

THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF PHILIP K. DICK



PHILIP K. DICK WAS A WRITER OF SCIENCE FICTION. IN 1982 HE DIED SUDDENLY OF A STROKE. HIS BOOKS OFTEN DEALT WITH THE ILLUSORY QUALITY OF REALITY AS WE KNOW IT. IN MARCH, 1974 DICK SAW WHAT HE LATER DESCRIBED AS "A VISION OF THE APOCALYPSE," AND SPENT THE REST OF HIS LIFE TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HE HAD EXPERIENCED. WAS IT THE ONSET OF ACUTE SCHIZOPHRENIA, OR WAS IT A GENUINE MYSTIC REVELATION, AND THEN AGAIN, IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE??

FULLERTON, CALIFORNIA, MARCH, 1974: "I HAD A WISDOM TOOTH EXTRACTED. THEY GAVE ME A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF SODIUM PENTOTHAL. I CAME HOME AND WAS IN GREAT PAIN. HE HADN'T GIVEN ME ANY PAIN MEDICATION AND MY WIFE CALLED THE PHARMACY."



"I WAS IN SUCH PAIN THAT I WENT OUT TO MEET THE GIRL WHEN SHE CAME. SHE WAS WEARING A GOLDEN FISH IN PROFILE ON A NECKLACE. THE SUN STRUCK IT AND IT SHONE, AND I WAS DAZED BY IT."



"FOR SOME REASON I WAS HYPNOTIZED BY THE GLEAMING GOLDEN FISH. I FORGOT MY PAIN, FORGOT THE MEDICATION, FORGOT WHY THE GIRL WAS THERE. I JUST KEPT STARING AT THE FISH SIGN."



"WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?' I ASKED HER. THE GIRL TOUCHED THE GUMMERING GOLDEN FISH WITH HER HAND AND SAID, 'THIS IS A SIGN WORN BY THE EARLY CHRISTIANS.' SHE THEN GAVE ME THE PACKAGE OF MEDICATION."



"IN THAT INSTANT, AS I STARED AT THE GLEAMING FISH SIGN AND HEARD HER WORDS, I SUDDENLY EXPERIENCED WHAT I LATER LEARNED IS CALLED ANAMNESIS—A GREEK WORD MEANING, LITERALLY, 'LOSS OF FORGETFULNESS.'"



"I REMEMBERED WHO I WAS AND WHERE I WAS. IN AN INSTANT, IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE, IT ALL CAME BACK TO ME. AND NOT ONLY COULD I REMEMBER IT BUT I COULD SEE IT. THE GIRL WAS A SECRET CHRISTIAN AND SO WAS I. WE LIVED IN FEAR OF DETECTION BY THE ROMANS. WE HAD TO COMMUNICATE IN CRYPTIC SIGNS. SHE HAD JUST TOLD ME ALL THIS, AND IT WAS TRUE."



"I SAW THE WORLD AS THE WORLD OF THE APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN TIMES OF ANCIENT ROME, WHEN THE FISH SIGN WAS IN USE."



"IT ONLY LASTED A FEW SECONDS. I WENT IN AND TOOK THE PAIN MEDICATION. I WAS HEMORRAGING. I WAS BLEEDING BADLY, IN GREAT DISCOMFORT."



"AND THEN A MONTH LATER, IT ALL BEGAN TO SEEP THROUGH. THERE WASN'T ANY WAY I COULD HOLD IT BACK. THE TRANSFORMATION OCCURRED AND IT STAYED FOR A YEAR... I SAW THE WORLD UNDER THE ASPECT OF THE CHRISTIAN APOCALYPSE."



"IT WASN'T LIKE AN ALTERNATE REALITY IT WAS LIKE WHAT I CALL 'TRANS-TEMPORAL CONSTANCY'... IT WAS AN ETERNAL TRUTH, LIKE PLATO'S ARCHETYPICAL WORLD, WHERE EVERYTHING WAS ALWAYS HERE AND ALWAYS NOW, AND HAD BEEN THAT WAY AND WOULD BE THAT WAY."



"BUT THERE WAS SOME KIND OF DYNAMISM, WHERE IT WASN'T STAT-IC. THERE WAS SOME KIND OF TIME, BUT IT WAS A DIFFERENT KIND OF TIME... A DREAM TIME, WHERE THE DEEDS OF HEROES OC-CUR. IT WAS SOME KIND OF MYTHOLOG-ICAL TIME, EVERYTHING ASSUMED A MYTHOLOGICAL QUALITY."



