

Moral Vision as Portrayed in Dick's Novel

The Three Stigmas of Palmer Eldritch

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Abstract

Ethics or values are a system of principles and behaviors that organize the lives of individuals in society, such that adherence to them results in the happiness of humanity.

Literary works of science fiction attempt, through creative forces that rely on intuition and spontaneity, to present an imaginary picture of what today's world will become in the future. These works reveal the integration between fictional work in the field of science fiction, modern scientific discoveries, and new situations in man's life. They also reveal the strength of the relationship between objective scientific thinking and subjective scientific imagination about the future, despite the difference and variation in treatment method and goal.

Moral vision in the science fiction is of a consistent vision of genuine realism at a time when such a concept has been disavowed by the postmodern establishment. Hence, science fiction writers have created a distinctive works that gradually are reflected the science fictional community. They focus on creating man's situation in harmony with realism. The moral vision of those authors goes with time to show the importance of this phenomenon and to describe the world in which significant mechanics become ostensible. It is evident that the moral thoughts replace any effort at disappearing it.

When man considers the moral cipher as something important in life, the aggressive world will definitely will be a moral one. Science fiction therefore transcends reality to discover the nature of man's mind and its materialism in this era. Therefore, the importance of science fiction is its impact on social life, human relationships, and the

moral values and principles that will guide these relationships and control man's destiny.

Key words: science fiction, realism, man, community, technology, ethics.

الرؤية الأخلاقية كما صورتها رواية ديك "الوصمات الثلاث لبالمر إدریتش"

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المستخلص:

الأخلاق أو القيم هي نظام من المبادئ والسلوكيات التي تنظم حياة الأفراد في المجتمع، بحيث يؤدي الالتزام بها إلى سعادة الإنسانية.

تحاول أعمال الخيال العلمي الأدبية، من خلال قوى إبداعية تعتمد على الحدس والعفوية، تقديم صورة خيالية لما سيصبح عليه عالم اليوم في المستقبل. وتكشف هذه الأعمال عن التكامل بين العمل الروائي في مجال الخيال العلمي والاكتشافات العلمية الحديثة والمواقف الجديدة في حياة الإنسان. كما أنها تكشف عن قوة العلاقة بين التفكير العلمي الموضوعي والتخيل العلمي الذاتي للمستقبل، على الرغم من الاختلاف والتنوع في طريقة العلاج والهدف.

الرؤية الأخلاقية في الخيال العلمي هي رؤية متسقة للواقعية الحقيقية في وقت تم فيه التنصل من هذا المفهوم من قبل مؤسسة ما بعد الحداثة. لذلك ابتكر كتاب الخيال العلمي أعمالاً مميزة تعكس تدريجياً مجتمع الخيال العلمي. إنهم يركزون على خلق حالة الإنسان بشكل متناغم مع الواقعية.

إن الرؤية الأخلاقية لهؤلاء المؤلفين تذهب مع مرور الوقت لإظهار أهمية هذه الظاهرة ووصف العالم الذي تصبح فيه الميكانيكا المهمة ظاهرة. ومن الواضح أن الأفكار الأخلاقية تحل محل أي جهد لإخفائها.

عندما يعتبر الإنسان الشفرة الأخلاقية شيئاً مهماً في الحياة، فإن العالم العدواني سيكون بالتأكيد عالماً أخلاقياً. لذلك فإن الخيال العلمي يتجاوز الواقع ليكتشف طبيعة عقل الإنسان وماديته في هذا العصر. ومن هنا تكمن أهمية الخيال العلمي في تأثيره على الحياة الاجتماعية والعلاقات الإنسانية والقيم والمبادئ الأخلاقية التي ستوجه هذه العلاقات وتتحكم في مصير الإنسان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخيال العلمي، الواقعية، الإنسان، المجتمع، التكنولوجيا، الأخلاق.

