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VALIS: A QUINTESENTIALLY PHILDICKIAN NOVEL

ABSTRACT. The journeys of the protagonist of Philip K. Dick's novel *Valis* across different personalities, points in time, and realities become a penetrating exploration of the very fabric of the real through his heteromorphic cosmogony that can serve as a paradigm to understanding Dick's literary-philosophical matrix. Whether a diagnosis or a profound insight into other realities, both insanity and schizophrenia in *Valis* develop into a means to diagnose the nature of reality by projecting the microcosm of an individual to the macrocosm of the entire universe and vice versa. Dick's earlier major works of fiction are reflected in *Valis* as is *Valis* reflected in them in a way that shows the line between insanity and reason, and reality and hallucinations, is not only thin but often non-existent. Unlike many who consider themselves normal, Dick never recoiled from an opportunity to embark on an exploration of other realities, both in life and in his fiction, as is evident from the close and intimate connections among them.

KEYWORDS: science fiction; multiverse; Philip K. Dick; reality; perception; insanity; schizophrenia.

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The novel *Valis* (1981) greatly contributes to understanding Philip K. Dick's literary-philosophical matrix and can be regarded as key to the essential, yet thorny, Phildickian dilemmas. It exemplifies deep and complex ties among a variety of his essayistic and fictional pieces of writing and sublimates them into a logical whole – logical to the extent that the word logic can be applied to Dick's life and his fiction.

The cryptic title *Valis* is the abbreviation for Vast Active Living Intelligence System, Dick's gnostic notion of a divine existence and presence he experienced in a number of visions, dreams, voices and sensations that he believed he was exposed to in February and March of 1974. He thought that these sensations and experiences, also known as 2-3-74, were manifestations of the contact with a non-terrestrial entity of divine origin that transferred an immense quantity of information to his mind. This idea echoes through his long, complex and meandering compilation of diary entries known as *The Exegesis*, as well as through *Valis*, its condensed and more accessible version shaped into a narrative text.

Valis can be regarded as a science fiction novel; however, not only do the plethora of autobiographical elements make it a unique example of Dick's fiction but also a highly atypical representative of the genre. *Valis* requires the reader's willingness to struggle through the maze of the protagonist's mental derangement and multiple personalities, as well as to follow him to domains out of the known space-time continuum, and to those domains of the mind believing to be touched by the divine.

Although the crown of Dick's oeuvre, the novel fails to attract considerable readers' and scholarly attention. An apparent reason for this can be found in the depth of fissure that it breaks between the genre fiction and the so-called serious literature. On the one hand, theological eclecticism combined with autobiographical elements in the form of visions, voices, dreams, insights and broodings of the protagonist(s) of *Valis* shift the horizon of expectation almost uncomfortably far beyond the perimeter of the science fiction genre – far further than Dick's best-known novels, such as *Flow My Tears*, *the Policeman Said*, *Ubik*, *The Man in the High Castle* or *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. Although the novels of his final trilogy “are among the best of his fiction”, as noticed by Hayles (1999, p. 189); the critics “privilege Dick's novels from the 1960s over his late ‘theological’ writings”, concludes Enns, particularly in the context of postmodern technoculture theories. Enns analyses the connections between me-

dia technologies and altered states of consciousness in Dick's fiction to show that there is "a direct continuity between his early work and his late theological writings"; however, this continuity is not transparently obvious (Enns, 2006, p. 68–69). Dick's employment of post-modernist strategies to textualize his ideas and theories makes the narrative of *Valis* much denser than it is in all his previous works, which is why the readers of genre fiction who expect the novel to fulfil the average fan's expectations may find it too complex and demanding. On the other hand, the presence of the typical genre tropes in combination with the genre "burden" imposed with Dick's previous works in which he often demonstrates literary hastiness and stylistic negligence as a consequence of writing for a living have long kept *Valis* on the margins of critical attention.

