareness of the illusion; that what they are experiencing is not the real world at all. Dick once gave an explanation, in a lecture, of what *Ubik* is all about:

... we are like the characters in my novel *Ubik*; we are in a state of half-life. We are neither dead nor alive, but preserved in cold storage, waiting to be thawed out... What melts the ice and snow covering the characters in *Ubik*, and what halts the cooling-off of their lives, the entropy which they feel, is the voice of Mr Runciter, their former employer, calling to them. The voice of Mr Runciter is none other than that same voice which each bulb and seed and root in the ground, our ground, in our wintertime, hears. It hears: Wake up! Sleepers awake! ("Man, Android and Machine", 207)

In his own words, Dick equates Runciter with the Universal Ruler (I refrain from using the word God, since Dick's theories on religion are far too complicated for such a simplification), which brings us to his last obsessive theme: the identity of God.

Dick's novels, by means of various devices, present entropy as an ongoing process: there is cold-pak in *Ubik*; Chew-Z in *The Three Stigmata*; "kipple" filling up empty spaces in *Do Androids Dream?* Coldness is word that recurs throughout Dick's novels, and connects with what he says in "Man, Android and Machine". In *Counter-Clock World* regular time flow has reversed itself so that everything happens backwards: people wake up from death, are "born" from the grave, revert back to infancy and finally enter a ready womb. The reborn always carry with them a memory of the "dreary coldness of the grave," and it is a chilling, haunting memory. In *Do Androids Dream?* there are constant references to the tombworld, the darkness and the cold. Mercerism is practiced by the individual by gripping the two handles on the so-called empathy box. A picture appears on the screen of the box, showing Wilbur Mercer, an old man clad in a robe, ascending a rocky hill. The individual, by gripping the handles, merges with Mercer, as well as everybody else holding their handles at the same time, and together they ascend the hill, hopefully to the top. In the fusion that occurs, all the individuals are together, sensing each other's feelings and voices and during the difficult climbing they support each other. For Jack Isidore, living alone in an empty building in the suburbs, this fusion is of vital importance. Isidore is a "special"; his genes are distorted because of the radioactive atmosphere, making him unacceptable on the colonies. Moreover, being a "chickenhead" - he failed to pass the minimum mentality test - no one wants to socialise with him, so he is always alone. The world of San Fransisco in 1992 is a world of decay: radioactive dust covers the earth and blocks out the sun; animals are either dead or dying; humans emigrating by the millions, leaving the cities to go to ruin. "Kipple" is the word Dick uses for the increasing decay; discarded refuse, empty houses crumbling to dust. "Kipple has a way of reproducing itself," Dick says,

and entropy takes over. The emptiness of the uninhabited suburban apartment buildings becomes palpable:

Silence. It flashed from the woodwork and the walls; it smote him with an awful, total power... Alive! He had often felt its austere approach before; when it came it burst in without subtlety, evidently unable to wait. The silence of the world could not rein back its greed... He lived alone in this deteriorating, blind building of a thousand uninhabited apartments which like all its counterparts, fell, day by day, into greater entropic ruin. Eventually everything within the building would merge, would be faceless and identical, mere pudding-like kipple piled to the ceiling of each apartment. And, after that, the uncared-for building itself would settle into shapelessness, buried under the ubiquity of the dust... He reached for the doorknob that opened the way out into the unlit hall, then shrank back as he glimpsed the vacuity of the rest of the building. It lay in wait for him, out here, the force which he had felt busily penetrating his specific apartment. God, he thought, and reshut the door. He was not ready for the trip up those clanging stairs... The echo of himself ascending: the echo of nothing. (19-21)

Isidore, in his empty house, in his loneliness, senses the void and the kipplisation that is taking place all around him. The tombworld is a world empty of human beings and full of kipple, destroying what life there is left. The cold is the defeating loneliness of people like Isidore.