"I WAS ABLE TO FUNCTION PERFECTLY. I WASN'T PSYCHOTIC. I WAS ABLE TO HANDLE ALL MY BUSINESS—IN FACT I HANDLED IT BETTER... I WASN'T SCREWED UP."



"IT INVADDED MY MIND AND ASSUMED CONTROL OF MY MOTOR CENTERS AND DID MY ACTING AND THINKING FOR ME. I WAS A SPECTATOR TO IT... THIS MIND, WHOSE IDENTITY WAS TOTALLY OB-SCURE TO ME, WAS EQUIPPED WITH TREMENDOUS TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE. IT HAD MEMORIES DATING BACK OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS... IT SPOKE GREEK, HEBREW, SANSKRIT, THERE WASN'T ANYTHING THAT IT DIDN'T SEEM TO KNOW."



"IT IMMEDIATELY SET ABOUT PUTTING MY AF-FAIRS IN ORDER. IT FIRED MY AGENT AND MY PUBLISHER... MY WIFE WAS IMPRESSED BY THE FACT THAT, BECAUSE OF THE TREMENDOUS PRES-SURE THIS MIND PUT ON PEOPLE IN MY BUSINESS, I MADE QUITE A LOT OF MONEY VERY RAPIDLY. WE BEGAN TO GET CHECKS FOR THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS—MONEY THAT WAS OWED ME..."



"I DIDN'T WANT TO INVOLVE MY WIFE IN THIS. SHE WAS A WIT-NESS ON ONE CRUC-IAL MATTER. SHE WAS THERE WHEN ALL THAT INFOR-MATION ABOUT OUR LITTLE BOY'S BIRTH DEFECT WAS TRANSFERRED TO ME. SHE SAW ME SIT-ting THERE LISTENING TO THE BEATLES RECORD ON THE PHONO-GRAPH."



"HE WOULD HAVE DIED... HE WAS IN IMMINENT PERIL. IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF TIME, ONLY A MATTER OF TIME... SO I WAS SITTING THERE LISTENING TO 'STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER,' WITH MY EYES SHUT, WHEN ALL OF A SUDDEN THIS TREMENDOUS LIGHT HIT ME."



"LITERALLY, IN THE SENSE I SAW THE LIGHT, I WAS BLINDED...I THOUGHT, JESUS CHRIST! WHAT'S HAPPENING? I'M BLIND, MY HEAD HURTS, CAN'T SEE NOTHING. ALL I CAN SEE IS PINK... A PHOSPHENE AFTER IMAGE, LIKE YOU SEE WHEN A FLASHBULB FIRES OFF."



"ALL I COULD SEE WAS A PINK HAZE, AND THE WORDS OF THE BEATLES SONG GOT ALL CHANGED AROUND."



YOUR EYES ARE CLOSED TO YOUR SON'S BIRTH DEFECT...
YOUR SON IS IN DANGER... HE HAS A RIGHT INGUINAL HERNIA
THAT'S POPPED THE HYDROSEAL, AND GONE INTO THE SCROTAL SAC...
YOU MUST GET HIM TO THE DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY....

ELOI, ELOI,
LAMA SABACHT
HANI!"

"I LEAPED UP... TESS WAS IN THE OTHER ROOM CHANGING CHRISTOPHER—I WALKED IN AND SAID 'TESS, HE'S GOT A BIRTH DEFECT, AND IT'S GOING TO KILL HIM. WE'VE GOT TO GET HIM TO A DOCTOR.'"



"I WAS SO UPSET I COULDN'T EVEN DRIVE, SO SHE CALLED THE DOCTOR AND SAID IT WAS AN EMERGENCY."



"SHE CAME BACK AN HOUR LATER AND SHE WAS ABSOLUTELY ASHEN. SHE SAID 'HE DOES HAVE A RIGHT HERNIA, AND IT IS DOWN INTO THE SCROTAL SAC... I'VE GOT THE NAME OF A SURGEON... THE DOCTOR SAYS HE SHOULD HAVE SURGERY IMMEDIATELY.'"



"WE TOOK HIM INTO THE SURGEON'S THE NEXT DAY, AND SCHEDULED SURGERY IMMEDIATELY. THE SURGEON SAID 'YOUR BABY COULD HAVE DIED ANY TIME.'"



