



**THE PHILOSOPHY
OF
SCIENCE FICTION
HENRI BERGSON
AND
THE FABULATIONS
OF
PHILIP K. DICK
JAMES BURTON**

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The Philosophy of Science Fiction

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The Philosophy of Science Fiction

Henri Bergson and the Fabulations
of Philip K. Dick

James Burton

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First published 2015

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-47422-766-7
ePDF: 978-1-47422-767-4
ePub: 978-1-47422-768-1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Typeset by Fakenham Prepress Solutions, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 8NN

Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	1
Philosophy and science fiction	3
Bergson and Dick at the edge of the known	11
The ethics of balking	17
Philip K. Dick studies	21
Note on terminology	26
1 Fabulation: Counteracting Reality	29
Mechanization and the war-instinct	30
The biological origins of society	35
Countering the intellect	38
The morality of violence	43
Open morality and the misdirection of mechanism	46
True mysticism: Immanent salvation	50
An incomplete soteriology	53
Fabulation for the open	57
Conclusion	59
2 Fabulating Salvation in Four Early Novels	61
<i>Solar Lottery</i> (1972 [1955])	63
<i>The World Jones Made</i> (1993b [1956])	70
<i>Vulcan's Hammer</i> (1976c [1960])	73
<i>Time Out of Joint</i> (2003c [1959])	76
Conclusion: Super–everyman to solar shoe salesman	81
3 The Empire that Never Ended	85
A matter of life or (life under the sign of) death	88
The open and the universal	89
The life–death chiasmus	91
The fictitious event	96
The messianic tension	97

	The remnant and messianic time	99
	The magic of language	102
	Sci-fi: The genre of 'as not'	105
	Conclusion: Gnostic politics	107
4	Objects of Salvation: <i>The Man in the High Castle</i>	113
	The fabulation of history	113
	Mechanization and paralysis	118
	Worldly remains	120
	Openings between worlds	124
	The tyranny of the concrete	128
	Objects of salvation	131
	Conclusion: Reality fields	134
5	How We Became Post-Android	137
	The mechanization of pot-healing	138
	The alien god	141
	The saviour in need	144
	Robot theology	148
	Humans: The cosmic bourgeoisie	151
	Android and theoid	157
	Creative destruction	161
	Conclusion	164
6	The Reality of Valis	169
	<i>Salvator salvandus</i>	173
	The believer and the sceptic	178
	The pharmakonic god	183
	Reduplicative paramnesia (time becomes space)	186
	The fabulative cure	191
	Recursion: Valis as limitlessly iterative soteriology	195
	Befriending god	197
	Conclusion	201
	Epilogue: Soter-ecologies	205
	Notes	212
	Bibliography	220
	Index	231

Acknowledgements

The researching and writing of this book took place in several different contexts. Part of the final manuscript was produced during a fellowship at the Ruhr University, Bochum, generously funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. I am grateful to the Institute for Media Studies at Bochum, and in particular Erich Hörl and Maren Mayer-Schwieger, for providing great intellectual stimulation within a supportive working environment, and for helping me find time to work on this manuscript alongside other projects. The patient support and feedback of Leila Whitley was invaluable during this phase of the writing.

The book's main argument, along with earlier versions of several sections, was central to a doctoral thesis researched and produced at Goldsmiths, University of London, between 2003 and 2008. During that time I benefited greatly from the supervision and support of Scott Lash and Howard Caygill, each of whom made the extraordinary range of his intellectual and intuitive knowledge of cultural theory and philosophy available to me throughout (and has done since). I am also grateful to John Hutnyk for his comments on a late draft of that text, and to Andrew Benjamin and Josh Cohen for their careful engagement with the final version. Within the already vibrant interdisciplinary research community at Goldsmiths, I was lucky enough to be surrounded by an exceptional group of fellow students and staff, who provided endless opportunities for stimulating and open-minded discussion on a limitless range of topics: among many others, I would especially like to thank Laura Cull, Sean McKeown, Joel McKim, Theresa Mikuriya (to whom I am also indebted for generous feedback on several drafts), Susan Schuppli, Craig Smith, Daisy Tam, and everyone in the Contemporary Thought seminars.