Awakening, remembering - these are key terms with Dick. Herb Asher (*The Divine Invasion*) is kept in cryonic suspension for ten years because of an accident. During those years he hears soupy string versions of South Pacific (which in itself indicates the unpleasantness of the state he is in) and dreams. In his dreams he relives his past. Here again we see a character in "half-life", like the half-lifers in *Ubik*. When he finally wakes up, he meets his son, Emmanuel, who is ten years old, and God reborn. Emmanuel is brain damaged because the ship that carried his mother to earth crashed

on arrival. The damage has caused amnesia in the boy and during Herb's sleeping years, Emmanuel has spent his time trying to remember who he is and what his purpose is. But he cannot do it on his own; Zina, his Beside-helper, aids his "awakening" by taking him to an alternate reality she creates: the paradise lost where everything is good and beautiful. Emmanuel hears the sounds of bells: "I cannot, myself, produce that sound,' he said to Zina. 'How is it done?' By wakefulness,' Zina said. 'The bell-sounds wake you up. They rouse you from sleep...' Gentle spring wind blew about them, the vapors of her realm" (170-71). Emmanuel needs Zina to make his world whole.

In a Dickian world can there be any hope for the characters of ever gaining control over their lives? Moreover, is there any hope for survival - mental and physical - in a world that appears to be hostile to its inhabitants? Dick answers yes, but only if you retain your sense of empathy. You cannot base your faith on material things - they are elusive, transitory. You have to place it in a different kind of substance, one that will endure, which is man's capacity to care. Lou Stathis, in *Heavy Metal*, says:

In Dick's universe you take nothing for granted. Not only have all authority figures lied to you, but reality has lied to you as well... But however paranoid, Dick's vision isn't despairing. There is always hopefulness within the entropic decay, humour in the absurdity, and redemption in the super human abilities of ordinary humans to cope with extraordinary circumstances. We can make it... Humans will survive as long as they retain their humanity, Dick says, and the measure of humanity is the capacity for caring... . ("Philip K. Dick 1928-1982",4)

Regarding Rick Deckard in this context makes certain things clear. Towards the end of the novel *Do Androids Dream?*, Deckard flies "up north" and finds an authentic, living toad. At this time, toads are supposed to be extinct, as are all living animals. The few remaining animals can be bought at exorbitant prices, and this state of affairs

has generated a new social status symbol: animal ownership. Deckard is ecstatic, after finding the toad, and flies home to his wife, Iran, who discovers the toad is a fake - a mechanical duplication. Deckard's first reaction is disappointment, followed by an emotional emptiness. Iran, feeling sorry for her husband, packs him off to bed with the promise that she will look after him. At that Deckard discovers his exhaustion and with a feeling of gratitude goes to sleep. From the beginning of the story, Deckard and Iran have disagreed on almost every subject. In the end, however, what matters most to them, as Deckard realises, is their support for each other; sticking together, and caring. Christiansen remarks on this:

In his [Dick's] work, it is the aggressive animals that fail, whereas humans with the sustaining qualities despised by their domineering antagonists win. The victories, for female and male alike, do not produce material prosperity, or even a temporary fame. They do produce what does matter to a human being: a life worth living. (81)

Ubik and *High Castle* present the religious aspect differently, but still similarly, and in both, spiritual matters are closely linked with the reality theme. I have already touched upon the basic outline of *High Castle*. One important element is yet to be discussed: the novel within the novel. Hawthorne Abendsen is a novelist in occupied America (the rumour is that he lives in a "high castle", surrounded by walls and barbed wire), and he has written a controversial book, called *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, in which he pictures the world as it would be had Japan and Germany lost the Second World War. The characters find this "invention" extraordinary; some are fascinated by the idea, others apalled. Juliana Frink finds it more than fascinating; she feels compelled to go and see this Abendsen to thank him for writing the novel. She falls in with a man named Joe, who, as she finds out on the way, is on a mission to assassinate Abendsen. When she discovers Joe's true reason for seeing Abendsen, she does the only thing she can do to stop him: she slits his throat. Juliana manages to visit Abendsen on her own, only to find that he did not actually write the book - the

