

I Understand Philip K. Dick

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In Pursuit of VALIS: Selections from the Exegesis, ed. Lawrence
Sutin

1991

True stories have no beginnings and neither does the tale of PKD's encounters with the Overmind. But we writers understand narrative economy, and for purposes of narrative economy his story seemed to him to begin with the mysterious break-in and riffling of his papers that was made notorious by an article in Rolling Stone, which brought Phil long-delayed and much-deserved fame. The break-in date was 11/17/71. It was a date and a style of referring to time that Phil used frequently.

I turned 25 the day before. It was no casual birthday, either. I met my natal day by sitting down and sincerely preparing myself for an Apocatastasis, the final apocalyptic ingression of novelty, the implosion really, of the entire multidimensional continuum of space and time. I imagined the megamacrocosmos was going to go down the drain like water out of a bathtub as the hyperspatial vacuum fluctuation of paired particles that is our universe collided with its own ghost image after billions of years of separation. The Logos assured me that parity would be conserved, all subatomic particles except photons would cancel each other and our entire universe would quietly disappear. The only particles that would remain, according to my fantastic expectation, would be photons. The universe of light would be exposed at last, set free from the iron prison of matter, freed from the awful physics that adhered to less unitary states of being. All mankind would march into the promised garden.

I felt I was well situated for the event as I, quite consciously and deliberately, and to the concern of my friends, had placed myself in the teeming, hallucinogen-saturated center of the largest garden I could find, the trackless rain forest of the Upper Amazon Basin of Colombia. My confidence in my vision was unshakable. Had not the Logos itself lead me to this vision, not only by revelation but by painstaking explanation? I had no radio, no way to contact the outside world at all. Who needed that? I knew with perfect clarity that the world of time, the illusion of history was ending. Divine *Parousia* was entering the world and the just, the meek and the humble were leaving their fields and factories, pushing

back their chairs from their office desks and workbenches and walking out into the light of a living sun that would never set, for there could be no setting for the eternal radiance of the Logos. Tears of joy streaming down their cheeks, the illumined billions were turning their eyes at last to the sky and finding there a consolation that they had never dared hope for.

However, Nixon's weary world ignored the eschatological opportunity I thought my brother's inspired fiddling with hyperspace had afforded. The world continued grinding forward in its usual less than merry way. There was only one small incident that might subsequently be construed, even within the framework of the schizoid logic that was my bread and butter then, to support my position. Unknown to me, a struggling, overweight SF writer, an idol of mine since my teens, discovered the next day that his house had been broken into, his privacy violated by the Other. How peculiar that on the first day of the new dispensation in my private reformist calendar, he had been burglarized by extraterrestrials, the CIA or his own deranged self in an altered state. The torch had been passed; in a weird way, the most intense phase of my episode of illumination/delusion ended right where Phil's began.

This raises some questions: can we refer to a delusional system as a *folie à deux* if the *deux* participants have never met and are, practically speaking, unaware of each other's existence? Does the delusion of one visionary ecstatic validate the delusion of another? How many deluded, or illuminated, ecstasies does it take to make a reality? PKD proved that it only takes one. But two is better.

When my brother looked over the edge in the Amazon and felt the dizziness of things unsaid in March of 1971, he came back with two words bursting from his lips, "May Day! May Day!" — the pilot's call of extreme emergency. May Day found me in Berkeley sheltered by friends so concerned about my state of mind that they considered committing me. I was only a few miles from Phil, who was rapidly going nuts too, as his psych admission of May 3rd, '71 attests. It was always like that with PKD and me. We never met but we lived around each other for years. In Berkeley, we both lived on Francisco Street, within five blocks and a few years of each other.¹ We both had roots in Sonoma County, in Orange County. How many times were we a table or two away from each other in the Café Med? How many times did I hurry past him on the Ave on some stoned errand? Later his homeopathic doctor was my doctor. There is a garbled mention of me (or my brother) on page 74 of this book.

Yeah, yawn, the world is fuckin' strange, right, bro?

Wrong. Or rather, of course, sure. But that is not the point, the point is that I understand Philip K. Dick. I know that sounds like hubris and if I am wrong I am sorry (as Phil says somewhere). But part of the delusional system in which I live contains and adumbrates the notion that I know what happened to the poor dude. We shared an affliction, a mania, sort of like Queequeg and Ishmael. And like one of those whale-chasing sailors, "I alone escaped to tell thee of it."

¹PKD lived at 1126, then a few years later and for six months I lived at 1624.

Phil wasn't nuts. Phil was a vortex victim.² Schizophrenia is not a psychological disorder peculiar to human beings. Schizophrenia is not a disease at all, but rather a localized traveling discontinuity of the space-time matrix itself. It is like a traveling whirlwind of radical understanding that haunts time. It haunts time in the same way that Alfred North Whitehead said that the color dove gray "haunts time like a ghost."