1. Introduction

Morals are “an attempt to reach an understanding of the nature of human values, how to live, and what correct behavior is” (Miller, 2008: p. 1). Wolfgang Künne defines morals as “the study or science of subjective morality and being moral means belonging to or relating to the principles of good and evil, or right and wrong” (Künne, 2003: p.15). This shows that values are actually a certain kind of truth and empirical statements about “the flourishing of sentient beings in society” as Harris suggests (1984: p.6). He argues that there are objective answers to moral questions, even if some are difficult or impossible to have in practice. In this way he says that science can tell us what we should value.

On the other hand, Wong focuses on the extent one should be involved in reforming social and political structures larger than one's community, and on the means one should behave when in a position of influence or power. For him, personal, social and political aspects are often intertwined (Wong, 2017:p. 22).

Philip Kindred Dick (1928- 1982) was an American novelist and one of the most important figures in 20th century science fiction which has revealed varied philosophical and social questions such as the nature of man/ reality, awareness, man's identity, and commonly

characters struggling against elements such as alternate realities, illusive environments, and drug abuse.

Dick's aim in his novel *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965) is to shed light on how the hallucination introduced by hallucinogenic medicines with the aid of scientific ideas misleads man's view of reality. Moreover, he concentrates on showing the harmful effect of power games played by the main protagonists on the axiological instructions.

The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch is one of Dick's enduring classics, profound characters, a dim secret and a tight-line walk along the verge of reality and illusion. It also reveals the misery of minds/ souls/ hearts of colonists on Mars in "a psychedelic odyssey of hallucinations-within-hallucinations from which no one emerges unscathed" (Globe, 2013:p.10).

Only, six colonists are on Mars; Sam Regan, Tod Morris, Norman Schein and their wives, have an experience with Can-D. The drug allows them to enter the materialistic culture of Earth for short time. Although, there is some disagreement about whether they are really on Earth or are just having a hallucinatory experience.

On Mars, the severe weather could push any colonist to take drugs in order to escape death, specifically the drug Can- D that turns its users into the peaceful world of a Barbie character named Perky Pat. But on the arrival of the mysterious Palmer Eldritch with a new drug named Chew-Z, he gives an addictive experience as its user will be closer to God. Nevertheless, no promises of value can be taken in a world of journey.

2. Reality Vs. Illusion

Science Fiction is a type of literary art that is characterized by imagination while relying on science. It is "imagination based on facts, theories and scientific principles and this is what distinguishes it from ordinary imagination" (Simov, 1982: p. 43). It can also be defined as one of the forms of imagination which is related to the impact of science on society or individuals, whether actual or imagined.

In their writings, science fiction authors focus on both reality and illusion which are two faces that live inside a person, but they differ on the ground of reality. There is a thin line that separates them, and sometimes things get mixed up between them.

The illusion that some people live is nothing but proactive thinking that breaks the chains of the environment. It is not tied to a place, and its horizons are limitless. Man can carry out the process of illusion whenever he wants, "as he wanders in his own world with his mind, forming images and moving them until he reaches what he wants" (Draaisma, 2000: p.10). Some illusions come true and are transformed into reality. It is painful for anyone to expose himself to frustration and tension when he does not differentiate between reality and illusion.

On the other side, awareness is considered a mental state through which man perceives reality and the facts that occur around him, through his contact with the environment in which he lives. Man's awareness and understanding of himself increased within the framework of the events around him.

Draaisma emphasizes that there is a contrast and contradiction between reality and illusion, and this is due to the fact that "truth is an expression of what is real and is rooted in the outside, while illusion is an expression of nothingness and unreality" ((2000: pp. 22-28). Although the distance between reality and illusion is unlimited, it may

shrink to the point that it is difficult to distinguish between them. The reason for the contradiction between them; reality/illusion, is clear in the stage of confirmation, but it is more ambiguous in the stage of proof, as man's knowledge does not create reality, but rather only perceives it (Draaisma: p. 31).