ancient Chinese Book of Changes, *I-Ching*, had written it for him.⁹ The *I-Ching* tells Juliana, when she asks it, that Abendsen's book is true; that it - the *I-Ching* - had written the book through Abendsen to reveal what really happened; i.e., that Germany and Japan lost the war. In an enigmatic scene, at Abendsen's house, Juliana discovers the truth, the present reality is not real reality, and the *I-Ching*, by writing the book, is trying to tell the world the truth. If only people would believe it - the novel - they might see what is real:

Juliana said, "Oracle, why did you write *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*? What are we supposed to learn?"

...

She began throwing the coins...

"It's Chung Fu," Juliana said. "Inner Truth. I know without using the chart []. And I know what it means."

Raising his head, Hawthorne scrutinized her. He had now 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... .

"I'm not sure of anything," he said.

"Believe," Juliana said. (246-47)

Here the *I-Ching* is equivalent to Valis which fired a beam of pink light at Horselover Fat's head in *Valis* and revealed to him that reality is a fake. Beneath it lurks the real world in which time turns into space, i.e., time, as we perceive it, does not exist.

⁹Incidentally, Dick himself claims the same: while writing *High Castle* he consulted the *I-Ching* on plot development.

Another instance occurs in *High Castle*, where the truth is revealed through a semi-religious medium. Childan, the antique-dealer, sells Tagomi a new product - a jewel in the form of a pin, designed and handmade by Frank Frink. A Japanese business official, Paul Kasoura, has just told Childan that for some strange reason the pin contains *wu*, which, as a Taoist concept, means "spontaneity"¹⁰ and Kasoura explains to Childan, that the *wu* means that the jewel has made its peace with the universe; that it is a balanced thing. He also emphasises that the *wu* is not inherent in the metal but has flown into it from the hands of the maker. Frink, in other words, gives the jewel its *wu*, and the reason he happens to have *wu* in the first place is because the only thing he wants to accomplish in making the jewel is to be allowed to do what he does best, and in such circumstances, the individual will produce quality, which is what gives his life meaning. Childan passes this information over to Tagomi, who takes the pin into a public park, sits down on a bench and tries to reach the *wu* inside. *Wu* (more accurately *wu-wei*) means literally "inaction", that is, as in "taking no unnatural action." It also means "spontaneity" (which I mentioned earlier): "to support all things in their natural state," and to "allow them to transform spontaneously" (Wing-tsit Chan, "Taoism"). Tagomi spends a long time watching the pin, handling it, this way and that, but gets no response. When at last he feels something is about to happen, he is interrupted. Consequently, he loses his concentration and the awareness disappears. Irritated, he decides to try no further and walks out of the garden onto a nearby street he knows; except that it no longer looks familiar to him. The cars are different, buildings seem to have changed or even vanished, and in their stead there are others completely different. He walks into a coffee shop which has changed into a diner. He notices that all seats are taken by whites but instead of giving up their seats to him, everyone remains seated. Tagomi, not being accustomed to such behaviour, demands a seat. The reactions he gets are rude remarks and angry glances. He is filled with horror and bewilderment:

¹⁰For further information on *wu*, see Wing-tsit Chan's entry, "Taoism" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1964 ed.

Mr. Tagomi looked to the other whites; all watched with hostile expressions. And none stirred.

Bardo Thodol existence, Mr. Tagomi thought. Hot winds blowing me who knows where. This is vision - of what? ...

He hurried from the lunch counter. The doors swung together behind him; he stood once more on the sidewalk.

Where am I? Out of my world, my space and time. (222-23)

The *wu* in the pin shows him, by transforming reality spontaneously, the world in its natural state. Tagomi's reality is false and *wu* in pin reveals to him, for a brief moment real reality - our reality - where Japan and Germany lost the second World War.

