

A Timeline of Psychiatry in Novels of Philip K. Dick

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Abstract: In the works of Philip K. Dick, one can identify the various moments that have characterized the progress made in psychiatry in the decades following the 1940s. According to Edward Shorter's classification, these phases make up the first biological psychiatry until the 1940s; psychoanalysis between the 1940s and the 1960s; anti-psychiatry in the 1960s; and the second biological psychiatry from the 1960s onward. The first and fourth phases are characterized by an explanation for mental illness through a biological paradigm, and by therapies which were initially the constraining and surgical type, and pharmacological afterwards. The psycho-analysis and anti-psychiatry periods are instead characterized by the "talking cure" and socio-family paradigms.

Philip Dick, an American writer famous for his science fiction novels, was an anxious person who used amphetamines and psychotropic drugs to cope with several psychiatric disorders. In his adult life, he became interested in mental distress and psychotherapies, and included futuristic transpositions of daily, post-war, American living in his science fiction works.

The aim of this article is to highlight how the different evolutionary phases of psychiatry in the United States are described in Philip K. Dick's literary production, and to thus confirm how his science fiction work was positioned within that particular American historical context.

Keywords: anti-psychiatry; biological psychiatry; Philip K. Dick; psychoanalysis; science fiction

1. Introduction

The critical work on Philip K. Dick has often focused on the author's exploration of schizophrenia (Dick, 1965a; Enn, 2006; Warrick, 1987). Mental illness, often associated with the description of the desperate conditions of Americans and of Martian colonists described in the Dickian novels, has led critics to analyze his novels of the 1960s by concentrating on their theoretical psychoanalytical and existentialist aspects (Wolk, 1995). It is indisputable that Dick was sensitive to this psychopathological topic; just as it is an undeniable fact that schizophrenia was the most frequently diagnosed mental illness between the 1940s and the 1960s (Shorter, 1997). In Dick's work, which covers approximately three decades, one can also find additional elements ascribable to other aspects of psychiatry and psychopathology.

The advances made in psychiatry in the United States have been described by Edward Shorter in four phases: initially, the first biological psychiatry, next, psychoanalysis and anti-psychiatry, and lastly, the second biological psychiatry. In his

works, Dick at times included long-winded descriptions, whilst at other times, planted simple clues tracing back to these different phases in the development of psychiatry.

In order to make even clearer the relationships between the phases of psychiatry and the phases of Dick's literary production, it is useful to follow Shorter's subdivision of the history of psychiatry as broken down into these four phases. Although Shorter's approach to the topic has been criticized,¹ his classification scheme is realistic and useful to the discussion contained herein by verifying how the works of Philip K. Dick are integrated into said phases, albeit with widely overlapping areas between them.

Obviously, not all four phases are equally represented. As Csicsery-Ronay writes: "[That] Dick was familiar with psychological discourse, to the point of fixation, is evident in almost everything he wrote" (Csicsery-Ronay, 1995, p. 431). But Dick was a writ-

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er who was active in the years between 1950 and 1970, and he absorbed those aspects of psychiatry that were typical of that contemporary moment, hence psychoanalysis (the works by Jung and Bin-swanger translated in the United States), part of the anti-psychiatry movement, and the first studies of the second biological psychiatry (the articles published in a psychology magazine with wide circulation such as *Psychology Today*). The second and third phases are much more evident in his work. The first is referenced through sporadic comments in his early works, which may be due to the fact that the first phase was ending when Dick started his career as a writer. The last phase began when Dick was in the midst of a creative and personal crisis, and so the references to such psychiatry pertain to only a few aspects of this phase, such as the studies on the split-brain and on neurotransmitters.

In Dick's work, there are countless scenes, asides, dialogues or comments that exemplify the four phases of the progress of psychiatry. Accordingly, I have tried to focus on representation throughout a few specific works, preferring to mention, in a footnote, other aspects which have been deemed to be important but more factual than narratological. This was done in order to keep the reading light, at the same time equally making it clear to the reader that Dick was indeed alert to what was happening in the areas of therapeutic treatment and the living conditions of people affected by psychiatric illnesses.

2. Post-war psychiatry in the United States

The post-war years were a breaking point for psychiatry between a before, when mental illness was considered a neurological disorder to be cured through invasive therapies, such as lobotomy and electroshock, and an after in which schizophrenia became the mental disorder par excellence, and was treated with pharmacological therapies.

During the three decades that followed World War II, psychiatry experienced two major and significant phases (psychoanalysis and anti-psychiatry)

during which mental disorders were considered exclusively psychic phenomena. The subsequent development of pharmacological therapies, accompanied by new studies on neurotransmitters and on the functioning of the brain, led to the return of psychiatry and a second biological phase.

2.1 The first biological psychiatry

The period from the end of the nineteenth century to the years spanning World War II is the period that Edward Shorter defined the first biological psychiatry. The therapies used in the psychiatric field between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1950s were basically gynecological surgery, hydrotherapy, tooth extraction, malaria fever therapy, insulin coma therapy, convulsive therapy with Metrazol, electroshock therapy, and prefrontal lobotomy.

