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Utilizing Fear: A Paranoiac's Approach to Dismantling a Capitalist Foundation

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Utilizing Fear: A Paranoiac's Approach to Dismantling a Capitalist Foundation

Walking to the library, I scroll through my Instagram feed as I double-tap some photos and skip past others. I try to give the people that don't get many likes on their pictures some help. My wireless earphones are hidden from view by the large hood hung over my head. I keep my head down and my eyes locked on the beautifully simplistic design of my iPhone to make the people I pass think I'm doing something of importance. A brisk wind rubs against my cheeks as I decide to open the weather app.

In the library, I see my peers sitting in front of large computer screens behind smaller laptop screens either working diligently or lounging around playing games on their phones. Others are talking with their friends about the games they're playing on their phones but none of them bother to look up at the person they're speaking with. Over the beat of the music coming through my earphones, I hear someone ask for a charger for their dead phone -- when did our electronic devices start dying rather than running out of battery?

Walking past the series of desks, past the series of suspicious glances, I notice most of the cameras on most of the laptops are covered by a single piece of tape. I am reminded of the Edward Snowden incident and I think about whether they truly believe someone is watching them through their cameras or not. But it doesn't matter anymore because the tape has become just another sticker to design laptops with.

College is just one of the many microcosms, or systems, that depend on the continual growth of technology. As citizens of twenty-first century capitalist America, we are inundated and obsessed with mass-produced material goods. Our digital culture especially promotes the use of advanced pieces of technology to a point where not utilizing it is seen as transgressive in some way. *We* -- the privileged groups of twenty-first century consumers that maintain the privilege and resources to see only the positive aspects of consistent technological advancement -- *exist* rather than *live* in the world. In abiding by the rules of society, we relinquish a genuine desire to do what we want. American society has reached a point in time where our immersion in powerful electronic devices has started to change what it means to be human. Our society has transformed into one where we will only ever be as smart as the devices we hold in our pockets -- we are setting ourselves up to be let down. In our search for the perfect device, we have manifested an unattainable idealization of technology that we will never be able to achieve; stagnancy is being misconstrued as progress. As a result, our perceptions of one another are being reoriented as we are required to build intimate relationships with our electronic devices before we can think about building anything intimate with another person.

The notion of success we are told to strive for by figures of authority is determined by how well we can work within the social structures put in place for us, by how willing we are to believe that society wants us to succeed. We set goals to appease the expectations of others rather than ourselves. Our achievements have become dependent upon the amount of time and trust we choose to put into the networks that have been created for us to consume, thus removing the genuine sense of accomplishment. Unfortunately, our collective understanding of success is molded by how we have allowed technology to penetrate our conscious perceptions of the world

as a means of making money. We consider the ubiquity of technological advancements to always be a good thing not only because we think constant updates will expedite the process through which we will achieve this idealized notion of success, but also because we have become accustomed to seeking ways we can get the most amount of work done in the least amount of time.

In today's digital culture, technology has not only built itself into the way we experience our daily lives, it has become an aesthetic that pleases us -- one that we want to continue improving and buying into so that we don't get left behind by the conforming masses. We fetishize our electronic devices while simultaneously fleeing from the prospect of thinking about any of their misgivings. This conception of *we* is ignorant -- even though we might think we are in the know -- to the requisite subjugation and objectification of our personhood in a capitalist system. We have been completely subsumed by the proliferation of advanced technology and yet, we remain frighteningly uninformed about the intentions of the larger corporations in control of feeding us what we think we need. The pervasiveness of exploitative marketing strategies blind us from seeing how we have been complicit with such capitalist values that perversely define the nature of our individual and collective experiences as consumers. Despite the fact that we have been (for lack of a better word) programmed to think in ways similar to how a computer functions -- logically, linearly, algorithmically -- we seem incapable of rationally considering the repercussions that might come with reorienting our conception of humanity. By disregarding this responsibility of contemplation, we disparage potentially important discourses into the realm of fantasy and unconsciously accept a lack of agency that aids in the perpetuation of our dehumanization.