In the stage of perception, difference and confusion occur between reality and illusion. In his cognitive perception, man is not absolutely neutral, but rather the self- intervenes with reality and changes it in a way that suits him. Here, "truth is no longer an expression of reality but rather becomes the expression of what man wants from reality" (Draaisma: p.37). When man is at ease with his self, he will draw for himself a world parallel to the world of truth and reality, and this appears clearly at the level of human knowledge related to social, political, economic, and other reality.

3. Dick and his Philosophical Foundations

Dick's novel *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* is rich in philosophical reflections and his focus on existence, identity and control is because the characters navigate their realities. Through Eldritch's character, the question of God emerges whether he is god-like or just a manifestation of man's drug illusion. Through taking Chew-Z drug, the author reveals many existential crises; showing man's nature and desires, his confrontation the fears and the distorted reality that leads to ambiguity.

Dick's works embodied a progression from a mundane moral vision to a religious one defined by prior to this overwhelming moral vision revolved around the opposite notions of empathy versus entropy. Dick's concern is to understand the nature of reality because of its significance in life; "linking this with a fundamental of human

behavior and to move towards a metaphorical quest for plentitude through God” (Alston, 1996: p. 10). He has preoccupied with finding reality's meaning that finally his sense told him that the unreal is a vital part of the human condition. Hence humanity has to resolve to this tape of the unreal before seeking the more philosophical and religious concepts of genuine reality. His visionary thinking lies in:

“his linking of quantum physics and its philosophical implications with metaphysical concerns; this is a world where metaphysics has long lost any serious standing in any of the postmodern systems of thought” (Blanshard, 1981: 15).

Dick has an additional asset that is a characteristic of science fiction that is a sort revolving around a great idea, his vivid thoughts and their usage. Stanislaw Lem points out that Dick's writing:

" introduced the hero's business concerns on page one...the hero is in the antique business, say, as each new marvel turns up to ruminates whether it is salable. When the dead talk, they give business advice....his plot are alike nothing else" (Lem, 1992: pp. 49-63)

Dick clearly wants to stress the unreality of human experience and will use the android itself defined as a perfect mechanical replace of human physiology.

Dick believes that the actual world is not under the influence of a genuine reality. For him, reality's belonging to the world is contiguous in meaning to empathy versus the android. His view is that once the ethical values of mankind are discovered, man becomes closer to God and “receptive to an epiphany which takes the form of platonic

anamnesis; the act of remembering something metaphysically forgotten” (Mackey, 1988: p. 30).

Dick wants people to recognize that the world is governed by secrets cabals and there is no foundation for the authentic anywhere to be seen. The authentic exists Dick asserts in our moral vision, it is the empathy people feel towards each other which prevent them from conning the fellow human beings and not any of the fake society.

Dick knows the human elements in the impossibility of realism. Aside from the factors that made realism patently impossible, he realizes that human beings live a lie by producing a deceptive and intrigue world that called human nature. But Dick believes that the great lie is realism actualized in this world. Hence, he has instructed man to produce the more common lies and rackets that seem to rule lives as Spinelli avers (1992: pp.19-22).

4. Dick's Moral Ambivalence

Moral vision in the science fiction of Dick appears upon reading his steady vision of genuine realism at a time when such a concept has been disavowed by the postmodern establishment:

“Taking his philosophical strides from platonic, Jungian and quantum terminology Dick has indeed created a unique and exhilarating work that is being increasingly given its due outside the science-fictional community” (Warrick, 1986: pp. 74-90),

He has confirmed the necessity of establishing a human condition in accord with perceptual realism. Crime, conspiracies, paranoia and behavior of the same kind make reality an impossible position. This is the part that can eventually be controlled by humankind.

On the other hand, Dick's moral vision goes with time as this phenomenon is important because he finally gets to describe a world

in which quantum mechanics become apparent. It is obvious that once man realizes the necessity of ethical code, morality will dominate the aggressive world.