Though too late to have any substantial effect on the text, a series of inspiring encounters and presentations in late 2012 at the Philip K. Dick Festival (San Francisco) and the 'Worlds Out of Joint' conference (Dortmund) – with, among others, Dilara Bilgisel, Erik Davis, Alexander Dunst, Daniel Gilbert, David Gill, Ted Hand, Pamela Jackson, Roger Luckhurst, Laurence Rickels, Lord Running-Clam (aka David Hyde) and Stefan Schlensag – offered much

encouragement for the completion of my own project and the future of Philip K. Dick studies in general.

I am also indebted to the following for a range of contributions, some tangible, some intangible, some recent, some going a long way back: Jay Basu, Pete De Bolla, Laura Burton, D. F. Chang, Deirdre Daly, Robin Durie, Geoff Gilbert, James Gitsham, David Kleijwegt, Yari Lanci, Chris Manasseh, Joe McKee, Leo Mellor, John Ó Maoilearca (then Mullarkey), Sebastian Olma, Ian Patterson, Michael Williams, Tom Wills, David Wright and Nicky Zeeman.

Finally, this book would never have been completed without the constant love and support (and patience) of my parents, Janice and Gil.

Abbreviations

Where a work is cited for the first time in a chapter, the first date given is the edition used or cited, followed by the date of the work's original publication, if different, in square brackets; thereafter only the date of the edition consulted is given. Certain frequently cited works are abbreviated as follows:

- CE Bergson, Henri (1998), *Creative Evolution* (Toronto: Dover Publications) [1907]
- MR Bergson, Henri (1977), *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press) [1932]
- TR Agamben, Giorgio (2005), *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press) [2000]
- SP Badiou, Alain (2003), *Saint Paul: The Foundations of Universalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press) [1997]
- E Dick, Philip (2011), *The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), ed. Pamela Jackson and Jonathan Lethem

Where there are multiple references to a single novel, only the page number of the cited edition is given, except where this might lead to confusion.

Introduction

In his *Histories*, Herodotus tells of a battle interrupted – and a war ended – by what we would now think of as a natural event. The conflict between the Lydians and the Medes had been ongoing for more than five years, with neither side able to establish a decisive dominance. Then, during a battle in the sixth year,

the day suddenly turned into night. The Ionians received a prediction of this eclipse from Thales of Miletus, who had determined that this was the year in which an eclipse would occur. The Lydians and the Medes, however, were astonished when they saw the onset of night during the day. They stopped fighting, and both sides became eager to have peace. (Herodotus 2007: 44–5 [1.74])

Why should a sudden, though short-lived, inversion of day and night be mirrored by the inversion of war and peace? It is not too hard to imagine how the unexpected descent of a shadow across the battlefield might have given rise to a spontaneous ceasefire. Even today, an eclipse will cause people to stop what they are doing. But in this case, Herodotus tells us, there was no resumption of normal activity when the sun re-emerged: instead, everything was different, and the two warring sides, having made peace, entered a lasting alliance.

Whether we consider Herodotus an inquiring historian or a storyteller, this account seems to invite us to speculate, to experiment with ways of filling in the absent details, just as Walter Benjamin responded to Herodotus' account of the grief of Psammenitus in 'The Storyteller' (1999: 89–90). How was this astronomical event able to have such a lasting effect on human affairs? Were the Lydians and the Medes already weary of the conflict, simply waiting for a legitimate pause in the fighting to open negotiations? Or did the turning of day into night have a more dramatic effect, being taken as the literal or symbolic herald of the end of the world – whose onset abated only when the fighting ceased? Or might the merging of the sun and the moon, two entities appearing equal in power and size, have been interpreted as a sign that the two equally matched peoples should align themselves into a single, superior force?

Missing from such speculations is the significance of the fact that Thales had predicted the eclipse. Does Herodotus include this merely as a tangential historical detail, to add context and corroboration to the main story? Or,

conversely, might it have played a more active role in the alchemical transmutation of war into peace? Herodotus seems to imply that the soldiers might have reacted differently had they, like the Ionians, been forewarned of the eclipse. But what if they were astonished precisely because news of the prediction *had* reached them? The idea of being able to anticipate the occurrence of an eclipse based on natural observations was not established as it is today: indeed, Thales' reputed pioneering ability in such areas is among the reasons many have regarded him as the founder of Western philosophy – and some as the first scientist. Yet in that he was extrapolating from his contemporary scientific knowledge to tell of strange future events, in an era in which accurate predictions of this kind were virtually unknown, it would be tempting to add to these accolades the title of first science fiction storyteller.