For the entire first half of the twentieth century, the idea that the disease was a chronic and hopeless one resulted in the practice of segregating mental patients into isolated hospital wards without ever discharging them: especially during the early decades of the twentieth century. Up until the 1930s, patients in psychiatric hospitals were often simply controlled by guards who did not treat them but instead kept them separate from the outside world, so much so that "asylum psychiatry counted scarcely as a branch of medicine at all" (Shorter, 1997, p. 192). The conditions in which mental patients lived were revealed by the journalist Albert Deutsch in a 1946 edition of *Life Magazine*. It was this discovery that led to the birth of a movement that became known as "anti-psychiatry." Photographs of patients left to themselves in large hospitals with few personnel available to assist them became a symbolic image of this phase. The conditions in which mental patients were found reminded readers of the lives of the Jews right after their liberations from concentration camps (Deutsch, 1948, pp. 41-42), as well as of other ethnic groups destined to segregation and subjected to eugenic practices. Lobotomies and electroshock therapy were also symbols of this post-war psychiatry, but these were

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merely the treatments themselves; the real problem consisted in the post-therapeutic treatment. The lobotomized patient or the patient who underwent many electroshocks was no longer autonomous and so was forcibly admitted to a clinic. The widespread belief that it was easy to obtain forced and generalized hospitalization subsequently paved the way for the anti-psychiatry movement in the early 1960s.

2.2 The Psychoanalytic era

While the first biological psychiatry phase was at its peak, psychoanalysis was taking hold in the United States due to the emigration of many European psychoanalysts who were fleeing Nazism. The psychoanalytic era took place between the early 1940s and the end of the 1960s, but its peak occurred between the end of the 1950s and the 1960s. New York City was America's psychoanalytic center, so much so that analysis mania was called "New York Syndrome" (Shorter, 1997, p. 174). Different factors contributed to the success of psychoanalysis: from the greater wealth enjoyed by the middle class, who thus had the opportunity to undergo such a personalized therapy, to the desire for introspection often manifested by those who had studied humanities.

Freudian psychoanalysts in Europe did not consider psychoanalysis to be suited for the treatment of schizophrenia and other psychoses, but in the United States things changed. Adolf Meyer was the one who, more than anyone else, introduced psychotherapy for psychotics in America, this being the reason why the psychoanalytical method became so widespread. Harry Stack Sullivan, who believed schizophrenia to be a failed reaction to anxiety, also introduced this method for these types of patients. Thanks to the psychotherapeutic innovation represented by the psychoanalytic "talking cure," for Americans in general, the term "psychiatry" became synonymous with psychoanalysis. This sentiment was further strengthened by the publication of the first diagnostic manual for psychologists and psychiatrists. This development emerged as a consequence of the disseminated works of the two most important theorists of psychoanalysis:

Sigmund Freud, whose work was already known in the United States for several decades; and Carl Gustav Jung, whose works were also translated into English and whose theory, not focused on sexuality like the Freudian one, was more widely accepted in the United States (Taylor, 1998; McGuire, 1995). In addition to Freud and Jung, books that gathered together articles by multiple authors on specific topics also met with some success (and caught Dick's interest). For example, in 1944, the work entitled *Language and Thought in Schizophrenia*, edited by J. S. Kasanin and N. D. C. Lewis, was published (and later reprinted by W.W. Norton & Company in 1964, in the midst of the anti-psychiatry phase when the topic of schizophrenia was extremely popular). The volume contained articles on the language of schizophrenics, written by Von Domarus, Sullivan and Goldstein; Kasanin and Angyal wrote two articles on schizophrenic thought, whilst Benjamin suggested a test aimed at diagnosing schizophrenia. This volume was still in the field of psychology, even though it dealt with topics such as language and thought which were also part of psychoanalysis. It was with the publication of the volume entitled *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* (1958), edited by Rollo May and Henri Ellenberger, that Americans became familiar with existential analysis and the thinking of the Swiss psychoanalyst Ludwig Binswanger. Although the book was viewed as a tract closer to philosophy and to poetry than to science (Piers, 1959) (and perhaps this is the reason why Dick particularly liked it), it did manage to disseminate Binswanger's thought, which was rather complex.

Binswanger assumes two forms of relation: one with things (Umwelt) and one with people (Mitwelt). The social background, the Mitwelt, is the world inhabited by people interacting with one another, whereas the subjective, closed world of the psychopath is called Umwelt, a world with non-human things on which the schizophrenic may exert his influence. Thus, he does not interact with the Mitwelt. According to Binswanger, the manic-depressive subject jumps from one world-project to the other, and he is possessed by his several and

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often contradictory worlds; the schizophrenic, instead, is possessed by one world only, a world without inhabitants, empty, and only powered by himself (Needleman, 1963). More specifically, Binswanger meant being-with-others and being-toward-others. Psychotherapy must be understood as a meeting of two human beings. The doctor/patient relationship must necessarily take place on a common ground. This is the concept that makes Binswanger one of the progenitors of anti-psychiatry.