Dick presents a weird landscape; late 21th century- space colonies are endemic with boredom. Earth's climate has deteriorated while colonists in Mars cope with miserable lives. To escape, they use Can-D, a hallucinogenic drug which allows users to create a fictitious reality including toys such as Perky Pat and Walt. The appearance of Palmer Eldritch, a mysterious manufacturer of Chew-Z, a very influential drug comes back from a decade- long journey to Proxima. This drug promises a deep experience but with terrible dangers. Some users refuse to take it fearing from being trapped in endless delusion, completely controlled by Eldritch himself. This tightness shapes a society struggles with this new drug's consequences.

In this novel Eldritch horrible pilgrim is a God-like figure turned cannibal in all the horrific senses of the term. His nourishment is not the flesh but the reality of his victims. Here, Dick can shift "the hallucination where no firm ground of consensual reality is existed" (Dick, 1978: p. 13. Dick used specific technique of Eldritch character by making him struck blind of voice only. We know nonetheless that Eldritch has just crashed on Pluto and is being hospitalized for main injustice. Also, no one knows at that time if the three stigmata are grafted into him or are already there when he left for the Prox system ten years ago.

One of the main protagonists, Leo Bulero Mayerson's boss is the king of the jungle as he is one of the most successful triumphs of the positive evolutionary device mentioned in the novel which makes him one of "the most brilliant individuals on earth and also the sole owner of a monopoly in an essential market of this future world" (Dick: p.

23). Bulero's genuine empathy with humanity differentiates him from Eldritch and other capitalist leaders

Dragged with a sample from Chew-Z, Eldritch 's new drug, Bulero changes into a maze of hallucination, freeing himself several times during the novel to find the insidious grip of Eldritch still firmly present. The drug seems so potent that a single take is enough to enslave the individual in Eldritch's rear universe. Eldritch proudly declares that "he can deliver eternal life which God can only promise" (Dick: p. 45). Nevertheless, this eternal life is not God's but Satan's eternal damnation.

Bulero, feels endangered by Eldritch and fears of losing his new drug that affects his behavior and disobedience reaction is. He has never regret in suffocation Monica which he believes to be a persona of Eldritch's lesbian daughter Zoe. The important thing is that when he suffocates her she mentions the Bible's words "from dust thou art to dust shall thou return" (Dick: pp.97-80). It is a clear and significant reference to the memo to show that Bulero does not acknowledge the short-lived existence and refuses to be challenged by it. So, Bulero decides to kill Eldritch for being the embodiment of evil.

It is important to mention that however Bulero's motives are less than noble as he seems to grip with the idea after he encounters a glorious statue of himself " as Earth's liberator from the proxies' invasion of the solar system"(Dick: p.97). Also in fighting, he takes cover so that the invasion of the proxers is the invasion of both his domination and personal damnation.

Unlike Bulero, the truly human character in this novel is Barney Mayerson. He is a complex but ultimately an extraordinary protagonist of a highly paid and important executive in Bulero's corporation where he uses his precognitive powers to fashion trends

for the Perky Pat layouts. On the other hand, he is deeply worried to resorting to a movable therapist whose function is to make him go insane enough to dodge the UN draft to the colonies. Mayerson's job includes forecasting trends in decor for Can-D experiences as "his character echoes a deep emotional conflict, contending with identity and regret" (Canaan, 2022: 307). He is haunted by his separation from ex-wife Emily, who now creates ceramics in Mars. Also, he knows that his new lover, Roni Fugate, "herself a precog, will manipulate events to overtake his professional position" (Dick: p.10). Mayerson is humane in his dealing with others; first with his ex-wife whom he always loves. He attempts to reconquer her love and is ready for all sacrifices when he observes that she has been devolved by the device which gave Bulero his intellectual edge. After he is fired by Bulero for not rescuing him when he was in Luna, Mayerson accepts to be part of a plan to discredit Eldritch in the outer colonies; "there he tries to culture the desolate methane land like Voltaire's *Candide*" (Dick: pp. 142-143) and thus redeems himself. His journey ends up in a desert to renewed hope.