I would like to posit the idea – somewhat outlandish perhaps, though no more so than foretelling the irruption of night within the day – that the account of an unheard-of, unbelievable event, whose status subsequently shifted, all of a sudden, from the realm of impossibility to reality with its first-hand experience, might have changed everything. Suddenly the impossible appeared possible, as the astronomical and the mundane spheres merged, and the most unlikely, ridiculous ideas about the future became realistic options. The boundaries between the fictional and the real, between war and peace, friend and enemy, dissolved as easily as the circular outlines of the sun and moon.

In fact, there is no first philosopher, no first scientist, though both philosophy and science, like (and perhaps through) storytelling, may have a new beginning at any moment. I chose to begin with an account of an eclipse not only because of its resonance with a series of other syzygies which appear in the course of this study and throughout Dick's work, but because it suggests to me, in an oblique yet compelling manner, a particular power of fictionalizing, of imaging or narrating the impossible, which is able to put an end to violence and warfare. My telescoped view of the eclipse is the product of pure speculation – in fact, it has been suggested that it was impossible for Thales to have predicted a solar eclipse based on the resources available to him, and that Herodotus may have misinterpreted reports of a lunar eclipse that possibly interrupted a night battle (Worthen 1997). Yet if my version of the story seems tenuous and far-fetched, this only serves to underscore how weak this power of fictionalizing is, how easily it may turn against and undermine itself, and thus how much care is required in both its examination and its application.

Philosophy and science fiction

This strange zone of the eclipse, in which the impossible and the possible begin to blur, or to reveal their secret affinity, and to point towards formerly unthinkable changes in human behaviour, such as a turning away from violence, may also serve poetically as an image of the meeting-point of the two central figures in this book, Henri Bergson and Philip K. Dick. One a philosopher, the other a writer of science fiction, as we superimpose each upon the other, like the sun and the moon during the eclipse, it becomes increasingly hard to see which is which.

Despite belonging to very different historical and cultural milieux, Bergson and Dick can each be seen to engage with the possibility of salvation – from violence, war and the mechanization of life – through the power of fictionalizing, or fabulation. Although this book is primarily concerned with their specific approaches to the problem of what I will term an immanent soteriology – that is, the search for a form of salvation that would be adequate for a post-industrialized, globalized society – their shared concern with the relationship between mechanization, salvation and fabulation is one that resonates with a number of strands in both philosophy and science fiction more generally. According to at least some ways of understanding philosophy and science fiction, there is a certain kind of experience and activity in which they may be said to share an origin – albeit an origin that can only be registered as a repeated, originating occurrence, rather than one that is historical and singular. It is thus worth exploring this activity a little at the outset, both as a means of highlighting the ways in which this book is and is not concerned with the (or a) philosophy of science fiction, and as the basic ground of the fabulative activity that I will posit as the heart of the soteriological enterprises of both Bergson and Dick.

The relationship between philosophy and science fiction has received an increasing amount of attention over the past three decades. Several monographs and edited collections are now available on the topic, some aimed at an academic and some at a more general readership, many seemingly intended to supplement the teaching of philosophy, and to a lesser extent science fiction.¹ Such texts frequently suggest or imply that science fiction makes philosophical ideas more accessible. Their increasing proliferation can also be taken as one indicator among others of the erosion, to a large degree, of formerly strong boundaries between the academic and popular spheres, at least with regard to

areas of culture such as literature, media and philosophy, and the overcoming of certain prejudices regarding the intellectual value of science fiction, along with a relative easing of the genre's traditional inferiority complex. These trends are also reflected in the appearance, increasingly over the past decade, of a number of publications dealing with philosophy and particular works or figures from popular culture, many of which focus on science fiction. Blackwell's 'Philosophy and Pop Culture' series, for example, has titles dealing with philosophy and Batman, *Battlestar Galactica* (2004–2009) and *Inception* (2010), while Open Court's equivalent series includes volumes on philosophy and *The Matrix* (1999), *Doctor Who* and the *Star Wars* films, not to mention Philip K. Dick.