Psychoanalysis declined in popularity in the 1960s due to new models of psychiatric illness, the discovery of alternative treatments, and most importantly, the development of newer and more powerful drugs. The boom of psychiatric drugs led to the second biological psychiatry, and to “the virtual abandonment of innovative interest in psychoanalytic and family theorizing on the etiology of schizophrenia” (Gilman Sander, 2008, p. 474).

2.3 Anti-psychiatry

At the same time as the end of psychoanalysis and the birth of the second biological psychiatry, the 1960s witnessed the onset of a movement historically defined as anti-psychiatry (originally, the term “anti-psychiatry” was used for the first time by Bernhard Beyer in 1912 to characterize an article that criticized psychiatry). Anti-psychiatry theorists were basically distinguished by an aversion to psychotropic drugs. One of the first anti-psychiatrists was the Englishman Robert Laing. In his work *The Divided Self* (1960), he opposed not psychiatry in itself, but its coercive aspect. In addition to Laing’s works, the other books that sparked widespread interest for anti-psychiatry were all published within the span of one year: *Asylum* by Erving Goffman (1961), *Madness and Insanity: History of Madness in the Classical Age* (1961; American edition 1965) by Michel Foucault, and *The Myth of Mental Illness* (1961) by Thomas Szasz. Anti-psychiatry arose from the social atmosphere of the 1960s: the general climate of hostility towards authority, the medical ones in particular; the opinion of anti-psychia-

try supporters that the origin of mental disorders was not personal but instead social and that it was society that determined who was schizophrenic. There was a widespread idea that thousands and thousands of Americans were hospitalized in psychiatric clinics, even those with only mild conditions, for the sole purpose of controlling them.

2.4 The second biological psychiatry

The decline of psychoanalysis at the end of the 1960s was caused by many factors: the discovery of new and more effective drugs that made it possible to avoid long therapy sessions; the advent of a new model of psychiatric illness, which emphasized neurogenesis rather than psychogenesis (which is what precisely Dick became interested in); and the discovery of alternative psychotherapeutic techniques such as the cognitive behavioral therapy (Shorter, 1997). Moreover, “psychodynamic psychology had offered a common paradigm linking psychiatry and anthropology. The shift of mainstream psychiatry towards science and medicine and away from psychodynamic psychology made this link no longer tenable” (Bains 2005, p. 145). As for anti-psychiatry, it was paradoxically that which facilitated the entrance of the new bio-psychology: psychiatric institutions were run by psychoanalysts, and at the time, said institutions were seen as spaces of confinement; this led to an equivalence between psychiatric institutions and psychoanalysis. And that is how the second biological psychiatry, in which neurology became the paradigm that could be used as a guide for interpreting phenomena which had been studied before by psychoanalysts and behaviorists, came about; moreover, the use of mass (blockbuster) psychiatric drugs became widespread.²

Although this phase had already been in progress for decades—given that biochemical testing had never stopped—one could say that it began at the end of the 1960s, when the studies of Kranjec & Schwartz (1967) developed on gamma-Aminobutyric acid (GABA), an inhibitor of the reuptake of receptors, the action of which could be applied to the

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production of anxiolytics. Studies on the functioning of the brain hemispheres proved to be just as interesting. These studies commenced during the same period by psychologists in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas, and were widely disseminated even outside the restricted academic circle. Joseph Bogen worked at UCLA and CalTech and published, “The other side of the brain: An appositional mind” (1968); Charles Tart of the Stanford Research Institute had already written articles on extrasensory perception and out-of-body experiences, and published a work entitled *Altered States of Consciousness* (1969); Robert E. Ornstein of the University of California Medical Center and later Stanford University published *The Psychology of Consciousness* (1972), in which he hypothesized that people actually use the left hemisphere only. They combined neuroscientific theories with theories on behaviorism and the subconscious. The group collaborated in putting together the collection, *The Nature of Human Consciousness*, edited by Ornstein in 1974. In addition to the classics of psychology, such as William James, Aldous Huxley, and Carl Jung, it also included recent contributions of the 1960s and 1970s to the cognitivist or neuroscientific school, but with an opening to other fields: there were works on the split-brain phenomenon, the two modes of consciousness by Deickman, Bogen’s article published a few years before, and “The split Brain in Man” by Michael S. Gazzaniga. It should be noted that in the section dedicated to the split-brain, there was also an excerpt from the *Ching*, one of the key books of the Dickian corpus.

Psychology Today, an informative magazine particularly focused on cognitive psychology and the neurosciences—which were the two emerging psychologies of the period that replaced behaviourism and psychoanalysis (the two major American psychological paradigms up until that time)—played an important role in spreading the second biological psychiatry. Two articles which struck a significant chord were “Vitamins Pills for Schizophrenics” by Harvey Ross (April 1974),³ which examined overdoses of water-soluble vitamins that improve neural

activity, and “Thrust your Body Rhythms,” by Gae G. Luce covering (unsurprisingly) body rhythms.