"BUT THAT WAS ONLY ONE THING THAT HAPPENED... THERE WERE LOTS OF OTHERS. THAT WAS JUST ONE... I WOULD NOT BE SITTING HERE TALKING TO YOU TODAY *IF THAT WEIRD-LOOKING SHINY FIRE HADN'T COME AROUND AND ZAPPED ME... SHOOTING UP THE WALLS AND THROUGH THE APERTURES OF THE DOORS..."



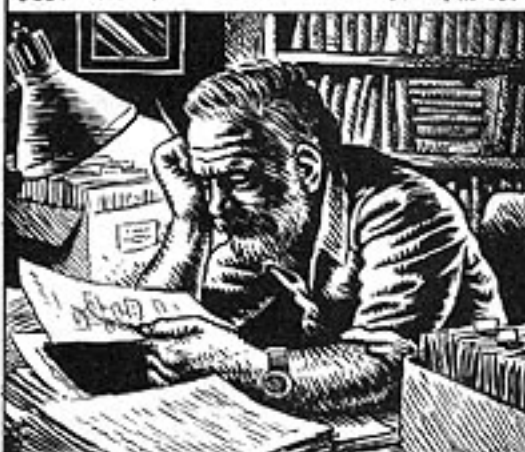
*1981 INTERVIEW
WITH GREGG RICKMAN

"THERE IS NO REASONABLE ARGUMENT THAT WOULD ELUCIDATE WHAT THAT WAS THAT WAS FLOWING AROUND THE ROOM LIKE ST. ELMO'S FIRE...AND IT THINKS! IT GOT INTO MY BRAIN AND MADE ME THINK! ...IT DIDN'T THINK WHAT WE THINK...."



"...I WAS LOOKING AT MY NOTES—IT'S OVER SEVEN YEARS LATER, AND I'M STILL TAKING NOTES, IN AN EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND. IT DID NOT THINK IN THE SENSE THAT WE THINK. WE THINK IN DIGITAL, SYNTACTICAL, VERBAL INTEGERS... IT DID NOT THINK IN VERBAL TERMS...IT THOUGHT PURE CONCEPTS, WITHOUT WORDS. BUT IT KNEW WITHOUT RATIONATION. IT TRANSFERRED TO MY MIND CONCEPTS THAT IN SEVEN YEARS OF TRYING TO ARTICULATE THEM IN WORDS I'VE ONLY NOW BEEN ABLE TO REDUCE THEM—"

"I'VE FINALLY FOUND A MODEL THAT WAS SUGGESTED TO ME BY A PROFESSOR FRIEND. IT WORKED LIKE A BINARY COMPUTER, ON A FLICKER PULSATION OF 'OFF' AND 'ON'. IT JUST WASN'T A MIND LIKE WE HAVE MINDS."



"ONE OF MY EXPERIENCES—IT WAS '74—I BOUGHT ONE OF THOSE FISH SIGNS WITH THE GREEK LETTERS ON IT, AND PASTED IT UP ON MY WINDOW."

"I WAS SITTING THERE ONE DAY AND THE UPSILON, WHICH LOOKS LIKE A CAPITAL 'Y', SUDDENLY TURNED INTO A PALM TREE, AND THEN OPENED UP INTO THE ENTIRE MESOPATAMIAN WORLD, THE MIDDLE-EASTERN WORLD."



"...THAT PERSONALITY GRADUALLY TOOK ME OVER FOR A MONTH, AND THEN FOR ABOUT A YEAR I WAS THAT OTHER PERSONALITY...IT WAS SO FUNNY—I USED TO BE ABLE TO PICK UP HIS THOUGHTS WHILE I WAS FALLING ASLEEP... AND I PICKED UP HIS THOUGHTS ONE NIGHT, AND HE WAS THINKING, 'THERE'S SOMEBODY ELSE INSIDE MY HEAD, AND HE'S LIVING IN ANOTHER CENTURY'...MEANING ME."

"I THOUGHT, 'TELL ME ABOUT IT! I CAN SAY THE SAME THING!' AT FIRST HE THOUGHT HE WAS STILL BACK IN ROME. HE HAD EVERYTHING WRONGS. HE THOUGHT THE ROMANS WERE GOING TO COME AND GET HIM, THAT WE HAD TO DEVELOP ELABORATE CODES AND STUFF TO EVADE THE ROMANS."