In addition to the quotes from *A Scanner Darkly*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and *The Man in the High Castle*, and details and episodes that create links with these and Dick's other novels, *Valis* textualizes Dick's theories, philosophy and deliberations more extensively and more successfully than any of his previous works. As a result, the novel proves to be unavoidable in interpretation, analysis and understanding of Dick's major works and the multiverse(s) created therein. It is possible to find relations even to his early fiction. DiTommaso notes that the works written before *The Man in the High Castle*, which is a significant early phase "both in the development of Dick's personal cosmology and in his use of dualistic motifs", discuss "the most primitive instances of the components of dualistic cosmogonies therein"; however, when compared with his later novels, "the philosophical discussion in [his] early fiction is highly unpolished and not always well-integrated" (DiTommaso, 2001, pp. 49–50).²

SPLIT REALITIES AND PERSONALITIES

In Dick's fiction the multiplicity of realities on a macroscopic level is often mirrored on the microscopic i.e. on a personal level as an identity crises, most often in the form of the dilemma whether someone is a human or an android, as in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* or

² DiTommaso (2001, p. 50) refuses "to resort to Dick's later writings or comments (especially those in the published portions of the "Exegesis") to interpret or clarify the material present in his earlier novels" because Dick had a tendency to rewrite and reinterpret his own words and theories.

in the form of split personalities. In *A Scanner Darkly*, in which Bob Arctor is an alias of an undercover police detective Fred, the dissociation is based on the ideas expressed in “The Other Side of the Brain: An Oppositional Mind” by Joseph E. Bogen and “The Split Brain in Man” by Michael S. Gazzaniga.

All the evidence indicates that separation of the hemispheres creates two independent spheres of consciousness within a single cranium, that is to say, within a single organism. This conclusion is disturbing to some people who view consciousness as an indivisible property of the human brain. (Dick, 2011, p. 122)

The quoted Gazzaniga’s words in *A Scanner Darkly* hold a clue about *Valis*, in which the split goes beyond the limits of one person, one time, one place, and one reality. The two novels have much more in common than the protagonists with the history of consuming narcotics and the time spent in a mental institution. Phil/ Horselover’s split personality and Fred/ Arctor’s split-brain disconnection induced with “Substance D” reflect the idea that time is not linear, that there could exist more than one reality, and that each individual could be perceiving and living in his or her own reality.

In *Valis*, one half of the narrator’s personality is Phil, the author himself, and the other is Horselover Fat, the narrator’s alter-ego whose name is derived from the author’s.

“Philip” means ‘Horselover’ in Greek, lover of horses. “Fat” is the German translation of “Dick”. (Dick, 2001, p. 188)

Diagnostically, the split personality most likely has origins in dissociative identity disorder, but as a cognitive and a narrative mechanism it serves to maintain the necessary distance from the narrator’s and the author’s consciousness – to process the information about the world around and present them in a more reliable way. Horselover says:

I am Horselover Fat, and I am writing this in the third person to gain much-needed objectivity. (Dick, 2001, p. 11)

As expected, the split does not provide the “much-needed objectivity” and a once institutionalized narrator and (ab)user of psychoactive substances fails to establish himself and his alter-ego as reliable sources of information and its evaluators. And yet, he is *the source* of relevant information, supplied with such an immense quantity of it that no single mind is capable of processing it all.

Frequent and often smooth transitions from one identity to another – from Phil to Horselover and vice versa – provide access to two aspects of one mind or even two minds. The multiplicity of shifting and unstable realities perceived by these two minds, or halves of one mind, often intertwined, looped and split in the course of the same sentence, in combination with those of the observers – i.e. friends who are equally unreliable and unsound – becomes more complex when Thomas from Ancient Rome is introduced. Similar dissociation happens in *A Scanner Darkly* with the appearance of Bruce, a patient on rehab, but in *Valis* the dissociation goes on.

Thomas remembered – if that is the word – other selves, one in Minoan Crete, which is from 3000 B.C.E. to 1100 B.C.E., a long, long time ago. Thomas even remembered a self before that: one which had come to this planet from the stars. (Dick, 2001, p. 124)

Phil/ Horselover who remembers Thomas, who remembers other selves is a reflection of Dick's realities that bear a likeness to a set of Chinese boxes.