In *Do Androids Dream?* Dick's invents a future religion, Mercerism, based on empathy. The novel puts forth important questions about Christianity and faith. Christianity, in its essence, unites people through their faith in Jesus and the unconditional belief in the redemption of our sins through his death. It exists because of the belief in the ultimate token of God's love for the human race, and in Jesus' empathy with every living being. Mercerism combines people through empathy; sharing your feelings with others, through the empathy box, for the benefit of everybody. When Mercerism is proven to be a hoax - Wilbur Mercer turns out to be an actor, paid to play the uniting role of a leader - it should mean the end of Mercerism. Yet, it lives on. With or without knowing it, Dick is asking us if it is of vital importance whether Jesus actually existed or not; whether he was authentic or not, or whether he died for our sins or not.

It presents an interesting view on Ridley Scott's film, *Blade Runner*, when we see Dick mentioning God as the toymaker.¹¹ Tyrell, president of Tyrell Corporations is a

¹¹See quotation on page 13. "I do seem attracted to trash..." From the *Exegesis*.

manufacturer of replicants (that is androids). His latest model of replicants, the Nexus-6, have become so advanced, technically, that a special test is needed to distinguish them from human beings, the main difference being the replicants's lack of empathy. One of Tyrell's genetic designers is J. F. Sebastian, who is also a toymaker in his spare time. His flat is filled with creatures of all sorts who walk and talk and who are his friends. Sebastian's "toys" are imperfect; they break down, function erratically, etc. The difference between Tyrell and Sebastian is noticeable - Tyrell is the boss; he has the power and his products are near perfect, so perfect in fact that they can pass themselves off as humans. Sebastian is the employee, he has no power and his products are mere toys - dolls that you wind up and repeat lines planted in them by their maker.

The motivation is the interesting factor. Tyrell, who has become rich from his business, is eager to design and manufacture the perfect replicant: his motto is "More Human Than Human". He does not care for his products as such, only as his perfect creations. "His" is the keyword here; his ambition is entirely selfishly motivated. He is proud to be the owner of the most successful replicant making factory but has not the least desire to know what happens to his creations once they enter the real world. Sebastian's motivation for creating his "friends" is loneliness. Having no real friends, he makes them with love and care and they in return greet him every time he comes home from work. If any of them breaks down or malfunctions one way or another he dexterously tries to fix the fault. He genuinely cares for his toy-friends; he talks to them, discusses things with them and with loving tolerance allows for their imperfections.

Although this setup is not in *Do Androids Dream?*, it is very Dickian in terms of theme. Being toy-makers, both Sebastian and Tyrell are analogous to God. When Roy Baty meets Tyrell, the latter says to him: "How does it feel to meet your maker?" Sebastian, as God, is quite different from Tyrell. The former is merciful, caring,

while the latter is ruthless and disinterested. Viewed this way, Tyrell is seen as Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, merciless, unrelenting creator of man. Sebastian is God as preached in the New Testament, and embodied in Christ: forgiving, caring saviour of man. Pris introduces Sebastian to Roy in this way: "This is my saviour, J. F. Sebastian." The two are the same and yet not the same. Tyrell, the creator, makes the being, sends it out into the world and when it deviates from the law, it must die. Sebastian, the saviour, feels sympathy for Tyrell's creations when they come to him in need and with the same care as he feels for his own little toys he wants to and tries to help the runaway replicants.

Transmigration poses the same questions as does *Do Android Dream?* To find God and faith intellectually is not possible, according to Dick. Rummaging through texts, debating the existence and identity of God and thus arriving at the truth about true religion, or God, for that matter, is not the way to do it. Faith is an emotional experience and this is what Dick discovers and emphasises in *Transmigration*. The tragic story about Bishop Timothy Archer - a character supposedly based on Dick's personal friend, Jim Pike, bishop of California, whose fate was identical to Archer's - is the story about a man who first loses his faith and then loses his life in his intellectual search for the true identity of Christ. Dick pits Angel against Archer to prove his point. Archer travels to Israel in order to examine for himself the Dead Sea Scrolls, hoping to find in them what he has lost. The attempt leads to his death. Angel is the empathetic figure who realises the futility of his journey and she tries to stop Archer from going. She tries to tell him that he will not find and regain his faith through books, but he does not listen. Through Angel Dick is trying to convey a message to us, about life. Reading about Jesus till the eyes go blind will not bring him any closer to us. We have to experience him physically. To have an actual understanding, we must experience what we must understand, reading about it is not enough. On their own, books have no meaning; they have to be connected with the reality around us to if we are to hear what they are saying. Angel clarifies this in her