These studies, conducted in the early years of the second biological psychiatry, were gradually set aside, and psychiatry oriented itself towards a synthesis between psycho-pharmacology and the cognitive behavioral paradigm.

3. Philip K. Dick’s works and the representation of psychiatry

Dick’s interest in the different types of psychology was in part due to the fact that he himself had been in therapy since he was a child, and that he was a user of psychotropic drugs. Scott writes: “Philip K. Dick suffered from a severe mental disorder that colored his fiction with strange elements” (Scott, 2017, p. 50). He was an anxious person; he suffered from various psychosomatic disorders, and was a user of amphetamines and psychotropic drugs. Moreover, Dick had an extreme interest in psychoses and the challenges of mental illness. With a sort of bohemian pride, he claimed to be a “partial schizophrenic” (Dick, 1965a, p. 181). In her memoirs, Maer Wilson narrates that Philip Dick loved creating strange, melodramatic situations because, “I think he enjoyed the game, whether it was for some scene in a book or because he enjoyed messing with people to see how they would react (which I think also played into his writing) is still uncertain” (Wilson, 2016, p. 179). Much has been written about Dick’s alleged neurotic or psychotic disorders (Rickmann, 1989; Arnold, 2016; Swanwick, 2019), but this is not the place for diagnoses. What interests us here is to see how he transposed the debate on etiology and the treatment of psychiatric disorders into his science fiction novels. In his many SF novels, Dick often described an America of the future, or an alternative present, where the abuse of psychiatry by the healthcare system represented a normal condition; likewise, he often created characters who used legal and illegal psychiatric drugs, often for the purpose of surviving in a world that would otherwise be unbearable. This is the reason

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why his works, fictional and autobiographical, are able to describe in a plausible manner how psychiatry and the relevant pharmacopeia became integral parts of post-war Americans' daily lives.

Novel after novel Dick represented the various phases of the development of psychiatry in the United States. It must be noted that, as the various phases of the history of psychiatry succeeded one another with large overlapping areas of interest, in the same way these phases were portrayed in Dick's works. Said overlapping has several explanations. Dick was a self-taught man and his knowledge came from informative texts (collections of articles; informative psychology magazines; encyclopedias), and these writings were published a few years after being acknowledged by academic research; hence there is a certain misalignment between the historical phase and the writing phase. Moreover, many perceptions of the phenomenon came to him from the zeitgeist, and this remained in the common social perception for many years afterward: suffice it to think of the issue of patients confined in an asylum, ascribable to the phase of the first biological psychiatry but that also had repercussions during the third phase, the anti-psychiatry phase.

Most of the Dickian vision of mental illness and of the psychiatric world (at least up until the end of the 1960s) was a consequence of the idea which the public held about the first biological psychiatry. In fact, during his youth Dick absorbed Harry S. Sullivan's innovative ideas on psychoses and on asylums as prisons. The vision was then supplemented by new information acquired by the writer in his adulthood: in other words, during the psychoanalysis boom, the birth of anti-psychiatry, the development of neuropharmacology, and the consequent diffusion of psychiatric drugs.

The study of the correspondence between phases of the history of psychiatry and phases of the Dickian narrative will therefore be most effectively conducted by considering the year in which the novels were written, and not the year of their

publication. In doing so, it is possible to follow a sort of history of psychiatry in the United States, viewed through the remodeling lens of science fiction.

3.1 The first biological psychiatry

From the last phase of the first biological psychiatry, Dick took the theme of hospitals as places of confinement for the mentally ill. Within some of his first stories and novels, there are several references to this treatment,⁴ but *We Can Build You* can be considered the first novel to belong to the first biological psychiatry phase. It was published in 1972 but it was written ten years earlier, in 1962.⁵ It is the one that best describes the various aspects of American psychiatry in the 1950s, in other words, of the decade distinguished by the last remnants of the first biological psychiatry, as well as by the hospitalization boom. The diffusion of psychiatric clinics is well-described in the novel: in the United States, there are tens of thousands of patients in several state clinics.⁶

Many of those patients were picked up during puberty. Accordingly, Dick emphasizes how many of these diagnoses were premature: puberty "is the time psychosis tends to strike" (Dick, 1972b, p. 27). But, most importantly, he describes how psychiatric treatment in the 1950s was perceived as an all-pervading trend, and he does so by describing the advertisements for residential commitment to American asylums: "LEAD THE WAY TO MENTAL HEALTH--BE THE FIRST IN YOUR FAMILY TO ENTER A MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC!" (Dick, 1972b, p. 152), as if to say that a stay in an asylum was something that, sooner or later, would have touched all American families. This concept is stressed at the end when Louis Rosen says to Doctor Nisea that almost everyone he knows has stayed at the Kasanin clinic: an aunt of his, one of his cousins, his high school teacher, a neighbor, a comrade, a former girlfriend, an employer of his, etc. The list takes up an entire page of the book. In this way, Dick makes it clear to the reader that, for each person living in the United

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States, there may be about a dozen friends or relatives among them being treated for mental disorders.