Horselover's conclusion that Samael "was blind, which is to say, occluded" (Dick, 2001, p. 73), the "secrecy theme" in Mark and Matthew, and the "idea that Christ veiled his teachings in parable form so that the multitude – that is, the many outsiders – would not understand him and so would not be saved" (Dick, 2001, p. 84), all point to an obscure state in which all is possibly an illusion, like a reflection in the mirror that cannot be distinguished from the original. These ideas and dilemmas directly allude to *A Scanner Darkly* whose title was inspired with the First Epistle to the Corinthians (Dick 1995c, p. 208; Kucukalic 2009, p. 118):

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. (*1 Corinthians 13:12*)

Personality split on a microcosmic level is a reflection of the reality split on the macroscopic level – one dissociation mirrors the other. When Ancient Rome superimposes over California 1974 the boundaries between separated personalities, between two times and between the mind and the universe also dissolve. In spite of all the information conveyed during 2-3-74, Horselover remains occluded and descends deeper into the vicious circle of revelations in which he completely loses touch with the known reality. Since he never fully penetrates to the core of the newly discovered one, he

constantly rewrites his theories and conclusions and (re)creates new versions of truth.

The mutual mirroring of the identity crisis – whether manifested as androidization³ or split personality – and multiplicity of realities, invites the readers to (re)consider the reliability of their own perception of the world they live in. On the one hand, such an approach allows the reader to consider the textualization of the writer's ideas and theories from a more personal perspective, while on the other hand it provides a wider context to interpret the text within the perimeter of Dick's "common" themes and motives that form an integral part of his literary and theoretical matrix.

IDENTITY, AUTHENTICITY, AND REALITY

Valis is an attempt to find answers to the questions of identity, authenticity and reality. As in other Dick's works, each new discovery – narrator's, reader's, and author's, who is here more obvious than in any of his works of fiction – reveals new layers of realities, personalities and, consequently, new dilemmas. If "Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away" as stated in Dick's essay "How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later" (Dick, 1995e, p. 261) and repeated verbatim in *Valis* (Dick, 2001, p. 87) then those who embark on a quest for the truth about it can rely only on faith – faith in the existence of the perfect supreme creator of the universe and all that exists, and faith in the reliability of one's own perception.

Dick's texts, fiction and essays alike, end in a chronic failure to provide final and clear answers to crucial questions and dilemmas. *Valis* is no exception, but the (pseudo)autobiographical elements combined with explicit and implicit references to Dick's earlier works offer a unique insight into a painstaking, occasionally amusing, but mostly profoundly uneasy and even excruciatingly painful process of coping with multiple layers of reality and its numerous versions.

A typical Phildickian protagonist, when unexpectedly wrenched out of the known reality, gains insights that, Dick thought, penetrate into the fabric of reality and the purpose of existence. Such insights, often considered by others to be the result of schizophrenia

³ An android, according to Dick, is not only a technological replica of a human being but also a human who is controlled.

or psychotic hallucinations, according to Dick, are experienced due to an exceedingly wide perception and sensitivity that average people (those considered to be, or those who consider themselves to be mentally sound) do not possess. When someone's mental and sensory perception of the world reaches beyond socially acceptable and generally established borders of reality, that person is believed to hallucinate. However, according to Dick, such an individual actually perceives reality other people do not have access to because they do not share the same perceptive sensations. As a consequence, they do not share the same reality.

In the light of this, the idea of hallucinating takes on a very different character; hallucinations, whether induced by psychosis, hypnosis, drugs, toxins, etc., may be merely quantitatively different from what we see, not qualitatively so. (Dick, 1995a, p. 172).

More precisely, such individuals perceive too much information. This excess information reaches parts of the brain responsible for cognitive processes, which is why they start perceiving the world differently, to such an extent that they are unable to share their experiences with other people.