On the other hand, Eldritch is an ambiguous as Bulero in his motives to invade the solar system. Eldritch, with three different physical deformities, aka the three stigmata, embodies a puzzle. His return in rumor creates a terror feeling around him. Several times, Eldritch's presence is vague "one of the grizzly proxers" (Dick: p. 166) or another alien that "fed on him on the way back from the prox system" (Dick: p. 198). But in two occasions Eldritch wants to help first Bulero after he faces the horrid monster (Dick: p. 80). Second, he assists Mayerson who attempts to reconcile with his ex-wife during his first Chew-Z drug trip (Dick: p. 192). Moreover, Eldritch's claim promises resurrection and transformation but unlike God, he does not

have the ability to keep his promises (Dick: p. 178). This process confirms that Eldritch is also a victim due to his situation like others.

5. Dick and the Concept of Evil:

Dick is aware that the corruption of man comes not from an intrinsic flaw in his existence but a moral flaw which derives from the existence of evil as a serpent entity. In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, Dick examines this notion of evil revealing that the ethical texts can be corrupted like the human condition. Therefore, one must be very cautious when he/ she seeks the moral stance and the empathy of world. Dick saw the resolution of evil as one of the main component in his philosophy.

His usage of the word gift is German for poison to emphasize that evil is a double –edged gift. In this novel, there are some ontological trends that link evil with the world of lies. The first trend is economic exploitation, related to the previous point about conspiracy. Bulero is the “premeditated exploiter of the colonists, unabashedly and vigorously pounding on any competitor” (Dick: p. 122). However, this exploitation is through the novel and at many levels that are independent from Bulero’s influence. The United Nations, rulers of this science-fictional world, are cunning and vicious exploiters of the earth’s situation as well as seen by the encounter between UN Secretary and Bulero at the beginning of the novel and in subsequent allusions to their activities in the colonies. Also, there is Dr. Denkmal’s E- Therapy which is not only elitist but harmful in the way it devolves Mayerson’s ex-wife. Above all is the Phildickian treatment of the mass media which continually harass the masses. Clearly, in all of Dick’s novels of this period “the mass media is seen in term of 24 hours TV

propaganda, robot insects which follow people incessantly with innate commercials and so on” as Canaan states (p. 312).

The second trend is conceptual religion as it is perceived by the colonialists and later the religious language used in describing both Can- D (Dick: p. 26) which is responsible for the miracle of translation whereby the colonialists are transported via a metaphysical cum supernatural air back to our kind of earth. Also, they mention the “disengagement of the body” (Dick: p.166) whereby they can commit any sin while not committing any crime. Finally, they describe the freedom of action that prevails where they can all act in opposition to the restrictions of their hellish environment on Mars. The genius of Dick is to substitute a lethal drug to the wine and bread of the Christian Mass. He can then discuss through the Martian settles the Medieval debate over substance versus accident.

The third trend is of good versus evil. Indeed, Dick's point is simple to comprehend how can man expect genuine reality if he himself is prone to evil and sin. Hence, this novel has reversed the conceptual roles of good and evil using images and symbols usually within the realm of the scriptures. Dick here confirms that “the good as is presented in the Bible, no guarantee of the genuine goodness of God” (Link, 2023: 47). Good as everything else, it can be prevented by evil. This is regarded as the most crucial point mentioned in the novel. It is evident that all these different trends led to a single religious solution to Dick's basic interrogation on the nature of reality and human condition. Obviously, all the characters become divinity.

Dick often states that “evil wears a mental face” (Warrick: p. 110). The stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, his panoramic mental eyes, teeth and hand are symbols of the different types of evil that man are confronted with. The artificial eyes are there to imply to the

pantheistic vision of evil, a perversion of the idea that God can see all our individual actions; while, the artificial teeth are there to overwhelm man, to cannibalize humanity and eventually the whole range of reality. Finally, the artificial hand is more efficient than any natural hand symbolizing “explicitly the dictum a velvet glove in an iron hand” (Sutin, 1996: 16). Also, Dick who is a classical music specialist and enthusiast has no ability to resist naming him after Ravel’s Bolero considered in its time as the Devil’s music. This indirect reference to the devil is both a reminder of what will befall him at the hands of Eldritch but also a statement of his character.