For us to become cognizant of our manipulation, we must first be able to conceive of our perceptions of self and reality, in general, as socially constructed by the social structures (family, peer groups, school, social media, work environment, etc) through which we are socialized and enculturated. Laying out this theoretical framework shows how each of those modes has a general procedure that is consistent with the maintenance and reproduction of the system in which they are constructed. These social structures will be successful and enduring to the extent that they create behavioral norms that are embraced by each individual. The individual then believes that they are acting freely and purposefully such that they will reap the greatest benefit from their participation in those structures; they learn the behavioral rules of conduct that they embrace as what is best for their own interests. Different social structures require different rules that are embraced by members of that society either by volition or coercion in order for that system to persist.

In this altered perception, we are made to see everything as a commodity meant to be fetishized. The process of fetishization leads us to ignore the fact that a product is valuable because it is a manifestation of human labor, not because it is in and of itself of value. Our ignorance then leads to the commodification of the human being, which entirely negates interpersonal relationships as we are made to see one another as little more than instruments of property. When we see each other as objects, we treat one another as objects. And because capitalism places value in what we get rather than what we give, we create this toxic self-consciousness -- a paranoid sensibility -- that makes us constantly put into question our own actions and behaviors because we don't want anyone to be doing better than we are. So, as a means of quieting our insecurities and reassuring ourselves that we are on the "right" track, we

seek to be different by expressing a sense of individuality that deceives us into thinking we are doing the things we are doing because we genuinely want to be doing them. But when the dominant system establishes only one track to success, one social construction of reality, everybody's sense of individuality is the same. We enter a vicious, paradoxical cycle where we cannot help but feed an insatiable desire to express individuality by conforming.

Reality is so well constructed for us by our social contexts that we trust it to be our own -- a representation of self. The more we believe in our minds that we are responsible, autonomous beings with the power to make our own decisions, the less free we actually are in reality; the only thing we can do is reproduce ourselves and the same social contexts that created our perceptions of reality. As a result, compassion and empathy become undesirable characteristics as we learn to obtain satisfaction and a sense of relief from ostracizing those who do not conform. Our internalization of capitalist values prevents us from breaking out of the mold shaped for us while simultaneously perpetuating our faulty economic system. This sense of unease that the next guy is making more money than I am, that I am not meeting my boss's expectations, that I need to have a job lined up straight out of college, is precisely what motivates us to remain in our delusional realities. We must modify these negative connotations attributed to what it means and how it feels to be uneasy, skeptical, paranoid, in order to dismantle capitalist expectations and finally see what it means for someone to *be* truly human -- whatever that may look like.

To gain a better understanding of how we might go about achieving such a task, it is necessary to further specify what it means to maintain a "paranoid sensibility." I am not saying that capitalism forces us to go about our daily lives as if someone is plotting to murder us.

Rather, we are made to feel more prominently the notion of feeling insecure in a state of vulnerability -- a lack of assurance in oneself. The kind of paranoia that we derive from our capitalist system is one that forces us to compare the ways in which we live our lives to others who exist in the same social constructs. As opposed to reconciling and being comfortable with our own perceptions of progression in life, we feel obligated to take away the things others are doing that we are not because capitalism's notion of success inherently necessitates a high level of competition. We look to others as a means of finding ways we can improve but we do not realize that they are looking to us for the same reason. As commodified instruments of property, we are made to prioritize the quantity of our possessions instead of the quality, which allows for the need to make money to precede (and even replace) the desire to be happy. Our minds revert to an atavistic way of thinking as the need to survive resurfaces as a genuine concern. Capitalism mandates that we disregard our hedonistic desires as a means of making money and obtaining a false sense of security so that we become more deeply embedded in the delusion.

Peter Fitting's piece "Reality as Ideological Construct: A Reading of Five Novels by Philip K. Dick," seems to agree with this idea of a delusional reality by using "Contemporary theories of ideology" as a way of getting at the heart of the philosophy behind much of Dick's science fictional works (Fitting 220). In disagreeing with the previously dominant positivist notion that we can directly experience an objective world, that we can somehow obtain unmediated knowledge from a reality separate from our subjective experiences, Fitting establishes a problematic with which he assesses the revelations of Dick's protagonists as being representative of the manifestations of ideology itself. For Fitting, "If we know *in theory* that reality is not lived directly, but mediated through modes and practices of representation and

perception which are historically determined, our *experience* of reality is often quite the contrary” (Fitting 220).