Maybe each human being lives in a unique world, a private world, a world different from those inhabited and experienced by all other humans. And that led me to wonder, If reality differs from person to person, can we speak of reality singular, or shouldn't we really be talking about plural realities? And if there are plural realities, are some more true (more real) than others? What about the world of a schizophrenic? Maybe it's as real as our world. Maybe we cannot say that we are in touch with reality and he is not, but should instead say, His reality is so different from ours that he can't explain his to us, and we can't explain ours to him. (Dick, 1995e, p. 261)

Dick attempted to overcome this inability and explain the perception of different realities in his works, and most openly and most directly in *Valis*, but instead of the final explanation and resolution of the dilemmas that such perception creates, the reader is faced with the narrator's chronic frustration over his inability to resolve them, which stems from the author's frustration over his inability to present such a vast quantity of information in the way that would be most suitable to understand it – all of it simultaneously. Instead, there are parts of it inserted in the text that serve as guidelines: from those subtle such as St. Elmo's Fire, the "King Felix" cypher, and repetition of the sentence "The Empire never ended", to those

more obvious, such as superposition of different realities, remembrance and parallel existence of different personalities, Mini's Synchronicity Music and, most illustratively and most importantly, the film *Valis*.

The role of the film *Valis* is similar to that of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* and *The Book of Changes* in *The Man in the High Castle* – they are metatextual pointers to the existence of another reality, and the key that can be used to grasp, decode and understand it. Like *The Grasshopper* and *The Book of Changes*, the film is equally elusive and does not provide unequivocal evidence that those who see the clues in it are not insane and that the other world that they try to grasp through it is not simply a figment of their imagination.

The proposal to see the film one more time but in a different way – frame by frame – is put forward with the aim to decode reality by altering the mode of perception. In his essay “Schizophrenia & *The Book of Changes*” Dick compared the perception of a schizophrenic person with the film tape – unlike the so-called “normal” people who perceive time as linear, or frame by frame, schizophrenics see everything simultaneously, all frames at the same time; they perceive them all as *now*. This experience Dick called synchronicity. Such perception of perpetual now is, according to Dick, typical not only of schizophrenics but also of people under the influence of psychoactive substances such as LSD (Dick, 1995b, p. 176).

In “The Electric Ant” the question is posed what it would have been like if the “TV set projected all channels onto the cathode ray screen *at the same time*? Could we have distinguished anything in the mixture?” Poole’s answer is that “a quasi-organic brain might” (Dick, 2002, p. 389). As Hayles noted, in Dick’s fictions, “androids are associated with unstable boundaries between self and world” (Hayles, 1999, p. 160). There is a clear connection between androidization and schizophrenia in his fiction, by dehumanizing humans by schizophrenia, or by humanizing androids. The two processes sometimes even take the form of inverted parallelism: while humans get more dehumanized, the androids get more humanized, as in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Enns notices that there is also a clear connection between temporal distortions caused by drugs and schizophrenia – the former can cause the latter, as in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (Enns, 2006, p. 78). However, the causality is not clear in Dick’s fiction because schizophrenia and drugs produce the same effects on the human mind by opening it for the perception of perpetual now.

The proposal to watch the film frame by frame is a call to try and perceive reality the way non-schizophrenics and people who are not under the influence of mind-altering substances do. The narrator and his friends are not likely to succeed in this attempt because a mind that is once altered stays altered – Dick’s protagonists, once they lose touch with the known reality, can never go back to it. Not in *Flow My Tears* in which Jason Taverner only seemingly returns to the same reality; not in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* in which those who consume Chew-Z are trapped in Eldritch’s hallucination; not in *Valis* in which Horselover searches for the answers about the reasons for and consequences of the sensations known as 2-3-74.