3.2 Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a recurring theme in the Dickian narrative. There are multiple references to it. Most of Dick's novels were published during the first half of the 1960s, when psychoanalysis was at its peak popularity in the United States. So, almost all novels of the 1960s contain references to the various psychoanalytical theories in general. Dick read Freud, the first classical psychoanalytic author, but found that he disliked him.⁷ He preferred Jung over Freud because "Freud would say the unconscious is just a repository of nasty thoughts we don't want to face; and Jung says no, the unconscious is extremely positive and powerful and very often correct, and compensatory to the conscious, and corrects an inadequate conscious view" (Rickman, 1989, p. 203). The writer became interested in Jungian psychoanalysis (in the typology⁸ and in the collective unconscious) and in the existential one, which were close relatives of the other topics preferred by Dick: mysticism and philosophy.⁹

An important part of Dick's self-taught psychoanalytical education consisted in the anthology edited by Rollo May and Henri Ellenberger, *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology*.¹⁰ The book gave wide emphasis to the work of Binswanger, the psychiatrist who created the Daseinanalyse. Ludwig Binswanger was another Swiss psychiatrist like Jung. He was an important name in the field of psychiatry, but American psychologies did not take his work into due account. Rollo May's book contained several essays on phenomenology and existential psychoanalysis, among which the famous *The Case of Ellen West* by Ludwig Binswanger was included (originally published by Binswanger in *Schweizer Archiv für Neurologie und Psychiatrie* in 1944-45). The case described a disease which today would probably be diagnosed as an eating disorder, but that at the time was presumed to be schizophrenia. This happened due to the characteristics of the worlds in which Ellen West seemed to live. She talked about

her life as being characterized by two antithetical worldviews. She had lived the years of her youth in an ethereal world, and afterwards lived the second phase of the illness, during which she refused to eat anything, in a sepulchral world. The latter, in particular, was characterized by a static temporalization.

Philip Dick became fascinated by this Umwelt, also called tomb world (Grabwelt), and transposed it into a science fiction context in *Martian Time-Slip* (written in 1962; published in 1964), the first work of the writer's psychoanalytical phase. In the novel, the planet Mars is described as being similar to the American frontier, with the terrestrial settlers facing a hostile world, and with real estate speculators that try to occupy the territory. Manfred Steiner is the autistic son of a family of settlers. His condition forces him to live in another time. His world is a static tomb world like Ellen West's. This static condition allows him a vision of time where past and future are equally visible. Hence, he can see the future. In one of the subplots of the novel, the speculator Arnie Kott is eager to know the development of one of his construction projects, and for this reason he wants to use the young Manfred, whose ability would allow him to know the future developments of his business. Unfortunately, the child is closed in his own world and can only communicate through babblings. His Grabwelt, and the future Mars he sees, is a dead planet. Even the people he sees are just heaps of bones, as if they were already dead: "Manfred's lack of empathy means that he is trapped in a tomb world where everything around him appears to be dead and decaying and the only vital force is decay itself, personified in the terrible Gubbler. Manfred sees the tomb world all around him, even though he evidently lives in the same place as the other characters who, in the normal course of things, do not perceive it. On one occasion in *Martian Time-Slip*, Manfred's world is directly referred to as the tomb world" (Viskovic, 2013, pp. 171-172).

3.3 Anti-psychiatry

Anti-psychiatry theorists were against the labels affixed to patients by psychiatric manuals. Up un-

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til the 1940s, nosology was the classical branch of the manual entitled *Psychologische Arbeiten* (1910) by Emil Kraepelin; but, in 1952, the American Psychiatric Association prepared the *DSM I: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Mental Disorders* (1952). This soon became widely used by psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychoanalysts (many disorders were explained in psychodynamic terms),¹¹ and as such it soon became the target of accusations by proponents of the anti-psychiatry movement. Dick was up-to-date on psychiatric issues and made widespread use of the diagnostic classificatory system DSM. He probably used it to describe the symptoms manifested by the characters in the novel *Clans of the Alphane Moon* (written in 1963; published in 1964): “he classifies characters as schizophrenic or schizoid, autistic, paranoid; he speculates on or invents explanations for these conditions. Nor does he see these conditions as illnesses happening to the individual, and telling only about his nature, as the psychological diagnoses might imply; it is usually society as a whole that is pathological, and very often the individual’s illness consists in the fact that he takes upon himself the condition of society as a whole. Dick practices a politicized psychology (Palmer, 2003, pp. 38-39).