There is an idea that wants to be born; it has wanted to be born for a very long time.³ And sometimes that longing to be born settles on a person, for no damn good reason. Then you're "it," you become the cheese, and the cheese stands alone. You are illuminated and maddened and lifted up by something great beyond all telling. It wants to be told. It's just that this idea is so damn big that it can't be told, or rather the whole of history is the telling of this idea, the stuttering, rambling effort of the sons and daughters of poor old Noah to tell this blinding, reality-shattering, bowel-loosening truth; and Phil had a piece of the action, a major piece of the action.

But I anticipate myself. Those who grasp a piece of the action end up with two things on their plate: the experience and their own idiosyncratic explanation of the experience based on what they have read, seen and been told. The experience is private, personal, the best part and ultimately unspeakable. The more you know, the quieter you get. The explanation is another matter and can be attempted. In fact it must be told, for the Logos speaks and we are its tools and its voice. Phil says a lot of things in the Exegesis, he is aware that he says too much, so he keeps trying to boil it down to ten points or twelve parts or whatever. I have my own experience, equally unspeakable, and my explanation, equally prolix. Phil (sometimes) thought he was Christ,⁴ I (sometimes) thought I was an extraterrestrial invader disguised as a meadow mushroom. What matters is the system that eventually emerges, not the fantasies concerning the source of the system. When I compare Phil's system to mine, my hair stands on end. We were both contacted by the same unspeakable something. Two madmen dancing, not together, but the same dance anyhow.

Truth or madness, you be the judge. What is trying to be expressed is this: the world is not real. Reality is not stranger than you suppose, it is stranger than

²ZEBRA (VALIS): "A vortex of intelligence extending as a supra-temporal field, involving humans but not limited to them, drawing objects and processes into a coherency which it arranges into information. A FLUX of purposeful arrangement of living information, both human and extra-human, tending to grow and incorporate its environment as a unitary complex of subsumations." (*In Pursuit of VALIS*, pg. 72)

³"Okay, fertilization is what takes place: it isn't a seed such as a plant has, but an egg such as a human woman ovulates, and cosmic spermatika fertilizes it; a zygote is produced." (*Ibid.*, pg. 22)

⁴"I am a homoplasmate: Zebra acting in syzygy with a human," (*Ibid.*, pg. 79) but also, "Did I do something? Absolutely. But I don't know what I did, so I don't know who (so to speak) I am in the drama." (pg. 42)

you *can* suppose. Time is not what you think it is.⁵ Reality is a hologram.⁶ Being is a solid-state matrix and psychosis is the redemptive process *ne plus ultra*.⁷ The real truth is splintered and spread throughout time.

Appearances are a vast and interlocking lie.⁸ To finally know the Logos truly, if that means anything, is to know it as for, as what Phil called a “unified abstract structure.” In a way, this was where PKD went wrong. It wasn’t his fault. He saw that the world of 1975 was a fiction and behind that fiction was the world of A.D. 45. But he lacked an essential concept, lacked it because it really hadn’t been invented yet. Anyhow, the man was an SF writer and a scholar of classical philosophy, he could not be expected to stay in touch with arcane discoveries beginning to take place on the frontiers of research mathematics. But he got very close, his intuition was red hot when he reached the conclusion that a unified abstract structure lay behind the shifting, always tricky casuistry of appearances. The concept he needed was that of fractals and fractal mathematics. The infinite regress of form built out of forms of itself built out of forms of itself unto infinity. The principle of self-similarity. Phil was right, time is not a linear river. He was right, the Empire never ended. Parallel universes is too simple a concept to encompass what is really going on. The megamacrococosmos is a system of resonances, of levels, of endlessly adumbrated funhouse reflections. PKD really was Thomas and Elijah and all the other precursive concrescences that came together to make the cat-loving fat man who compacted trash into gold. The logic of being that he sought, and largely found, was not an either/or logic but a both/and and and/and kind of logic.