Reality is something every person experiences and every experience of reality is radically different because nobody perceives one thing the same way. Capitalism has altered that reality to make everyone think in the same way, in a way that views money and property as most important. Fitting believes that the simple acknowledgement of the faults in reality is in and of itself a creation of an ideology or experience separate from the one constructed for us by capitalism. Rather than choosing to think about the individual and the world as separate entities, Fitting sees the two as inseparable -- reality as being both individually and socially constructed into an ideology that is itself part of a larger collective identity. Every individual has their own sense of reality that is radically different from anyone else's; when placed in a societal (hierarchical) structure, these individual perceptions come together as a collective and agree upon a greater reality, a space in which each independent experience can exist alongside one another. Add a capitalist framework where material values and beliefs are imposed upon that shared reality, and each individual's experiences are radically distorted to think and abide by those same values and beliefs as if it were law. If we can logically manifest a hypothetical in which reality is not commodified by private enterprises, then why can't we seek ways to actualize it? The difficulty lies in convincing the populus to leave the comfortable spaces they've manifested for themselves and see how our internalization of capitalist values keeps us from doing anything but reproducing the behaviors that our system of oppression wants from us.

This capitalist framework, as described by Carl Freedman in his article “Towards a Theory of Paranoia: The Science Fiction of Philip K. Dick,” is essentially “generalized

commodity production, which... necessarily encompasses generalized commodity fetishism” (Freedman 17). Using “a Marxist theory of paranoia,” Freedman views the faulty capitalist system as the root of our disillusionment (Freedman 16). As citizens born into and raised by the capitalist regime, we have always had our subjective experiences molded by this internalized fetishization of material objects. Our understanding of the world -- which Marx refers to as “the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands” (Marx 48) -- we live in, although it is filtered through all of the materialistic values and beliefs that have evolved into what we know as American society, does not bother us because of our habituation to objectification. The key to capitalism’s success lies in the dual aspect of the commodity “as both a use-value that satisfies some human need and an exchange-value that renders it an interchangeable atom in the total system of exchange” (Freedman 17).

Of the two, it is exchange-value that most concerns contemporary capitalist society. According to Karl Marx in the first chapter of the first volume of his book *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, the difference between the two values is that “as use values, commodities are, above all, of different qualities, but as exchange values they are merely different quantities” (Marx 28). Because of this, “capitalism constitutes the hegemony of exchange-value” as the amount of things we own is representative of our levels of success in society (Freedman 17). The products we are told we need not only claim to make our lives easier, they are also perceived as inherently valuable, as “depositories of value” (Marx 33). We have been taught to sever a product’s connection to human labor because “Human labour power in motion... becomes value only in its congealed state, when embodied in the form of some object” (Marx 35). This consumerist ideology leaves us confined to one dominant construct that actively changes social

relations between humans to material relations between the things we own. As a result, we unconsciously maintain “that the practices and systems of representation which produce our understanding and perception of ourselves and of our reality play an essential part in the maintenance and reproduction of the existing (capitalist) relations of production” (Fitting 220). If there is nothing to trigger our senses into making us think that there isn’t something immoral about allowing a material object to assume social status, it is because we fail to see how “our ‘common-sense’ acceptance of reality as given” strips us of the agency we think our so-called democratic society gives us (Fitting 220). The power that we think we have stems from the ability to purchase the things we think we want from a system that we assume is looking out for us. In this sense, we obtain a collective identity through the items we purchase but we fail to recognize how we are made to be dependent upon material goods because of it.

We find ourselves entrenched in what Jean Baudrillard deems the third and final order of simulacra, the realm of the hyperreal (hyperreality). Due to our intense fetishization of material goods, we convert “every product into a social hieroglyphic” that we must later try to decipher (Marx 49). The perception of products as being intrinsically valuable keeps large corporations pumping out more copies to a point where reality itself becomes a mass-produced product, a hieroglyphic that we have yet to comprehend. In hyperreality, everything that we think is real is actually made up of things that aren’t real (copies); the simulated reality so accurately portrays the original that distinguishing between real and copy is virtually impossible. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard lists the evolution of simulacra in society to what it has become now:

Three orders of simulacra:

simulacra that are natural, naturalist, founded on the image, on imitation and counterfeit, that are harmonious, optimistic, and that aim for the restitution or the ideal institution of nature made in God's image;

simulacra that are productive, productivist, founded on energy, force, its materialization by the machine and in the whole system of production - a Promethean aim of a continuous globalization and expansion, of an indefinite liberation of energy (desire belongs to the Utopias related to this order of simulacra);

simulacra of simulation, founded on information, the model, the cybernetic game - total operationality, hyperreality, aim of total control (Baudrillard 81).