This politicized psychology was part of the debate by the counterculture and anti-psychiatry to which Dick referred. *Clans of the Alphane Moon* (1964) is an ‘anti-psychiatric’ novel. He puts forward the idea that people who are undesirable because they are different or defined as being sick are powerless in society. This is why the novel “corroborates the contemporary anti-psychiatric politics of Thomas Szasz and R.D. Laing” (Palmer, 2003, p. 146).¹²

In *Clans of the Alphane Moon*, “Dick constructs a whole society divided among groups exhibiting various forms of mental illness” (Taylor, 1975, p. 16). To establish the novel’s division of inhabitants into castes of fools, Dick reshaped Jacob Sergi Kasanin’s classification of pathologies as set out in *Language and Thought in Schizophrenia*, and he integrated it with the Jungian theories (a collective

unconscious rooted in the past) and existentialist ideas (the ancient and original world), more acceptable to anti-psychiatrists than the classical psychoanalysis. In the novel, the schizophrenic is “lost in his clouded visions of an archetypal reality, of cosmic proto-forces underlying the temporal universe, his perpetual view of the so-called *Urwelt*” (Dick, 1964d, p. 12). Part of the story is set in a planet-hospital divided into seven cities, each one intended for a specific group of psychiatric patients: there are the hebephrenics (Heebs) who live in Ghandi-town, the schizophrenics (Skitz) in Giovanna D’Arco, the paranoids (Para) who live in Adolfville, the polymorphs (Polys) in Hamlet, the maniacs (Manses) who reside in Da Vinci Heights, the depressed (Deps) in Cotton Mather, and the obsessive-compulsive (Ob-Com) who live in an unnamed city). The planet, three light years away from Earth, was abandoned by the Earth government and became autonomous. The novel describes Earth’s attempt to regain control over the former colony by resorting to a psychiatric evaluation of Dr. Mary Ritterford, sent to the planet for the purpose of making contact with the colonist/patients. As underscored by the simulacrum Mageboom who accompanies the psychiatrist, “we intend to take the leadership out of their hands, place them back where they were twenty-five years ago. Patients in enforced hospitalization circumstances—in other words, captivity” (Dick, 1964d, p. 81).

Dick’s description of the various types of mental disorders is detailed, but what makes the novel interesting is its anti-psychiatric vision. The psychotics in *Clans of the Alphane Moon* survive because they are able to spontaneously create a mutual collaboration system for the purpose of overcoming their various difficulties, something that the litigious “normal people” on Earth were unable to do. It is as if the “sick ones” were the earthlings and the “healthy ones” were the “former insane asylum patients,” a reversal that seems to indicate how the real disease is not so much the psychiatric one but the moral disease of people who, albeit lucid, are evil on the inside. Of the psychiatrics on Earth, which are clearly the transfiguration of the American government and

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psychiatric associations of Dick's time, a reporter wonders, "has it occurred to TERPLAN just to leave this moon alone? To treat its culture as you would any other culture, respecting its values and customs?" (Dick, 1964d, p. 33). The extra-terrestrials in whose system the planet is located, correspond to anti-psychiatry psychoanalysts: "the Alphanes will guarantee the civil liberties of the clans. No hospitalization. No therapy. You won't be treated as nuts: you'll be treated as bona fide colonists, owning land and engaging in manufacture and commerce, whatever it is you all do" (Dick, 1964d, pp. 174-175).

Philip Dick seems to draw on this prospective when he describes his characters, who are schizophrenics, but are also perfectly adapted in that world that they have shaped according to their needs. When Chuck, Mary Ritterford's husband, asks himself how it will be to live in Alpha, a community of psychotic individuals, the comedian-dealer Bunny Hentmann answers as follows: "how the hell do you think you've been living? I'd call your inter-personal relationship with your wife psychotic" (Dick, 1964d, p. 179).

All of the families described by Dick in his many novels are psychotic, and this would seem to draw on another psychological theory of the 1960s, the "double-bind theory" (Bateson et al). According to this model, one of the possible causes of schizophrenia is the communication of conflicting and ambiguous messages within the family environment during the child's developmental phase.

One of the main concepts of anti-psychiatry was that pathology and normality are the expressions of a continuum, and Dick seems to have believed it. This concept, today very modern and accepted but supported only by a few psychologists during the 1960s, states that the division between normality and pathology is not clear, but instead, is a state that changes also in relation to the impairment of daily functioning. Over the years, this attitude has made the pathology more understandable. A behavior that may be "strange" or exaggerated, but does not jeopardize normal daily and social life, can be "ec-

centric," but not abnormal. In a forward-looking way, Chuck Ritterford, the protagonist of *Clans of the Alphanes Moon*, states that "If there's one thing that contemporary psychiatry has shown, it's that. Merely knowing that you are mentally sick won't make you well, any more than knowing you have a heart condition provides a suddenly sound heart" (Dick, 1964d, p. 197).

3.4 The second biological psychiatry

Philip Dick's work coinciding with the phase of the second biological psychiatry is entirely focused on the phenomenon which Dick himself called 2-3-74. The experience is indicated as such because it took place during the months of February and March of 1974. During that time, Dick experienced a series of visual hallucinations. About the causes and the meaning of these hallucinations, Dick started to write a diary that, more than thirty years later, was published under the title, *The Exegesis*. It consists of approximately eight thousand pages of speculations on the episode. Dick's initial interpretation is of the neurological type. It was only afterwards, starting from the mid-1970s, that he associated it to a metaphysical-religious vision.