First eight hours of graphic information is fired at you from sources unknown, taking the form of lurid phosphene activity in eighty colors arranged like modern abstract paintings; then you dream about three-eyed people in glass bubbles and electronic gear; then your apartment fills up with St. Elmo's Fire plasmatic energy which appears to be alive and to think; your animals die; you are overcome by a different personality who thinks in Greek; you dream about Russians; and finally you get a couple of Soviet letters within a three-day period – which you were told were coming. But the total impression isn't bad because some of the information saves your son's life. Oh yes; one more thing: Fat found himself seeing ancient Rome superimposed over California 1974. Well, I'll say this: Fat's encounter may not have been with God, but it certainly was with *something*. (Dick, 2001, pp. 119–120)

This *something*, an indeterminate conglomerate of visions, sensations and knowledge that Phil/ Horselover wants to grasp and understand remains elusive in spite of all the efforts invested in numerous attempts to decipher it in his *Exegesis* and *Valis*. He insists that this *something*, which over time grows into an immense rhizomic mindscape known as 2-3-74, is triggered with the injection of Sodium Pentothal administered to remove his impacted wisdom tooth. This substance, also known as the truth serum, is yet another mechanism expected to “gain much-needed objectivity”. However, it is equally unsuccessful and unreliable as is the creation of the narrator’s alter-ego.

God, or *something*, fires a ray of light with an unimaginable quantity of information into Horselover. After a temporary blindness and a severe headache that lasted for several days, he remains in the grip of an obsession with a haunting colour that remains a potent symbol of the indescribability of 2-3-74 – it can be “seen” but never

fully and truly explained to anyone. The colour, the fish sign used by the early Christians, St. Sophia, “who was Christ; as the Head Apollo; as the Buddha or Siddhartha” (Dick, 2001, p. 138), and numerous historical, philosophical, mystical, musical and other clues trigger recollection of intrinsic knowledge accumulated in all the personalities that remember one another through the loss of amnesia. Horseslover, however, remains uncertain whether it is completely lost and he wavers between insanity and gnosis, which gradually interlace.

Phil interprets Horseslover’s explanation for the spectre of light as a nervous breakdown because, as he states, those who suffer it often commit to detailed research, of which the entries and interpretations collected in the *Tractates Cryptica Scriptura* are the most illustrative example. Horseslover’s diary containing numbered entries with interpretations, explanations and theories, is considered by Phil to be an act of a deranged person.

Horseslover tries to overcome the limits of human experience imposed by the erroneous perception of time as linear and the entire wrong idea of causality. Earlier in his essays, Dick explained the illusion of perception with the concept of the true or orthogonal time, which he compared with the LP inscribed with everything that happened, is happening and will happen. Although the grooves of events do not disappear after the stylus tracks them on the LP of time, only schizophrenics and people under the influence of mind-altering substances can “see” them owing to ontological slips that happen for unknown reasons. The slips are erased from the minds of people and substituted with false memories, but some individuals keep the memories of earlier versions of reality. Like Horseslover, those who *remember* are trapped in this knowledge that they cannot communicate to others for several reasons. Firstly, they cannot explain to others what they perceive, all frames at the same time, so they are believed to be insane. Secondly, the quantity and complexity of information revealed as a consequence of the insight is too much for a human mind to process and present to others in a way they would accept and understand. Thirdly, the decoding of one piece of information leads to new insights into the fabric of reality that reveal that all is possibly yet another illusion that needs to be dispelled.

I, in my stories and novels, often write about counterfeit worlds, semi-real worlds, as well as deranged private worlds inhabited, often, by just one person, while, meantime, the other characters either remain in their own worlds throughout or are somehow drawn into one

of the peculiar ones. This theme occurs in the corpus of my twenty-seven years of writing. At no time did I have a theoretical or conscious explanation for my preoccupation with these pluriform pseudoworlds, but now I think I understand. What I was sensing was the manifold of partially actualized realities lying tangent to what evidently is the most actualized one, the one that the majority of us, by *consensus gentium* [general consent], agree on. (Dick, 1995d, p. 240)

The hallucinatory realities in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and the virtual-like religious experience in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* are examples of consensus reality, but all of them are pseudoworlds, or “partially actualized realities”. The only *consensus gentium* that is accomplished in *Valis* is that among the split personalities, who remember one another through time, and their friends who are similarly unreliable, likely to be insane, and possibly protagonist’s other identities or dissociated personalities.

