



In an entry in his *Exegesis* (an extensive journal he kept to explore the ramifications of 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1974 or ' 23-74' as he called it, when he thought he had been burgled *significantly*) written in 1981, Philip K. Dick wrote this assessment:

I am a fictionalizing philosopher, not a novelist; my novel & story-writing ability is employed as a means to formulate my perception. The core of my writing is not art but truth. Thus what I tell is the truth, yet I can do nothing to alleviate it, either by deed or explanation. Yet this seems somehow to help a certain kind of sensitive troubled person, for whom I speak. I think I understand the common ingredient in those whom my writing helps: they cannot or will not blunt their own intimations about the irrational, mysterious nature of reality, & for them, my corpus is one long ratiocination regarding this inexplicable reality, an integration & presentation, analysis & response & personal history.

Philip Dick is right up there with the fictionalizing philosophers of the twentieth century, with Franz Kafka, Jorge Luis Borges, Samuel Beckett and Flann O'Brien. And he got there on the back of high pop: science fiction. More than any of these writers except perhaps O'Brien, Dick at his best (and his best did not often come) makes compulsive reading. He is the master of the psychological pratfall, the metaphysical freefall, the conspiracy within a conspiracy. The best of his work offers us artful, wily guidance to the shifting realities of the twenty-first century.