anecdote about the night she suffered from an infected tooth, when she sat up, drinking bourboun to lessen the pain, and read Dante's *Commedia*, and started to understand. Timothy Archer's life, as described in *Transmigration*, is identical to Bishop Jim Pike's life. However, Archer is really Dick himself, and so is Angel. Dick, at the time of writing the book, had been spending years studying religious doctrines, trying to find the God that had sent information to him through a beam of pink light. Archer is the intellectual, analysing side of Dick, whereas Angel is that part of him which stays put, with the feet on the ground, and believes in people as the only substantial reality. In Sutin's words:

Timothy Archer is an exploration of the soul of a man for whom, like Phil, "vision" and "consciousness" are the essence of life. No other of Phil's novels delineates so clearly the radical difference between Phil the thinker and Phil the artist. For in telling the story of Bishop Archer's failed existence - his unhappy family life, bitter extramarital affair, and soulless intellectual justifications - Phil is in essence rejecting the abstractions of his own *Exegesis* in favour of the simple, day-to-day virtues of human warmth and kindness. (279)

Turning to religion is just Dick's way of moving on in his search for authenticity and truth. As Warrick says: "Over his long writing career, he has remained intrigued with the same subjects, but the answers he gives to the questions he raises on these subjects are never the same. His mind is constantly in motion" (109). So, his search for authentic reality and authentic humanity led to questions and theories about God: where is he? What kind of God is it that runs this world? At the end of his long search he had come up with millions of theories, and had he lived longer, would probably have produced a million more. Yet, they all more or less reach the same conclusion: that true salvation comes from within the individual, and Christ, like Mercer, is simply a uniting force, causing us to care about each other and thus survive.

CONCLUSION

What I write about, I think is belief, faith, trust... and the lack of all three. ("Afterword" to Levack, 154)

My writing, in toto, is an attempt on my part to take my life and everything I've seen and done, and fashion it into a work that makes sense. I'm not sure I've been successful. First, I cannot falsify what I have seen. I see disorder and sorrow, and so I have to write about it; but I've seen bravery and humor, and so I put that in too. (Dick, "Now Wait for This Year", 226)

Dick's final conclusion is that God certainly moves in mysterious ways; the universe has no actual purpose; reality may be an illusion, but it really does not matter, for the only reality of any real concern, is ourselves. He believes there is a God, but that God is neither Yahweh nor Buddha, but the human being next to us. And salvation does exist; it is the caring of our loved ones. Through compassion we will be redeemed - but we have to believe in it. Galbreath comments: "The Saviour is not the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost; it is the human being who chooses salvation" (112). If we retain our humanity, our empathetic understanding, we will discover that this is the only substantial reality there is. Life is, after all, quite simple, when we discover it actually has no meaning but the one we put into it.

Within the context of Dick's work in general, the Valis trilogy is a logical continuation of what he had been doing before. I have to agree with Aaron John Barlow when he says: "Dick's final and fervent Christianity, with its highly individualistic formula for man/God relations, is the result of all his experiments and is his final conclusion" ("Reality, Religion and Politics in Philip K. Dick's Fiction", *DAI*). Earlier novels pose the questions on religion, as well as on authenticity: i.e., how real is reality and how human is the human being. The Valis trilogy, especially

The Divine Invasion, brings all of Dick's obsessive topics together; links them to each other and arrives at Dick's final conclusion.