Whether for the purposes of marketing, pedagogy or research, such publications all suggest that there is value in bringing philosophy and science fiction together. What remains ambiguous is whether, as is sometimes implied, this value derives from the fact that each is able to supplement the other with something it has generally tended to lack; or whether it reflects a greater affinity between them, whereby despite surface differences, they share many basic activities, qualities and functions. It is the latter possibility that I want to pursue here. Drawing connections between philosophy and science fiction as conventionally, professionally understood, clearly *can* have the effect of giving colourful and lively illustration to long-standing philosophical questions and debates (which are often inaccessibly expressed in the philosophical vernacular), while simultaneously according to science fiction a level of academic respect which it struggled to attract through much of the twentieth century: yet we should not allow this to eclipse the less obvious, but potentially very illuminating ways in which key aspects of philosophical activity and science fiction storytelling might *already* be intertwined. I hope to give here a sense of why the strangest aspect of the relationship between philosophy and science fiction might lie not in their coming together, but in the idea of their easy separation.

At first glance, philosophy and science fiction may seem like two quite different creatures. A common general view is that (Western) philosophy dates back at least to the sixth century BCE, if not earlier, while science fiction is generally perceived as a predominantly modern phenomenon. Such conceptions, even when implicit or treated as according with common sense, can be seen as based on what we might call cultural-historical or sociological determinations. They more or less identify the emergence of a phenomenon with the entry into cultural usage of the name by which it has come to be known, that is, with the moment it began to be treated as having a specific cultural identity. Thales has often been viewed as the first Western philosopher because he is the

earliest figure referred to as a philosopher by those whose contemporaries had come to view them as philosophers, such as Aristotle and his followers. In a parallel manner, many consider science fiction to have appeared only when the term entered common usage in the 1920s, when Hugo Gernsback employed it (initially in the variant 'scientifiction') to describe the stories published in his journals *Modern Electrics* and *Amazing Stories*, paving the way for its recognition by publishers as a discrete genre.² As with philosophy, such a conception allows the 'origins' of science fiction to be located a generation or two earlier, in the writers whose work figures like Gernsback were citing (and indeed republishing) as pioneering science fiction (H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, and Edgar Allan Poe and others).³

However, many have argued that science fiction long pre-dates its nineteenth- and twentieth-century forms, a notion which, once entertained, immediately diminishes the apparent historical gap between the respective origins of philosophy and science fiction. In fact, many of the texts cited as early works of science fiction turn out either to be overtly philosophical works or to have a strong philosophical dimension. When in 1752 Voltaire published an account of a visit to Earth by an alien from a planet in the Sirius star system, he referred to it as a 'philosophical story' [*histoire philosophique*]. While Brian Aldiss (1973) maintains that science fiction begins with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in the heart of the Romantic movement, Darko Suvin has prominently advocated a much older, pre-modern literary tradition of science fiction affiliated with the long history of writing on utopia (Suvin 1979), from Plato's *Republic* to works by Thomas More, Jonathan Swift and many other pre-nineteenth-century authors.

Alternatively, on the basis of Steve Clark's (1995) surprisingly compelling argument that immortality is the most definitive theme of science fiction, possible candidates for the earliest work might be found among the pre-Socratic philosophers, with Pythagoras precluded only by the lack of any extant material; perhaps Xenophanes' parodic 'story' of Pythagoras' belief that a howling dog contained the soul of an old friend would qualify, as having a narrative structure (however compact) and as the first overt reference to Pythagorean metempsychosis (Leshner 1992: 78). Or we might look yet further back, towards explorations of the theme of immortality in much earlier mythological sources, notably the Gilgamesh epic, with its hero's quest to find the secret of eternal life possessed by the legendary Ut-napishtim. There are also non-thematic definitions which would equally seem to produce an overlap between philosophy and science fiction. For example, Alexandra Aldridge's definition of science fiction

as fiction which represents a ‘cosmic point of view’ where ‘individual experience recedes into the background’ (1983: 16), would seem to offer grounds for locating any philosophical text which deals poetically with cosmology, such as Lucretius’ first-century BCE *De Rerum Natura*, within the bounds of science fiction.