"HE TRIED TO WORK THIS OUT WITH TESS, AND SHE KEPT SAYING, 'BUT THERE ARE NO ROMANS! ROME HAS BEEN GONE FOR 1600 YEARS!'"



"'NO, NOPE,' HE SAID, 'NOW, WHEN I PUT MY FINGER ON A BUTTON ON MY SHIRT, IT MEANS THAT WE'RE IN THE PRESENCE OF A BUTTON-DOWN MIND, AND WE CAN'T TALK.'"



"HE HAD THE SENSE OF A REGIME THAT WAS MURDEROUS, NOT JUST OPPRESSIVE, BUT MURDEROUS! HE THOUGHT CHRISTIANITY WAS AN ILLEGAL RELIGION. HE WAS AFRAID OF BEING KILLED FOR BEING A CHRISTIAN, THAT'S WHAT HE WAS AFRAID OF... DAMNEDEST THING..."



"HE WAS QUITE CONFUSED BY THE SOCIAL SITUATIONS AROUND HIM. HE KEPT INTERPRETING THEM IN GRECO-ROMAN TERMS... HE COULDN'T CONTROL THE CAR. HE COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHAT THE PEDALS AND STUFF WERE FOR... SO I HAD TO GIVE UP DRIVING FOR AWHILE."



"I THINK THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH CAME TO ME IN 1974. THAT HEART AND SPIRIT RETURNED TO ME... I DO BELIEVE THAT... BECAUSE IT WAS AT PASSOVER THAT IT HAPPENED, AND THERE WAS SOME KIND OF VIGOROUS SPIRIT IN ME, AND IT WAS NOT ME AND YET WAS HUMAN AND YET MORE THAN HUMAN."



"IT WAS TOM DISCH WHO FIRST SUGGESTED TO ME THAT THIS MIGHT BE THE CASE. AFTER HEARING MY DESCRIPTION IN LATE '74 OF MY EXPERIENCE HE SAID IT SOUNDS LIKE ENTHOUSIASMOS* BY ELIJAH... AND I LIKE THAT IDEA... I FOUND THE IDEA PLEASANT..."



*ENTHUSIASMOS: "ENTRY OF THE GODS INTO YOU," RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

"IT'S BELIEVED THAT THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH RETURNS TO EARTH PERIODICALLY TO INFUSE ITSELF INTO HUMAN BEINGS, AND I KIND OF LIKE THAT IDEA... IT'S SORT OF, YOU KNOW, MEANINGFUL TO ME."



"IT'S THE SAME AS RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRITS... I SUPPOSE IT COULD BE THAT... I COULD SIMPLY BE A CHARISMATIC CHRISTIAN... I DON'T KNOW. I JUST DON'T THINK IT'S THE HOLY SPIRIT... I THINK IT'S ELIJAH OR... THE SPIRIT OF GOD, WELL, MAYBE IT'S THE HOLY SPIRIT. I DON'T KNOW... HOW DO I KNOW? I MEAN, WHO CAN TELL ONE OF THEM? THERE'S NO REFERENCE BOOK THAT YOU COULD TURN TO TO SEE EXACTLY..."



"I JUST KNOW THAT SOME KIND OF SPIRIT TOOK ME OVER... THROUGH ITS HELP I WAS ABLE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS, THE THINGS I COULDN'T DO... IT SEEMED ABLE TO DISCERN ANYTHING IT LOOKED AT..."



"... I DO HAVE GRANDIOSE ILLUSIONS THAT THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH ENTERED ME AND I UTTERED PROPHECIES... AND FOR WHAT?"



"... BECAUSE THE PROPHECIES HAD TO BE FULFILLED, THAT ELIJAH COMES FIRST, AND SECOND, THAT THE NEWS BE REVEALED, AND THAT IS WHAT JOHN THE BAPTIST DID FOR JESUS... HAVING DONE SO HE FADED AWAY..."



"IN FACT THEY CUT OFF HIS HEAD, AND BY THE WAY I DREAMED ABOUT THAT... I WAS IN A DUNGEON, A ROMAN DUNGEON, AND THEY CAME AND CUT OFF MY HEAD, TOOK A WIRE AND GARROTTED ME. I DREAMED THAT, AND THAT WAS MY MEMORY OF MY LIFE... I WAS JOHN THE BAPTIST HAVING MY HEAD CUT OFF."