Newly discovered realities could be simply pseudoworlds Horselover thinks he understands for a brief time, before slipping into another revelatory uncertainty. It is a process Dick himself went through, a process that is exceptionally complex, wonderfully imaginative, and excruciatingly and almost unbearably painful, and a one that required the creation of an entirely new cosmogony, necessary because no individual existing set of beliefs is sufficient to understand how everything is woven in the fabric of reality.

Instead of taking him out of a quandary, Horselover’s (and Dick’s) theological eclecticism has complicated his attempts to connect the loose ends. Numerous references to the Bible, Christ and Christianity, Gnosticism, Buddhism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Greek pantheism, and other beliefs and mythologies, and their ideas, postulates, elements and principles, are all fused into a personal, often equivocal building material for Horselover’s (and Dick’s) own cosmogony.

And yet Horselover/ Phil never loses faith in Christ but keeps exploring its connections with his speculations about Zebra, three-eyed alien telepaths and their relations with the Russians, St. Elmo’s Fire-like light and radiation, xenoglossia, and particularly with the vision experienced when the girl with the fish sign of the early Christians delivers him painkillers, when Ancient Rome superimposes over California 1974. The two realities overlap like the old and the new lift or like the old and newer versions of Archer’s drugstore in *Ubik*. All these revelations come from the memories inscribed in the DNA, which are unavailable to people due to an inherent error, but which Horselover/Phil gains access to. When Horse-

lover remembers Thomas, he realizes that people are not individuals but entities separated in a universe, the “universe is information and we are stationary in it, not three-dimensional and not in space or time. The information fed to us we hypostatize into the phenomenal world” (Dick, 2001, p. 123).

The ideas that the universe is a hologram, a construct, that each individual perceives reality differently or a different reality, that DNA is a memory structure similar to a diversified computer system whose meanings collected for thousands of years remain inaccessible due to an error, and other ideas too numerous to be listed in one paragraph, lead to the conclusion that this heteromorphic cosmogony was not only an attempt to devise a key to understanding the multiverse of realities, but also a key to creating them.

There are numerous details and episodes that connect *Valis* with Dick's previously written works of fiction – the most prominent being the use of narcotics, authentic artefacts, superimposed realities, and the idea that an uglier version of reality will be replaced with a better one – all pointing to the same conclusion that there is more than one reality and that the process of substituting one with another is rather dynamic, yet imperceptible.

The ceramic pot Oh Ho made by Horselover's girlfriend Stephanie, through who “Fat made his way eventually to God” (Dick, 2001, p. 20) plays an important role in the novel *Deus Irae*. Knowing that in 1964 Horselover went back and forth through time and out of time, that he spoke in Latin and that he believed *Dies Irae*, the Day of Wrath, came after he had taken a considerable dose of LSD-25 also points to this novel. In *The Man in the High Castle*, Frank Frink's authentic jewellery triggers Mr. Tagomi's experience. A piece of authentic hand-made pottery also takes on a central role in *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* when it initiates the process of returning the protagonist to his initial reality. The pot in which “slumbered God... slumbered in the pot for a long time” becomes the metaphor of the search for truth (Dick, 2001, p. 21). Once the authentic pot appears in the novel, the illusion of the drug-altered reality starts dispelling.

Another link between *Valis* and *Flow My Tears* is the premise about the USA that turned into a police state in a different reality in which Richard Nixon never existed. In the novel *Valis* this version of reality is presented in the form of the eponymous film. The awareness about it comes with consumption of drugs.

Overt experimenting with narcotics, including LSD, had dire consequences on Dick's perception but it also inspired and motivated

him to become a hyper-productive author whose works incorporate numerous personal experiences. Paul Williams, an American journalist and writer observes that “Phil often describes things best before he experiences them. It’s a frightening talent when you think about it” (Williams, 1975, p. 46). Williams particularly has in mind *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* which he compares to the sensations and states caused by the influence of LSD although this novel was written several years before Dick actually tried it for the first time. The use of drugs triggers the dissolution of the known reality in *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*. In *A Scanner Darkly* everyone is on drugs and addiction to “Substance D” splits the protagonist’s personality and dissociates the two hemispheres of his brain. The same happens to the protagonist of *Valis*.