It seems one can make a case with at least some merits for finding science fiction virtually anywhere one can find records of storytelling. Nevertheless, the common-sense or sociological view of science fiction as a modern phenomenon remains culturally dominant. It is worth taking a closer look at the presumptions on which this view is based. It seems that, at the core of this established common understanding is the idea that science fiction has an essential relationship to modern science and technology – whether this is understood in terms of its historical conditions of emergence, as discussed by Roger Luckhurst (2005: 15–29 and *passim*) and others, or in terms of the prescriptions and expectations of its founding and formative figures. Hugo Gernsback, mentioned above, one of the most instrumental figures in shaping US science fiction as a modern genre through his efforts as a pioneering editor, critic and author, promoted the binding of science fiction to modern science. As Gary Westfahl observes, Gernsback was explicit that in ‘the process of writing science fiction, scientific knowledge comes first’, and indeed that ‘science fiction *must include scientific writing* (perhaps even taken from a textbook)’ (1998: 42; original italics). William Wilson, who coined the term ‘science-fiction’ in the mid-nineteenth century (though apparently with little direct influence on the genre’s subsequent emergence) had expressed a similar sentiment: ‘Science-Fiction, in which the revealed truths of Science may be given interwoven with a pleasing story which may itself be poetical and *true* – thus circulating a knowledge of the Poetry of Science, clothed in a garb of the Poetry of Life’ (Wilson 1851: 139–40). Meanwhile, the figure generally cited as the most influential science fiction editor following Gernsback, John W. Campbell, also emphasized the scientific dimension, suggesting that the aim of science fiction was ‘to predict the future on the basis of known facts, culled largely from present-day laboratories’ (quoted in Westfahl 1998: 181).⁴

Whether or not one accepts such prescriptions, it is hard to avoid the fact that science fiction as a modern genre arose within the socio-cultural context of the rise of modern industrial science and technology. However, we should remember that the modern conception of science itself evolved partly as a continuation of, and partly by distinguishing itself from what was previously termed ‘natural philosophy’. The astronomer Johannes Kepler, in writing an

account of a trip to the moon, titled *Somnium* (1634), '(a) Dream', distinguished his text from utopian fiction by stating that his intention was to 'remain in the pleasant, fresh green fields of philosophy' (quoted in Christianson 1976).

Broadly speaking, natural science distinguishes itself by narrowing the scope of natural philosophy through the exclusion of what it takes as its 'unscientific' or 'unnatural' aspects. Central to these developments, as detailed by twentieth-century historians and philosophers of science such as Edwin Burt (2003 [1924]) and Alexandre Koyré (2008 [1957]), is the movement away from a view of the world as composed of substances and qualities towards an atomistic and mechanical worldview, in which mathematical and logical explanations are paramount. As this new outlook progressively becomes dominant, anything which is considered beyond its scope – that is, beyond nature – is discounted. Thus both God and the human soul, previously granted unproblematic metaphysical (literally super-natural) status, must, if they are to remain meaningful scientific entities worthy of discussion, either be naturalized, or abandoned (Burt 2003: 300–2 and *passim*).

As post-Enlightenment science re-imagines and purifies its own history, it elides the fact that what have become its central principles, methods and concerns were not regarded as incompatible with so-called supernatural or metaphysical spheres of interest by those responsible for their formulation and development. Isaac Newton's interest in not only alchemy but religious prophecy and revelation, which has only recently become widely appreciated, would be a good example.⁵ Indeed, as Paolo Rossi has argued, the supposedly defining characteristics of modern science as it emerged between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment – the rise of deductive reasoning, scepticism, and a mechanical approach to nature – emerged alongside an equally influential 'complex nexus of themes connecting the cabala, ideographic writing, the discovery of "real characters", the art of memory, the image of the "tree of the sciences", "mathesis", universal languages, "method" (understood as a miraculous key to the universe and a general science)' (2000: xvii). Only later would such areas be exorcized from the emerging model of science, along with 'the foolish, superstitious and impious pursuits of astrology, magic and alchemy – relics of medieval darkness, feebly persisting in the age of new science' (Rossi 2000: xvi). Kepler's *Somnium*, in combining technical details of lunar astronomy and scientifically informed speculations about the physical conditions of space travel, with a story of witchcraft and demons, would be a good illustration of Rossi's suggestion that pre-Enlightenment science had not yet – at least not universally – realized any

strong split between a supposedly natural or materialist approach and what would subsequently be considered supernatural and metaphysical themes.