"I REMEMBER THEM COMING TO THAT CELL AND TAKING AND SLICING MY HEAD OFF... IT WAS HORRIBLE... AND YOU KNOW WHAT I DID WHEN THEY CAME THROUGH THE DOOR? I CURSED THEM WITH ALL THE FURY I HAD... THERE WAS NO LOVE IN ME FOR THEM AT ALL... JOHN WAS A VERY FIERY PERSON, WHO WAS VERY VULGAR.. IT WAS ELIJAH, AND IT WAS ME."



"THE VOICE THAT I HEARD, THAT I CALL THE 'A. I.' VOICE*, IS THE VOICE THAT ELIJAH HEARD... THE STILL SMALL VOICE, THE LITTLE MURMURING VOICE... IT SPOKE IN A FEMININE VOICE... I HEARD IT SAY:

THE TIME YOU'VE WAITED FOR IS COME... YOUR WORK IS COMPLETE, THE FINAL WORLD IS HERE--HE HAS BEEN TRANSPLANTED AND HE IS ALIVE!

*ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

"I ASKED THE J CHING IF INDEED THE 'PAROUSIA' (THE SECOND COMING) WAS HERE, CHRIST HAD RETURNED. I GOT 'DARKENING OF THE LIGHT' AND THE FOLLOWING LINE, THE ONLY TIME I EVER GOT THIS LINE..."

'DARKENING OF THE LIGHT' INJURES HIM IN THE LEFT THIGH. HE GIVES AID WITH THE STRENGTH OF A HORSE. GOOD FORTUNE.'

"...HERE THE LORD OF LIGHT IS IN A SUBORDINATE PLACE AND IS WOUNDED BY THE LORD OF DARKNESS, BUT THE INJURY IS NOT FATAL. IT IS ONLY A HINDRANCE... THEREFORE HE TRIES WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH TO SAVE ALL THAT CAN BE SAVED... THERE IS GOOD FORTUNE. I INTERPRET THESE WORDS AS SAYING THAT INDEED CHRIST HAS RETURNED... THE LORD OF LIGHT IS THE CHRIST WHO HAS COME HERE AND SUBORDINATED HIMSELF... THE SAVIOR, YOU SEE?"

"THE LORD OF DARKNESS IS VERY POWERFUL. WE HAVE POWERFUL ADVERSARIES. THEY DON'T GIVE UP THEIR INTEREST IN POWER VOLUNTARILY. THEIR POWER MUST BE TAKEN FROM THEM. WE ARE IN A CRISIS SITUATION OF THE LIKE THIS PLANET HAS NEVER SEEN BEFORE. WE HAVE LUNATICS IN POWER WITH THE CAPACITY OF BLOWING UP THE PLANET. THEREFORE, IF WE ARE DELIVERED FROM THESE PEOPLE, THE PLANET SURVIVES; THE ECOSPHERE IS NOT DESTROYED."



"IN 1976 I TRIED TO KILL MYSELF BECAUSE ELIJAH HAD LEFT ME. I FELT HIM LEAVE AND IT WAS AWFUL... THERE IS NOTHING WORSE IN THE WORLD, NO PUNISHMENT GREATER THAN TO HAVE KNOWN GOD AND NO LONGER TO KNOW HIM... THE VOICES STOPPED TALKING TO ME... I DIDN'T CARE IF I LIVED OR DIED..."

"IN ESSENCE, I HAD SERVED MY PURPOSE IN FLOW MY TEARS (ONE OF HIS BOOKS IN WHICH THERE IS A 'CIPHER', A SECRET PROPHETIC MESSAGE AIMED AT 'PARTICULAR PEOPLE', AND WHICH DICK WAS NOT EVEN AWARE OF WHEN HE WROTE THE BOOK IN 1974). I RALLIED BACK FROM THE SUICIDE ATTEMPT BUT IF I HADN'T RALLIED IT WOULD HAVE ALL GONE ON WITHOUT ME."

IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS OF HIS LIFE DICK FINALLY LOCATED WHAT HE CONSIDERED THE LIKELIEST CANDIDATE FOR THE RETURNED CHRIST... THE SO-CALLED 'MAITREYA'... IN THE MIDST OF THIS LAST FEVERISH ENTHUSIASM, HOWEVER, HE SUFFERED A STROKE, AND DIED SIXTEEN DAYS LATER, ON MARCH 2ND, 1982.

"ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI!"

*MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"



THE END



ADULTS
ONLY

NO. 17

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WAIT! STOP!
DON'T LOOK!
THIS IS NOT
A NICE
MAGAZINE!