Horselover has a friend Kevin whose unhealthy obsession with a dead cat holds a clue about multiple realities – it illustrates the dilemma about the relations among their multiple layers, and exemplifies how, in spite of the awareness about them, every attempt to understand them leads to a dead end (Jakovljević, 2015, pp. 164–165). For Kevin the cat “is a symbol of everything about the universe he doesn’t understand” (Dick, 2001, p. 29). And failure to understand, being occluded, becomes the symbol of failure to come to terms with the loss, so later in the novel the narrator says that to Kevin “the cat’s death represents everything that’s wrong with the universe” (Dick, 2001, p. 226). This seemingly over exaggerated statement becomes more meaningful if related to an anecdote in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* about a woman who invites guests for dinner but the meat for it disappears while she is talking to them. They decide that her cat has eaten it because they see it licking and washing its face.

“Did it? The guests are called in; they argue about it. The steak is gone, all five pounds of it; there sits the cat, looking well-fed and cheerful. ‘Weigh the cat,’ someone says. They’ve had a few drinks; it looks like a good idea. So they go into the bathroom and weigh the cat on the scales. It reads exactly five pounds. They all perceive this reading and one guest says, ‘Okay, that’s it. There’s the steak.’ They’re satisfied that they know what happened, now; they’ve got empirical proof. Then a qualm comes to one of them and he says, puzzled, ‘But where’s the cat?’” (Dick, 2003, p. 217)

The dead cat in *Valis* and the living one in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* are parables of truth that the multitude cannot perceive and understand, while those who become aware of them can

only wonder what has happened to the real reality, if it actually exists. Like the guests confronted with the dilemma about the meat, they can never arrive at definite answers but can only see reflections in a dark mirror, one of which is the film *Valis*.

(IN)SANITY AND THE UNIVERSE

The dissolution of reality in *Ubik*, the permeation of reality in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* with Eldritch's technological stigmata, the projection of the mindscape created in a mind on drugs onto reality in *Flow My Tears*, the existence of another reality revealed through the *Book of Changes* and *Grasshopper Lies Heavy* in *The Man in the High Castle* – they all mirror the idea that mimicry can exist on the level of reality. Like Zebra that takes over the place of the universe in the process similar to transubstantiation, other realities in Dick's works of fiction take over the place of the initial one up to the point when it becomes too late for the protagonists, even if they notice the change, to do something to stop or reverse the process, or to clearly distinguish one reality from another. In *Valis* the mechanism and philosophy behind the process is made transparent by stripping the novel off of the conventional narrative and by foregrounding the attempts to understand it in the form of numbered diary entries.

The wish to decode and understand 2-3-74, to which almost every thought in the novel is related, grows into an obsessive mental hunger that eventually develops into psychosis.

Let it be said that one of the first symptoms of psychosis is that the person feels perhaps he is becoming psychotic. It is another Chinese finger-trap. You cannot think about it without becoming part of it. By thinking about madness, Horselover Fat slipped by degrees into madness. (Dick, 2001, p. 18)

Horselover seeks answers about the workings and interconnection of mind, madness and the universe in the domains in which they overlap. To Horselover, the universe is one great mind that has become deranged. In this vicious circle of ontological puzzles, there is no answer to the question about the cat's whereabouts because "someone in touch with reality is, by definition, in touch with the insane: infused by the irrational" (Dick, 2001, p. 44). Horselover grasps the Hermetic concept that the part (microcosm) reflects the whole (macrocosm) and vice versa and tries to apply it to his own mind and the universe but his effort is in vain – the faults in one occlude the

evidence concerning the revelations about the other, and he remains incapable of connecting all the segments of the acquired knowledge into logical and final conclusions.