One way of characterizing this shift would be to suggest that modern science in its emergence (while still bound to philosophy) attempts to suppress or eliminate from its own constitution all those elements of the study of nature that from a (post-)Enlightenment perspective would be associated, overtly or not, with the *fictional* – with that which, though it may be speculatively described and discussed, is banned from inclusion in the real. Both rationalism and empiricism, whose rise in their modern forms can be said to be the two crucial driving forces in developing the dominance of this perspective, attempt to discern and specify the limits of knowledge, developing principles by which to separate the known and the knowable from what cannot be known. Anything discussed or considered in past or subsequent discourse which does not belong within the sphere of the knowable so defined, thus implicitly or explicitly acquires the status of what is commonly termed fiction: the contents of dreams, superstition, rumour, fancy and much of religion (though not yet God) are gradually relegated to this inferior, denigrated realm on the wrong side of the real, where they are increasingly viewed as not deserving of serious intellectual attention.

If modern science emerges in part by distancing itself from the fictional and from philosophy, this process is itself only enabled by a form of (hi)storytelling. Similar stories have been widely told of the way ancient philosophy emerged from mythological thinking. We have already seen that Thales' ability to predict eclipses, among other achievements, subsequently earned him the title of first philosopher, on the basis that those predictions were the result of rational and empirical investigations, using geometry, astronomical observation and logical reasoning. For those who celebrate these aspects of Thales' approach, not least Bertrand Russell (2004: 15), philosophy emerges when it becomes, effectively, scientific, eschewing formerly dominant mythological and superstitious ways of explaining and relating to the natural world.

A particularly influential version of this view of the emergence of philosophy as a shift from mythological to (proto-)scientific thinking was given by F. M. Cornford in *From Religion to Philosophy* (1957). As Drew Hyland has noted, Cornford's account presents a movement from 'a basically emotional reaction to a set of issues to a more rational reaction to essentially the same issues' – a movement whereby an older, non-rational approach is replaced by one of rationalist materialism (1973: 18). Hyland highlights several weaknesses in Cornford's position – not only in that it seems to ignore the extensive and often

constitutive role played by mythology and storytelling throughout philosophy's history from (at least) Plato onwards, but also in that it implies an understanding of philosophy that would have to be located in human nature generally, rather than any cultural-historical moment, while still wanting to present philosophy as beginning (for the first time) with Thales and the pre-Socratic thinkers (1973: 22–3).

These two parallel views of the origins of ancient philosophy and modern science give two particular images of science and philosophy, based on the way they distance themselves from fiction. Recognizing this allows us to acknowledge the possibility of other images or conceptions of both that, in contrast, would bear a strong affinity with more or less the same category of the fictional. That is, this suppression or abolition of the fictional, which is the corollary of certain kinds of attempt to delineate what is known and knowable, may only occur in response to other ways of 'knowing' in which so-called fictional elements may be regarded as playing an essential part.

An often-cited conception of philosophy which would seem to allow a constitutive role for something other than the rational, found in both Aristotle and Plato, suggests that philosophy begins (wherever and however many times it begins) with an experience of wonder:

It is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize; wondering in the first place at obvious perplexities, and then by gradual progression raising questions about the greater matters too, *e.g.* about the changes of the moon and of the sun, about the stars and the origin of the universe. (Aristotle 1933: 13; *Metaphysics* I.ii: 9)

Hyland (1973: 16) sets this Aristotelian notion of wonder as the non-historical origin of philosophy in direct opposition to the historicizing position (epitomized by Cornford) that philosophy begins at a certain time in ancient Greece. The word Aristotle uses for wonder is *thaumazein*, which gives its root to the word thaumaturgy, referring to the working of miracles or wonders by a saint – and which might equally serve as another alternative description of the activity of science fiction, a 'working with the miraculous'. Might it not be argued that this sense of wonder, in that it gives rise to speculation and narration about what *may* be, is the source of a kind of science fiction as much as it is of philosophy? In both contexts, a momentary glimpse of the possibility of the impossible casts a different light – or shadow – over the whole of reality, over what is taken as known. Is Plato's prisoner not a science fiction storyteller when he returns to the cave and begins to tell of the wondrous world he has seen – tales which, to

his former cohabitants, seem fantastical and ridiculous? It does not seem too far-fetched to suggest that, whenever someone is inspired to begin telling stories about the hitherto unknown in contrast to the known, they enter the realm of science fiction, in an etymological sense if nothing else, that is, in the sense of fictionalizing knowledge (*scientia*).