It is evident that the struggle between good and evil opens the way to the trend of the cannibalization of humankind. By accepting this evil individually as the position of the UN reveals itself in the novel, obstacles are putted that will never be breached between man and genuine reality. Hence, the struggle cannot be only individual but a universal as well.

6. The Drugs: Two Ways of Reality

In this novel the first challenge is everyday changing between reality and vague experience achieved through the drug Chew-Z. Both, Bulero and Mayerson take this drug and try to escape from. It is evident when Bulero’s attempt to escape from this drug reality to his office at P. P. Layouts that clearly exposes to be another facet of the drug experience.

Both the two drugs Can-D and Chew- Z represent opposing vision of escaping. Can-D gives a momentary illusion of happiness; permitting users to inhabit dolls. It adopts a sense of community and experience but for a short time as being rooted in delusion. Despite of its temporary lasting, the colonists consider it as a salvation from

depressing condition (Dick: p. 67). In the contrast, Chew-Z drug offers a profound dive into man's reality manipulation. Its users can form their illusions and create world that echoes their wishes. The lines between reality and thought are distorted. It is evident that the difference between the two drugs symbolizes the extended metaphor for religion and spirituality.

Other important thing is the time between Mayerson's awakening and his subsequent overdose as Eldritch tells him that he never awake because of his manipulation into overdose. Is it really what Eldritch said or is Mayerson's hallucination. Deep within a drug induced vision, Mayerson explains that Chew- Z causes "phantasms in the future but indecisive for might be from a storytelling outlook" (Dick: p. 78). Dick used drugs, religion and misperception as vital parts of man's normal state.

The two women characters, Rondinella represents ambition whereas Anne a traditional voice asking about the ethics of drugs. Their role has significance in the middle of confused events. There is a variance between Anne's collapse from grace, using drugs because religion is not enough to make her happy and Mayerson's fall from a different grace, accepting religious beliefs because atheism is not sufficient to give him logical clarification for his Chew- Z experience. At the end, Mayerson cannot tell the dissimilarity between religious phenomena and drug-induced hallucinations, believing that "the methods of the Christians may purge Eldritch's stigmata from him and that the appearance of the stigmata saved him from the jackal because they represented the presence of god (Dick: p.225). No suspect, Dick is recognized as a major thinker on the nature of reality throughout his three decade career, he inquired upon the importance of reality.

Conclusion

The world has witnessed in this century the most radical transformation of civilization ever imagined before and recent history has encountered the worse face of man's condition. The technological advancement that has emerged so quickly does not allow a genuine evaluation of its influence on society and the future of mankind.

Science fiction novels are often futuristic and include innovative concepts. All science fiction novels are somewhat complex, regardless of the setting and characters. They contain precise details and explore new and different events and concepts from our reality. Dick has never denied science fiction as the type of ultimate freedom. The restrictions of its tropes are limitless because these motifs are philosophical entities and not materialistic metaphors. Dick's science fiction begins with an explicit assertion of the real / unreal and the mixture he makes between the authentic/ empathy. The conversion happened as the moral vision becomes part of a secretive.

Dick was the master of the sophisticated plot with multifocal narration. He often entertained conflicting ideas and points of view. His style is to present several viewpoints that will eliminate each other until he achieves a resolution at the end of the novel.

In this novel, *The Three Stigmas of Palmer Eldritch*, Bulero's decision to kill Eldritch and end everything is uncertain whether he is himself or now becomes Eldritch. Though, Bulero pretends that Eldritch's role is optimistic, in the future, man has not filled the gap with himself in an elevating way but with commercialized mess, dolls and psychoactive chemicals. This shows the extremes of human nature that is most pessimistic, dim and dreary. Definitely, the effect of loss, isolation and longing for meaning are reflected throughout the novel.

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