“Everything is in pieces, all the information”, Kevin says, aware that all the pieces need to be connected. However, Horselover cannot connect them all in a meaningful way and remains trapped – he cannot watch the film frame by frame, he cannot perceive reality frame by frame, and he cannot understand the universe piece by piece, and the universe he wants to understand is damaged, split, like his personality is. The universe is insane.

“Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away” (Dick, 1995e, p. 261) but neither Horselover nor Dick ever stop believing in it. With newly discovered realities new personalities, new alter-egos, are created to have someone to believe in them. When the split between Horselover and Phil grows and there is too much information for them to process, another alter-ego, Thomas, is created. Multiple realities require multiple personalities although Horselover becomes aware too late “that it is sometimes an appropriate response to reality to go insane” (Dick, 2001, p. 10). To understand all the realities that exist, it is necessary to perceive them all as *now*, which is too much to be explained to anyone else. One has to be insane to understand the insanity of the person who perceives and understands the insanity of the universe. If “the universe and the Mind behind it which governed it are both totally irrational” (Dick, 2001, p. 69), then insanity could be the only way to understand reality.

Dick's literary-philosophical approach can be viewed as a mere fantasy of a mind damaged with drugs, or as prattling of a madman who lost touch with reality, or as a unique insight into the machinery of reality hidden from the eyes and minds of “normal” individuals who, limited with their perception, cannot fathom its complexity and depth. During his journey towards truth, the narrator in *Valis* tries to prove that none of the previous options are a matter of choice or that any one of them excludes others, but that they are all prerequisites for the quest for truth, as already demonstrated in Dick's previously written fiction.

The experiences described in *Valis* and the prevailing idea that microcosm and macrocosm are each other's reflections, that parts of truth about one found in the other can be used to try to understand them, as well as the evasive truth about the existence and nature of the universe that remains occluded, are clear pointers that

Dick's novels should be interpreted the same way. Together they create the Phildickian multiverse of truths in which he asks, faces and addresses numerous probing questions about the nature of existence, spiritual and material dimensions of existence, from the most general ones concerning macrocosm and the entire universe to the most intimate ones related to microcosm of an individual. As the crown of Dick's fictional oeuvre and its comprehensive reflection, *Valis* is probably the most important piece of the Phildickian ontological puzzle.

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МЛАДЕН М. ЈАКОВЉЕВИЋ

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ У ПРИШТИНИ СА ПРИВРЕМЕНИМ СЕДИШТЕМ
У КОСОВСКОЈ МИТРОВИЦИ, ФИЛОЗОФСКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ
КАТЕДРА ЗА ЕНГЛЕСКИ ЈЕЗИК И КЊИЖЕВНОСТ

РЕЗИМЕ

ВАЛИС: ПАРАДИГМА ФИЛДИКОВСКЕ СТВАРНОСТИ

Путовање протагонисте романа *Валис* Филипа К. Дика кроз различите личности, тачке у времену и стварности израста у свеобухватни покушај поимања себе и света креирањем хетероморфне космогоније. Било да је у питању дијагноза или увид у друге стварности, лудило и шизофренија у *Валису* постају средство дијагностиковања природе реалности пројектовањем микрокосмоса појединца на макрокосмос целокупног универзума и обрнуто. Одједи Дикових претходних кључних дела присутни су у текстуалним просторствима *Валиса* једнако колико и његови у њима, показујући тако да је линија између лудила и здравог разума, као и она између стварности и халуцинације, не само танка и прозачна него неретко и непостојећа. За разлику од оних који себе сматрају нормалнима, Дик се никада није устегао да се упусти у истраживање других стварности, како у животу тако и у свом стваралаштву, на шта блиске везе између њих јасно указују. Роман *Валис* најдиректније сажима Дикове наративне и искуствене механизме и у значајној мери доприноси разумевању његове књижевнотеоријске матрице, због чега се може сматрати кључним делом филдиковске онтолошке слагалице.

Кључне речи: научна фантастика; мултиверзум; Филип К. Дик; стварност; перцепција; лудило; шизофренија.



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