The theories that he made reference to in order to explain the hallucinations came from his readings of that period. He became interested in studies on the split-brain which he had read in *The Nature of Human Consciousness*. The idea of separate brains, an active one (the left one) and an apparently dormant one (the right one, seat of the unconscious), advocated by Robert F. Ornstein, fascinated Dick. He set himself to find a way to activate both of them, so as to have a complete vision of the world: "Two separate "mono" views, when blended, become a "stereo" view. Both entities, surprised by the heightened perception, would probably attribute it to the other's ability, not realizing [that] he himself supplied half" (Dick, 2011, § 4-103). In order to activate the right dormant hemisphere, Dick used the overdosage of vitamins which he had read about in the article by H. Ross published in *Psychology*

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Today. If it could be useful for schizophrenics, he thought, it could be useful for him as well. The result was the series of hallucinations to which he initially attempted to give a neurological explanation.

The possible explanation came to him from both the studies on GABA, and the articles by Luce Gae which he had read in *The Nature of Human Consciousness* and in *Psychology Today*. On the one hand, he believed that information had always been present in his brain, but that it was blocked by the GABA-inhibitor, and that the vitamins had unblocked them; on the other hand, he believed that, by following Gae Luce's theory, the pineal gland, when reacting to the light, had produced the phosphonic activity which he had perceived. After 1975, Dick began to associate these neuro-pharmacological explanations with a mystical-religious explanation that implied an alien entity or perhaps god, which had possessed him and revealed to him the true nature of the universe.

Both the 2-3-74 experience and the neurological explanations were included in the novels of that period. The novel entitled *A Scanner Darkly* (written in 1975 but published in 1977) described the life of a policeman who has infiltrated a group of drug addicts in order to identify the supplier of the drug. He is in incognito and is protected by the Scramble suit, a special bodysuit that hides his true identity and appears as a series of colored spots to the people who look at it. "The scramble suit was an invention of the Bell Laboratories, conjured up by accident by an employee named S. A. Powers. He had, a few years ago, been experimenting with disinhibiting substances affecting neural tissue, and one night, having administered to himself an IV injection considered safe and mildly euphoric, had experienced a disastrous drop in the GABA fluid of his brain. Subjectively, he had then witnessed lurid phosphene activity projected on the far wall of his bedroom, a frantically progressing montage of what, at the time, he imagined to be modern-day abstract paintings" (Dick, 1977, pp. 23-24).

The 2-3-74 experience is fully described in *Radio Free Albemuth*, a novel written in 1976 but shelved by the author and published posthumously in 1985, rewritten with a great deal of changes as *Valis* (written in 1978 and published in 1980). *Radio Free Albemuth* is set in an alternative present where the United States gradually takes on a totalitarian nature guided by President Ferris F. Freemont. The science fiction writer Phil Dick finds himself involved in a conspiracy when his friend Nicholas Brady tells him that he is receiving messages, in the form of hallucinations, from a perhaps alien entity which he calls VALIS (Vast Active Living Intelligence System), the only possibility to fight Freemont's rising dictatorship.

In the *Valis* version, the writer Phil Dick narrates how his friend Horselover Fat believes himself to have been contacted by a perhaps divine or perhaps extra-terrestrial entity, called VALIS. The novel contains Fat's diaries, which include parts of the *Exegesis*.

4. Conclusions

Philip K. Dick's literary and autobiographical production manages to represent, in literary form, the progress made in psychiatry during the twentieth century. The writer grew and matured as an author during the span of those three decades (the 1950s through 1970s), during which the four overlapping phases that characterize modern psychiatry were manifested. What happened during that period in the field of psychiatry formed his beliefs with regards to the treatment of mental illnesses, and he represented, with the conventions and conceits of science fiction, his America in the 1950s and 1960s, invaded by psychiatric clinics.

The first biological psychiatry featured the use of retention or surgical methods. It is generally deemed to have ended with the diffusion of psychoanalysis, at the start of the 1940s; nonetheless the use of forced hospitalization and electroshock therapy, which continued until the end of the

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1950s, represented a remnant of that first phase. Psychoanalysis became predominant in American psychiatry with the arrival of European doctors fleeing Nazism. Also, thanks to the actions of Adolf Meyer, who contributed to bringing together psychoanalysis and psychiatry, and who encouraged the drafting of the DSM, psychoanalysis experienced a boom during the two decades following WWII, reaching its apex between the end of the 1950s and the early-1960s. These years also marked the birth of the anti-psychiatry movement. Although the texts that originated this movement were written by Laing, Goffman, and Foucault, an anti-psychiatry conscience, however, can be traced back to an article published in *Life* magazine (1946), which showed the conditions of psychiatric hospitals. Lastly, the second biological psychiatry involved a study of the brain functions and of neurotransmitters, and the consequent introduction of new therapies.