According to this progression, we reached a point where we have lost all ability to make sense of the distinction between nature and artifice. In the first order of simulacra, the image is a clear counterfeit of the real; the distinction between the original and its copy is easily recognizable. In the second order of simulacra, which Baudrillard associates with the industrial revolution, the distinction between the original and the copy becomes more difficult to decipher as mass production leads to the proliferation of copies. In the third order of simulacra, which is associated with our postmodern era, we are faced with “the precession of simulacra” where copies have become so widespread that they both precede and determine the makeup of the original -- the maps subsume the territory. Representative of contemporary capitalist America, there is no longer any way of distinguishing between reality and its representation through objects. The simulacrum takes over and assumes a dominant position which we mistake for

reality: “The simulacrum is never what hides the truth -- it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true” (Baudrillard 3). Hyperreality is then the inability of consciousness to distinguish between an individual’s perception of reality and the numerous simulations of that reality constructed by a capitalist institution -- the simulacra of simulation. What we think of as our perceptions of contemporary American capitalist society are actually perceptions of its simulacrum, of its computer simulation.

Technology, driven by capitalist intent, adds a layer of distortion to our perceptions of the simulated world through its sheer ubiquity. As a commodity, technology is just another simulacrum of our perceived reality; it is taken for granted because we necessitate it within mainstream digital culture rather than view it as a privilege. Not only have we been socialized in an environment that capitalizes off of us in every way it can, we have also been shaped to learn in ways that keep us reliant on the next update. Wendy Chun, in her book *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*, shows how these “updates” are actually keeping us stagnant: **“our media matter most when seem not to matter at all**, that is, when they have moved from the new to the habitual” (Chun 1). We tell ourselves that we are in control of the growth of technology, that updates are improvements that make our lives easier, so we neglect to think about any of the potential vices. We have become so habituated to having a surplus of technological devices at our fingertips that all expressions of doubt regarding it dissipates; we’ve convinced ourselves that technology and stress do not logically correlate because “Habituation dulls us to the new” (Chun 2).

In our digital culture, as the ever-present need for consistently advancing forms of technology increases the number of electronic devices in society, we are made to perceive the

world through a computer screen that misleads us into thinking we are seeing a lot more than we are actually being given. The commodification of technology alters the genesis of knowledge to be dependent upon the dissemination of *information* rather than *understanding*. Made to perceive ourselves as more knowledgeable than we are in reality, we feel we know enough about our governing system to entrust it with our desires and goals. We reach a point where we let our guard down; we make ourselves vulnerable to deceit and manipulation in our failure to consider exactly who is distributing technology and for what reasons. Thus, our fixation with technology helps to create the ideal subject for a capitalist society -- one who is complicit in their control. By allowing us to portray a perception of self through a highly-personalized, virtually-simulated reality (the internet) that we assume we have complete control over, the capitalist system manifests a repository for data collection and surveillance as they seize further control over our population.

The necessity of control in a societal hierarchy evolves from the concept of discipline, which was the intended function and purpose of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. *The Panopticon Writings* were initially written and released in a series of letters for supposedly humanitarian purposes of reform. The idealized plan written by Bentham -- the founder of modern utilitarianism -- conceived of the panopticon as an architectural blueprint for any social context (hospitals, schools, asylums, etc.) that needed to supervise the people within it. Due to fear served through the apprehension of being constantly under surveillance, the panopticon -- much like American capitalist digital culture -- "is supposed to lead to the internalisation of the rules and appropriate behavior" (Fludernik 4). By intuiting that such a structure would provide those doing the inspecting with a certain kind of power, which Bentham described as "obtaining power

of mind over mind,” important social contexts through which we develop as humans are misguided to believe in the notion that we are inherently transgressive and in dire need of discipline (Bentham 2). His intentions in thinking up such a power structure were wrongly hidden behind the pretense that the panopticon was meant to improve society.