There are modern counterparts to the classical sense of wonder as an inspiration for philosophizing. Kant seems to allude to the Aristotelian account of this experience when he concludes the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1997 [1788]) with a now famous reference to the amazement or awe generated by reflecting on the 'starry heavens'. This awe inspires Kant to contemplate 'a countless multitude of worlds' that 'as it were annihilates my importance as an animal creature, which after it has been for a short time provided with a vital force (one knows not how) must give back to the planet (a mere speck in the universe) the matter from whence it came' (1997: 133). Following his monumental *Critique of Pure Reason* (1978 [1781/87]), arguably the work most responsible for establishing the modern faith in the power and scope of reason, and the capacity of the rational human mind to comprehend the universe, here Kant suggests that this power of reason is itself dependent on an experience of the human's own cosmic insignificance. This anticipates his extension of the concept of the sublime in *Critique of Judgement* (1973 [1790]), where it comes to stand for the mind's experience of being faced with magnitudes and powers beyond its ability for comprehension or imagination.⁶ The figure responsible for the Copernican Revolution that established a heliocentrism of the reasoning human, here reduces that same human figure to the level of the least significance by viewing it from a cosmic perspective. The human as the sun around which the world rotates, is eclipsed. Day becomes night and night becomes day, and for a brief moment, the illuminated realm of knowledge and the infinite dark expanse of the unknown give the impression of changing places.

It does not require much imagination to see how easily an experience of wonder may have been fostered by the key facets of the emergence of modern science, which even as it appeared to cast aside questions of transcendence and the imagination, in taking up Kant's cosmic perspective, exposed the figure of the human to the near-inconceivability of an infinite world. As Paolo Rossi neatly summarizes,

Men in Hooke's times had a past of six thousand years; those of Kant's times were conscious of a past of millions of years. The difference lies not only between living at the center or at the margins of the universe, but also between

living in a present relatively close to the origins (and having at hand, what is more, a text that narrates the *entire* history of the world) or living instead in a present behind which stretches the 'dark abyss' (the term is Buffon's) of an almost infinite time. (1984: ix)

Considered from this perspective, a notion of science or philosophy *without* wonder, and without the capacity for fictionalizing, whether this means the explicit use of examples from myth or literature, or the constitutive role played by the thought of the unreal or unknown in theory, prediction and experimentation, would seem far stranger than the notion of a study of reality or nature which employs forms of fictionalizing.

What is salient in all this for the relationship between philosophy and science fiction, as well as for the affiliation between Bergson and Dick to which we will now turn, is the possibility that what come to appear, from a certain kind of scientific perspective, as modes of thought associated with knowledge, rationality and the real on the one hand, and the irrational and the fictional on the other, might at some other level, or at some other time, be or have been quite compatible, indeed, mutually conducive. In this light, it may make sense to consider the modern historical phenomenon of science fiction not as a bridge between two quite unconnected spheres – scientific rationalism and the experience of wonder, the known and the unknown – but, rather, as the partial re(dis)covery of a far older and more fundamental relationship between them.

Bergson and Dick at the edge of the known

More than an archaeology, more than a genealogy, Bergson's anti-Platonism is an astronomy that looks for other forms of life.

(Lawlor 2003: 111)

In the 'Avant-propos' to *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze avows that a book of philosophy should be part a crime thriller, and in part 'a kind of science fiction' (1994 [1968]: xx). Manola Antonioli (1999) provides a number of valuable insights into the significance of this comment in a text subtitled, 'on philosophy as science fiction'. With Deleuze, Antonioli suggests, 'one is before all else in the domain of *fiction*, one is in a possible world and not in the representation of the world "such as it is" or as it should be' (15).⁷ Where the attempt to represent necessarily constitutes a deliberate reduction of the real, which may

be considered a positive addition only in the limited sense of constructing a new object-text, science fiction makes additions of a qualitatively different order, supplying other possible worlds, multiplying the world itself. This description could equally be used to characterize that which makes Dick's science fiction philosophical. Antonioli suggests that

philosophy is also close to science-fiction in that one can write only about that which one knows badly, 'at the edge of his knowledge' [*à la pointe de son savoir*], just as the science fiction writer always writes from the scientific knowledge of the present in the direction of a knowledge that we do not yet possess, or from this world in the direction of worlds that are possible but as yet unknown. (1999: 16)