PKD was never more right than when he wrote:

I actually had to develop a love of the disordered and puzzling, viewing reality as a vast riddle to be joyfully tackled, not in fear but with tireless fascination. What has been most needed is reality testing, and a willingness to face the possibility of self-negating experiences: i.e., real contradictions, with something being both true and not

⁵“If the Logos is outside time, imprinting, then the Holy Spirit stands at the right or far or completed end of time, toward which the field-flow moves (the time flow). It receives time: the negative terminal, so to speak.” (Ibid., pg. 64) See also, “If there is to be immortality, there must be another kind of time: one in which past events (i.e., the past in its entirety) can be retrieved — i.e., brought back. I did experience such a time.” (pg. 79)

⁶“It (reality) is a hologram. 1) My augmented sense of space proves it. And 2) the information element; consisting of two parts: set and ground. All this points to: hologram. Based on two information-rich signals.” (Ibid., pg. 98-99)

⁷“The Gospels, then, depict a sacred mythic rite outside of time, rather than a historical event. Note: This whole process can be regarded as a psychological transformation, that of a redemptive psychosis.” (Ibid., pg. 95)

⁸“Probably the wisest view is to say: the truth — like the Self — is splintered up over thousands of miles and years; bits are found here and there, then and now, and must be recollected; bits appear in the Greek naturalists, in Pythagoras, in Plato, Parmenides, in Heraclitus, Neoplatonism, Zoroastrianism, Gnosticism, Taoism, Mani, Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Orphism, the other mystery religions. Each religion or philosophy or philosopher contains one or more bits, but the total system interweaves it into falsity, so each as a total system must be rejected, and none is to be accepted at the expense of all the others...” (Ibid., pg. 111-112)

true. The enigma is alive, aware of us and changing. It is partly created by our own minds: we alter it by perceiving it, since we are not outside it. As our views shift, it shifts. In a sense it is not there at all (acosmism). In another sense it is a vast intelligence; in another sense it is total *harmonia* and structure. (How, logically, can it be all three? Well, it is).⁹

One cannot learn these things. One can only be told these things, and it is the Logos that does the telling. The key is in the *I Ching*, which Phil loved and used but which occupies a disappointingly small fraction of his ruminations in the Exegesis.¹⁰ Almost as if the counterflow, the occluding intelligence, kept Phil's eyes diverted from the key element necessary to the universal decipherment that he was attempting. Time is a fractal, or has a fractal structure. All times, moments, months and millennia, have a pattern; the same pattern. This pattern is the structure within which, upon which, events "undergo the formality of actually occurring," as Whitehead used to say. The pattern recurs on every level. A love affair, the fall of an empire, the death agony of a protozoan, all occur within the context of this always the same but ever different pattern. All events are resonances of other events in other parts of time and at other scales of time.¹¹

The mathematical nature of this pattern can be known.¹² It can be written as an equation, just like the equations of Schrödinger or Einstein. The raw material, the ur-text, out of which this mathematical pattern can be drawn is the King Wen sequence of the *I Ching*. That is where the secret lies, in the world's oldest book. Of course. Once possessed the pattern can then be discerned everywhere. Of course. It is ubiquitous. One of Phil's favorite words. I know this because the Logos taught me the pattern and I escaped the black iron prison of the world to tell thee of it. I have published it, I have lectured it and have had it written into software. My books are on the way, some with Phil's old publisher Bantam. I would bet dollars to donuts that if Phil had

⁹Ibid., pg. 91.

¹⁰"*MITHC* seems to be a subtle, even delicate questioning of, what is real? As if only the two books in it, *GRASSHOPPER* and the *I CHING*, are really the only actual reality. Strange." (Ibid., pg. 181)

¹¹"Through anamnesis and restoration to the Form realm you have access to several space-time continua based on your universals." (Ibid., pg. 102)

¹²The agent of creation (*Logos* or Forms, whatever called) is at the same time the abstract structure of creation. Although normally unavailable to our cognition and perception, this structure — and hence the agent of creation — can be known..." (Ibid., pg. 125) Also, "This insubstantial abstract structure *is* reality properly conceived. But it is not God. Here, multiplicity gives way to unity, to what perhaps can be called a field. The field is self-perturbing; *it initiates its own causes internally; it is not acted on from outside.*" (pg. 127) Also, "The agent of creation is its own structure. This structure must not be confused with the multiplicity of physical objects in space and time governed by causation; the two are entirely different. (The structure is insubstantial, abstract, unitary and initiates its own causes internally, it is not physical and cannot be perceived by the human percept-system sensibly; it is known intelligibly, by what Plato called *Noesis*, which involves a certain ultimate high-order meta-abstracting.)" (pg. 128) And finally: "I... posit ontological primacy to the insubstantial abstract structure, and, moreover, I believe that it fully controls the physical spatiotemporal universe as its basis and cause." (pg. 129)

lived to see, to feel and to understand what this PKD-inspired servant of the Logos has managed to drag home from the beach, he would embrace it. This cannot be said without sounding like a madman or a jackass. I am sorry about that. As Phil Dick said, “What’s got to be gotten over is the false idea that hallucination is a *private* matter.”¹³ What is important is that the birth of this idea is now very near, has in fact already happened, and PKD showed the way. The answer is found. And this incredible genius, this gentle, long-suffering, beauty-worshipping man showed the way. When it counted he was right. All hail Philip K. Dick.

¹³Ibid., pg. 17.