Monika Fludernik, in her piece “Panopticism: from fantasy to metaphor to reality,” traces the transformation of Bentham’s original idea from architectural blueprint to metaphorical framework to misguided interpretation in modern society and expresses the negative consequences of such a perception of discipline. The focal point of Fludernik’s argument is that the contemporary use of the term *panopticon* has been altered to contradict Bentham’s original objective: “its use has been generalised as global surveillance, to the extent that one will need to debate whether or not this panopticon is still beholden to Bentham or constitutes an entirely separate strategy with purposes that have little or no affinity with the original blueprint” (Fludernik 3). In failing to “serve to exemplify the greatest force and variety of precautionary contrivance” (Bentham 4), Bentham and his oppressive structure have allowed for the manifestation of an ideological foreground from which surveillance and intimidation are seen as justified means of obtaining power in any social setting. In withholding the implementation of the panopticon as a physical structure, the notion becomes a schema, an ideology that infiltrates the mind and unconsciously censors any behaviors that do not conform to the dominant capitalist agenda.

Foucault’s adaptation and popularization of Bentham’s premise is expanded upon in the “Panopticism” section of his famous book titled *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* where he depicts a plague-stricken town that is met by self-surveillance achieved through

disciplinary power and the threat of societal alienation. For Foucault “The panoptic mechanism is not simply a hinge, a point of exchange between a mechanism of power and a function; it is a way of making power relations function in a function, and of making a function function through these power relations” (Foucault 10). It seems Foucault’s focus is on power and the attainment of it through the establishment of a schema whose natural polyvalence allows for its implementation into any society. Further, it is “a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men” (Foucault 9). In maintaining that the exercise of power is the most important function of Bentham’s panopticon, Foucault broadens the concept as a structure or system that is “destined to spread throughout the social body” and reinforces the skewed power dynamic between authority and individual (Foucault 11). He gives birth to the notion of the panoptic gaze and exposes the ephemerality of a society of discipline can persist. Through fear, our oppressive system forces us to conform to societal norms and internalize the toxic paranoia that makes us question our place in society.

In our commodified and technologically dependent collective reality, the panoptic gaze is as powerful and pervasive as the unconscious inclinations we have to make a purchase. The disciplinary society portrayed by Foucault then gives way to the society of control described by Gilles Deleuze in his work “Postscripts on the Societies of Control.” Deleuze explains that “in a society of control, the corporation has replaced the factory, and the corporation is a spirit, a gas” (Deleuze 4). In “disciplinary societies one was always starting again (from school to the barracks, from the barracks to the factory),” but in “societies of control one is never finished with anything -- the corporation, the educational system, the armed services being metastable states coexisting in one and the same modulation, like a universal system of deformation” (Deleuze 5).

In this sense, contemporary American capitalist society -- a society of control -- functions in a way that is more abstract, unrecognizable, ever-present, and constantly flowing in and around us. We exist in an illusory reality that we interpret as pleasurable because we cannot recognize the ways in which we are being controlled. While we may not be able to see it, we can acknowledge that it is there based off of the fact that our society continues to function according to the values and norms established by capitalism. Manifestations of capitalism become as pervasive as the media technologies used to market new products and track our movements. The entity that keeps this system running is not only the large corporations that give us things to buy, it is us, the citizens of this controlled society that have never known another economic structure. The faith we've put into capitalism is taken advantage of. Capitalism wants to keep us blind to the detritus left behind by the perpetual consumption we choose to label as progress; the "discontinuous producer of energy" makes way for the man that is "undulatory, in orbit, in a continuous network" (Deleuze 5-6). The most powerful and compelling aspect of this kind of society is that within its seemingly oppressive structure, we are still able to derive pleasurable feelings. Sinking deeper and deeper into capitalism, we give our consent -- we literally buy in -- to being manipulated as we relinquish our individualized perceptions of the world for the continuity of a society determined by capitalist ideology.