Bergson and Dick can each in his own way be said to be writing 'at the edge of his knowledge' – where accepted reality, that which is taken as known, begins to break down, or simply reaches its limits: for both writers, although in different modes, one arrives at this point through the recognition of the artificiality of the conventional view of the world (the view provided by both science and everyday intellectual experience). Both collapse conventional notions of reality, and struggle with the consequences, the task of understanding what is beyond the artificial. Dick's characters, on breaking through one false version of reality, frequently find themselves lost in another, and only through prolonged striving against these artificial views may they occasionally – possibly – have a glimpse or a hint of underlying truth or reality. Likewise, the grasping of the processual, dynamic nature of time and matter described by Bergson requires a great effort of intuition, since all the exigencies of everyday social and physical human life work to push it aside. One of Dick's favourite pieces of philosophical terminology was the distinction between *idios kosmos* and *koinos kosmos*, Greek terms used by Heraclitus to differentiate between private and shared worlds (Dick 1995a [1965]; E: 243). In making the distinction, Heraclitus suggested that the waking share one common world while the sleeping turn away from this to worlds of their own: Bergson likewise, in writing about the nature of mind, theorized that in waking life memories tend to be oriented towards the exigencies of a shared social reality, with the unique, private aspects of our mental lives being filtered out, only to return while sleeping and dreaming, when 'the darkened images come forward into the full light' (1988 [1896]): 85). Both Dick and Bergson are deeply concerned with the way these two spheres of human existence function and dysfunction, how and why the shared reality of the *koinos kosmos* may emerge from so many *idioti kosmoi* that are in themselves

mutually incompatible – and what different views of reality may be acquired on moving between them, or beyond the distinction.

Dick suggested in an interview that many science fiction writers, like himself, started off with a scientific desire for knowledge, yet coupled with a desire to speculate, to transcend the limits of the known and enter the imaginary realms that are generally prohibited for the scientist:

It is first of all the true scientific curiosity, in fact, true wondering, dreaming curiosity in general, that motivates us [science fiction writers], plus a desire to fill in the missing pieces in the most startling or unusual way. To add to what is actually there, the concrete reality [...] my own 'glimpse' of another world. (Dick 1995b [1974]: 73)

While Dick's movement at or beyond the limits of the known immediately takes him into the realm of fiction and speculation, it would be difficult to maintain that with Bergson we are in the realm of fiction to the extent Antonioli regards this as true of Deleuze. Nevertheless, there are moments of fictionalizing in Bergson's philosophy that play a central role in its development, as Deleuze himself attested (1988: 25). *Matter and Memory*, for instance, begins neither with propositions nor questions about the nature of the world, but with a kind of story – an imagined scene depicting a universe of images surrounding the particular image of a body, which Bergson plays with freely: 'In this image I cut asunder, in thought, all the afferent nerves of the cerebro-spinal system [...] A few cuts with the scalpel [...]' (1988 [1896]): 21). Various concepts in Bergson could be interrogated as to the degree to which they involve fiction, or the extent to which they depend on a fictive mode in order to be adequately thought – among them, his notions of the virtual, of pure perception and pure memory. Yet we would not even need to delve into such examples to recognize that in challenging the scientific common sense of his era, such as confidence in the mechanistic nature of the material world and of biological evolution (the understanding epitomized by the work of Herbert Spencer, which Bergson himself had embraced in his youth), or the notion that memories are physically stored in the brain, Bergson can already be said to have been attempting to think 'at the edge of (his) knowledge'.

To an extent, the relationship between Bergson and Dick explored here can itself be considered something fabulated. Another way Antonioli develops the notion of philosophy as science fiction is by suggesting that Deleuze develops a kind of 'fictive genealogy' of philosophy, which receives its 'coherence from elsewhere' – that is, from Deleuze's own reworking and interrelating of his

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