As I have attempted to demonstrate in this essay, the pervading questions, occurring and recurring in novel after novel, are the questions "What is Human?" and "What is Real?". When it comes to humanity and reality there are no such concepts as correctness and incorrectness: correct human behaviour does not exist; only human behaviour. Whatever may be the origin of the universe, reality is only that which we experience in the daily struggle for survival. Dick says in a lecture:

Within the universe there exist fierce cold things, which I have given the name 'machines' to. Their behaviour frightens me ... I call them 'androids', which is my way own way of using that word. By 'android' I do not mean a sincere attempt to create in the laboratory a human being... we must not posit a difference of essence, but a difference of behaviour. In my science fiction I write about them constantly... A human being without the proper empathy or feeling is the same as an android built so as to lack it, either by design or mistake. We mean, basically, someone who does not care about the fate which his fellow living creatures fall victim to; he stands detached, a spectator, acting out by his indifference John Donne's theorem that "No man is an island", but giving that theorem a twist: that which is a mental and moral island is not a man. (201-02)

Consider the myth of the Advocate: he offers to defend every one of us before the high judge in heaven, but he only does so if we ask for his help. The myth also states that most people do not ask for this help because by that they admit they are sinful and that they need the Advocate's help to get into Heaven. So it is with the individual who claims he needs nobody else; that he is complete in himself. This individual is "a mental and moral island" and thus rejects his humanity.

Blade Runner, Ridley Scott's film, is in most respects different from its source, *Do Androids Dream?*; however, a close inspection of the film reveals its Dickian essence. *Blade Runner* is like a tribute to Dick in that it mixes together motifs from various Dick novels: the crowded streets are Dick's kipple; Tyrell of Tyrell Corporations is an intriguing variation of Dick's religious figures; Deckard's relationship with Rachael and the rest of the replicants presents the humanity theme faithfully. The only drawback is the absence of Dick's absurd and often cynical humour. A flock of Hare Krishnas, bouncing through the crowded, futuristic streets of Los Angeles, is the only instance of humour (and a very nice one) but one scene does not make up for the *Blade Runner's* entire lack of the humour so characteristic in Dick.

The religious aspect of the film sums up much of what Dick is saying in his novels. The grim meeting between Roy and Tyrell is a powerful moment in the film, when Roy discovers his maker's true nature. He sees "the toymaker who has generated... all his toys,"¹² and he feels hatred and disgust at God's/Tyrell's non-caring attitude. Marilyn Gwaltney in "Androids as a Device for Reflection on Personhood", says: "Our understanding of ... [Roy's] cruelty changes as we come to understand it as a very human reaction to his existential situation: the imminence of his death and that of those he loves; the feeling of betrayal by the beings that brought him into existence" (33). Here Roy becomes comparable to man; Roy is unhappy that he is not made to last. He wants his creator to give him more life. The creator says he cannot do it, but shows no remorse at his inability. He does not care whether Roy lives or dies, all Tyrell sees is that Roy is a perfect example of his own ingeniousness - the perfect example. Whether Roy lives or dies is of no concern to Tyrell. Roy, maddened at the reply, kills Tyrell, which is a powerful and fearsome act when we understand it as man killing God.

¹²Ibid.

Even the way Roy kills Tyrell is laden with implications: Roy grabs Tyrell's head between his hands and kisses him on the mouth, indicating the Judas' kiss of death. Then he thrusts Tyrell's eyes into his head and crushes his skull. The Gnostics believed that the demi-urge's cruelty and indifference is due to his being blind and in the Valis trilogy Dick often refers to the "blind God": the God running this world must indeed be blind since he does not see the injustice that goes on, and he must be blind to his creatures plights since he does nothing to alleviate them. Replicants return to earth because they seek life. They want their creator, man, to give them life, which man is not able to do. Replicant, in return, grants life to man (Roy saving Deckard at the end of the film), endowing it with more empathy than man.