We portray exactly the kind of consciousness that Anthony Enns in his piece "Media, Drugs, and Schizophrenia in the Works of Philip K. Dick" speaks to -- one where "the unstable boundaries between the self and the environment... have infected the author's own personal life" (Enns 69). In his article, Enns examines the effect on identity by analyzing the inherent connection between altered states of consciousnesses and media technology in Dick's works. If

“A human being is constantly changing, is constantly in a process of becoming” in an environment that is ever-advancing in technology, then to what extent is our sense of identity -- our approach to perceiving the world -- being molded to conform to the technology we are so dependent upon? “By conceiving of consciousness as thoroughly extended into and penetrated by the electric media environment” (Enns 69), Enns not only portrays the human brain as operating similarly to the technologies we use, he also exposes how the promise of media technologies “to extend cognitive functioning and increase neural efficiency” will only aid in dissolving “the boundaries of the self” (Enns 86). We pay to be made to think in this way so that we can reassure ourselves with a false sense of security. Reality then becomes just another function of capitalism as technology manifests a new ideological construct and subsequently forces us to alter the ways in which we perceive ourselves. We don’t even realize that we’ve lost sight of what is real in the world because it’s been so efficiently replaced; reality is subsumed by our simulations of it and identity is fragmented by our dependence on technology.

The kind of paranoia that I seek to utilize as a tool that allows us to recognize the delusion of our realities is one that could potentially disintegrate the veil of capitalist simulation. It is also one that Carl Freedman says we can’t live without: “If we are economically constituted as capitalists and workers who must buy and sell human labor that is commodified into labor-power, then we are psychically constituted as paranoid subjects who must seek to interpret the signification of the objects -- commodities -- which define us and which, in a quasi-living manner, mystify the way that they and we are defined” (Freedman 18). The difference between the kind of paranoia that our capitalist system ingrains in us and the kind of paranoia both Freedman and I speak of is that there is something to be learned from the latter. If we are to

protect ourselves, it is necessary to be paranoid citizens, to always be skeptical of our surroundings and never accept something solely for its appearance.

The paranoid person is merely someone who is more willing to be observant: “The paranoid is not only someone for whom every detail is meaningful -- for whom nothing can be left uninterpreted or taken for granted -- but someone who holds a conception of meaning that is both totalizing and hermeneutic” (Freedman 16). By belittling the negative connotations associated with the notion of paranoia, Freedman argues that it is actually a very productive, pedagogical quality in a person that should be viewed as the impetus for better understanding the inner workings of our capitalist system. The paranoid is not bogged down in their pursuit for knowledge by the boundaries put in place for them by a higher system of power; their curiosity is not diminished as they learn to see all of the ways in which they can prosper within a society that seeks to degrade its citizens.

The attempt to repress any feeling of paranoia is impossible if it is the case that a capitalist system necessitates it of us. Rather, we should try and reorient our perceptions of paranoia as a positive sentiment, an instinctual voice of reason, that keeps us safe from self-doubt as we seek to disrupt the hegemonic structure that oppresses us. If we can maintain this helpful conception of paranoia, then we know it “is no mere aberration but is structurally crucial to the way that we, as ordinary subjects of bourgeois hegemony, represent ourselves to ourselves and embark on the Cartesian project of acquiring empiricist knowledge” (Freedman 17). Aware of the inherent disillusionment that capitalism imposes upon our perceptions of self and reality, the paranoid is perpetually seeking to subvert the power dynamic by learning more about it. Through self-alienation and non-conformity, the paranoid refuses to buy into the

capitalist schema; by breaking materialistic traditions and refusing to allow any object to represent our sense of humanity, we can keep ourselves from falling victim to the insecurities and anxiety capitalism forces us to confront. If achieved, we can take pride in our hyper-awareness of the world and begin to find solace in the perception of ourselves as the most powerful members of society.

Philip K. Dick was himself a man of many suspicions. Said to have had a strong distrust in government and general authority, Dick maintained precisely the sense of paranoia I see as necessary to our existence in a capitalist structure as a way of claiming some semblance of control he spent most of his life without. While his novels cannot be categorized in any way as autobiographical, many of the tropes we see in his writing stem from personal traumatic experiences. The pervasiveness of drugs, defying authority, and altered realities came -- more often than not -- from his own preoccupation with such influences. Dick's emotional state was also always in flux. Forty-one days after being born six weeks premature, his twin sister died; he was involved in five failed marriages, conceiving three children; and for approximately ten years of his adult life, he was battling an amphetamine addiction. As a means of escaping the agony that seemed ingrained in his perception of life, he wrote vigorously of characters suffering within dystopias and illusory realities to try and give himself the power he lacked. Through the conflation of his work in science fiction and his cynical perception of reality, Dick plummets into a realm of utter despair that sees him become a prisoner of his own distorted world.