Gregg Rickman says about Dick: "[] where his real greatness lies is in the love and care he has for his most tortured characters, and his understanding of their pain. His empathy" (*Philip K. Dick: In His Own Words*, 11). The essentially humanistic aspect of Dick's fiction is largely due to his often comic but always sympathetic heroes, who hardly ever achieve what they aim at, but who nevertheless demand respect and a dignified place in the world. Michael Bishop's description of Joe Chip applies to every hero Dick creates:

... Joe Chip [is a] schlemiel and tarnished knight errant. Chip - a dedicated working stiff, a perennially out-of-pocket Sisyphus, and the point-of-view character who seems to matter most to Dick - is a shaving of the fallen tree of humanity: a chip off the old but sometimes praiseworthy blockheadedness by which we and our progenitors have sought to insist upon the meaningfulness of our lives.
("In Pursuit of *Ubik*", 143)

Dick believes in this character: he may not be perfect, but his human qualities are the redemptive qualities. Galbreath comments on Dick's fascination with the redeemer figure, and says that by creating this "Sisyphus" character, Dick "is ... expressing his

belief in the redemptive quality at 'the heart of human life' and trust in its ability to manifest itself, usually in the 'minor man' whose modest actions - his choices - are blows against chaos and entropy" ("Redemption and Doubt in Philip K. Dick's Valis Trilogy", 111). Joe Chip and his likes do not save the universe but they do save the world, when we understand that the world is only that which is closest to us. The world, to a small creature like the average human being, is not the whole planet; it is that which he sees and feels every day and in this sense, it is a world he can save by his "modest actions".

Le Guin, in "The Modest One" comments on Dick's humour and says that it is such that you "cannot quote funny bits from Dick, because you have to read the whole book up to that point to know why it's so funny..." (175). Although it is possible to kind instances of "jokes" in a Dick novel, I have commonly found myself up against this wall when wanting to illustrate Dick's sense of humour. A particular line is most often funny only within the context of the novel as a whole. For example, I find it quite difficult to explain what is so amusing about the scene in *High Castle* where Tagomi awaits the German intruders who are barging their way through the Nippon Times Building, where Tagomi's office is. *A Scanner Darkly* is Dick's funniest novel and the only one where an authentic joke can be found. Bob Arctor is speaking:

A dream woke me ... In it there was this huge clap of thunder, and all of a sudden the heavens rolled aside and God appeared and His voice rumbled at me - what the hell did He say? - oh yeah. 'I'm vexed with you, my son,' He said. He was scowling. I was shaking, in the dream, and looking up, and I said, 'What'd I do now, Lord?' And He said, 'You left the cap off the tooth-paste tube again.' And then I realised it was my ex-wife. (69)

Although Le Guin claims Dick is not an absurdist, my view of his humour is that it lies partly in the absurdity of the contents of his text: the fun often lies in the absurd inconsistency between the narration and its subject-matter.

Le Guin also says, in the same essay: "You all know what prophets don't get in their own country" (178), referring to the lack of recognition of the literary value of Dick's fiction. Only during the last decade have his works begun to receive a position of fame, and, as "serious" critics and academics have one by one become aware of his existence, he is finally claiming the literary status he so rightly deserved all along. Le Guin's statement in the beginning also refers to the fact that Europeans have recognised Dick's value as a writer for a long time; since 1960, the French have pronounced him the greatest American science fiction writer ever. Dick's books have been translated into many languages: Danish, German, Spanish, Japanese and Polish, to name but a few. The Polish science fiction writer and translator, Stanislaw Lem has written two essays that I know of on American SF and Philip K. Dick, "Visionary Among the Charlatans", and "American SF - A Hopeless Case - With Exceptions", in which he discusses Dick's position within the American SF genre, as well as the genre as a whole. Lem's view is not optimistic on behalf of the American SF field; however, there exists one bright light in the dull "pulpness" of cheap, clichéd adventure-space stories, and the exception is Philip K. Dick.

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