In the YouTube video titled "For all of you (Affected) by the Mandela Effect Philip K Dick discloses the real deal in 1977," posted by an account named *Nope*, Dick clearly expresses

this delusion through his actions as well as in his speech. The intonation of his voice is assured and stern, like he is teaching a lesson to those who are listening. He states:

In other words, it's a common theme in my writing...(long eerie pause) that a dark haired girl shows up at the door of the protagonist and tells them that his world is delusional, that there's something false about it. Well this did finally happen to me; I even knew that her hair would be black, I had an actually...(corrects himself) complete sense of what she looked like and what she would say. She did appear, she was a total stranger, and she did inform me of this fact: that some of my fictional works were in a literal sense true (Dick).

In the video, Dick sits in front of a large group of science fiction fans at the Metz Science Fiction Convention in France and resolutely recites a portion of one of his essays titled “If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some of the Others” (now also referred to as “The Metz Speech”). He looks uneasy, as if some greater presence is watching him. He talks slowly and clearly so as to make sure his audience can grasp the weight of what he is saying. The many perplexed faces in the crowd provide a striking contrast to the seriousness with which Dick speaks. It is clear that he genuinely believes in what he is saying. His perception of reality is that he has access to others that are not his own. And who are we to say that what he claims to be experiencing is invalid if we are confined only to our own perceptions?

Dick, while he recognizes that the collective reality built for us by our capitalist society as “the most actualized one,” is able to detach himself from it and manifest a solipsistic reality in which he is the martyr who has descended from another reality to save us from our ignorance -- he assumes the position of the black-haired girl and informs us of our disillusionment. No

ideological construct is mightier than his own. He abides by his own values and beliefs no matter what reality he finds himself in because that is all he knows. The construction of reality as being ideologically and socially informed by ourselves and our social contexts is taken literally by Dick as his disposition in the video seem secure and confident. Unlike the rest of us -- cogs in the capitalist system -- Dick does not concern himself with any authoritarian imposition because he is his own ultimate authority; rather than exist, he lives in-between the world he seeks to escape and the worlds in which he takes refuge. He manifests a solitary simulation of reality in which his perception of the world is not bound to a monetary value, in which his identity cannot be fragmented.

Our assessment of the society in which we live is in need of a major alteration. The trust we put into our society is unrequited and naïve in that we fail to question anything we are told. Rather than approach our collective reality with an air of skepticism, we walk with open arms and leave ourselves vulnerable to the manipulation capitalism seems to necessitate. By simply acknowledging that the system we are made to abide by is not perfect, we open a space for which we, as citizens, can place our individual needs above that of the structure we make up. If we can reorient and maintain the helpful sense of paranoia, a skeptical consciousness, that resides suppressed within all of us, we will be that much better off in potentially altering this faulty system of oppression. We need to comprehend that we hold the power in a system that does its best to make us feel like we are subordinate. In masse, we must want to understand more deeply the authoritarian aims of our society as a means of seeking to subvert them within itself to reveal the detriments being hidden from us.

Only through the pursuit of true knowledge, independent of the distorted social contexts we interact with, can we engage in the creation of our needs as equals within the greater social structure and foresee a future in which humanity is dependent on the love and compassion of one another as opposed to the commodified objects. If, as a community of free individuals, we could relate to one another and recognize that we are in this (being reality) together, and that our actions are reflective of the social responsibility to respect and admire the position of all other within the same system, then there would be an opportunity to establish that holistic sense of community. We would then be able to perpetuate the engendering of the type of individual that would recognize and manipulate the socially constructed nature of our environment to reproduce the self as well as the systems in which we have learned to engage with one another in a free and positive manner. The future of society depends on our ability to defy the system of systems and abide by the laws of human nature.

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