This timeline of psychiatry is fully represented in Dick's novels and it is outlined in Fig. 1. The overlaps, which coincide with adherence to conflicting views of psychiatry, are part of the writer's complex personality: "he could favor strongly psychodynamic Jungian explanations, then dismiss all of those for a purely biochemical etiology of mental illness. [...] he might seem to be allied to the discourse of the anti-psychiatry movement, since his countercultural location shared their disdain for authority, yet he also continually relied on the official diagnostic language of psychiatry in his life and throughout his fiction, from the first to the last" (Luckhurst, 2015, p. 18). *We Can Build You* is the novel that best describes the massive hospitalization of U.S. patients. In it, Dick resumes the news about asylums that he probably read in the 1940s and 1950s (at the end of the first biological psychiatry) and that he still felt current when he wrote the novel. The psychoanalytic phase can also be easily identified in Dick's works, albeit not in its Freudian sense (the most popular one in the United States). In many of his novels, Dick described the *Grabwelt* illustrated by the Swiss psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger: the planet Mars seen by the autistic child Manfred in *Martian Time-slip* is

a tomb-world. Anti-psychiatry was also widely represented by Dick. Its origins coincide with the writer's artistic maturity, and in some way satisfied this paranoid and anti-system ideas: the accusations flung at the concentration camp-system of the asylums is clear in the novel *Clans of the Alphane Moon*. The second biological psychiatry retains the biological-organicist imprint of the first, but is characterized by the diffusion of psychiatric drugs. It is widely present in Dick's last works, the *Valis* books.

There are certainly vast overlapping areas both between the development phases of twentieth-century psychiatry and between Philip Dick's creative phases. We also need to consider a certain misalignment between the historical phase and the novel-writing phase, which is due to the time that it takes for theories and research to be acknowledged by popular informational media sources (Dick was a self-taught writer and not a professional psychiatrist). Some topics were discussed by Dick even several years after their peak diffusion; however, as one can see from the diagram, there is a certain correspondence between the phases of psychiatry and their representation in his science fiction works.

This correspondence between phases of psychiatry and their respective representations in Dick's work allows us to draw some conclusions. The problem of mental illness was strongly felt in the United States between the 1950s and 1970s. *Life Magazine's* report on the success of books such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey point out it. Dick's massive recourse to psychological theories and to the description of neurotic characters allows us to say that the writer hit the zeitgeist.

Science fiction, as a literary genre, has the task of reshaping the society of the present and putting it in a future or alternate world. Dick takes one of the aspects of society that he considers most important (mental illness as medical and philosophical concept) and puts it in the background of almost all his texts. The way he does it changes according to the historical period in which he writes his stories. Fig. 1 directs attention on this shift in Dick's histor-

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ical perspective: he describes the American society of the future and its characters according to the models of psychiatry that are being imposed in the various decades. He followed with interest every change in the evolution of psychiatry so that his novels could be classified as psychiatric novels.

Notes:

¹ Volker Hess and Benoît Majerus also see in Shorter, *A bias in his Story*, to the advantage of neurology (Hess, Majerus, 2011).

² The history of the development of psycho-pharmacology is described in Healy D. (2008), in particular pp. 421-430.

³ The effects of vitamins on psychiatric disorders continue to this day: see Brown & Roffman (2014).

⁴ In the novel *The Man Who Japed* (written in 1955 and published in 1956), reference is made to mental patients as individuals who are not accepted by society: "Noose was a derisive term contracted from neuro-psychiatric. Allen disliked it. It had a blind, savage quality that made him think of the old hate terms, nigger and kike" (Dick, 1956, p. 20). The term "kikes" refers to the book by Albert Deutsch on the conditions of people confined in the psychiatric wards in those years; moreover, the term "nigger" refers to stigma and prejudice in addition to minority ethnic groups, extending to mental patients as well.

Other references to psychiatric treatments of the first phase (hospitalisation, electroshock) can also be found in "Piper in the Woods" (1953) where there is a "lie detector," called shock-box, to get answers that cannot be obtained consciously: the reference to electroshocks is clear; in the story "Null-O" (1958), Lemuel is a troubled boy and his parents fear that the authorities may seize the child and compulsorily detain him in a mental institute. In *Confessions of a Crap Artist* (1975 but written in 1959), Fay says that Claudia Hambro underwent electroshock treatments a couple of years before:

the novel is set in 1959.

⁵ The dates on which the novels and stories were written are taken from the "Chronological survey and guide" by Lawrence Sutin (1989); the publication dates are taken from the Stephensen-Payne P., Benson Jr, G. (1995).

⁷ In one of Dick's first novels, *Eye in the Sky* (1957), written in 1955 and therefore before Dick discovered existentialist psychoanalysis, there is long reference to the Freudian theory of sublimation, which may reveal an acceptance of Freudian theory: "[...] the initial resistance to Freud's monumental discovery has been overcome. Naturally, he met terrific opposition. But, happily, that's all dying out. Nowadays you rarely find an educated person speaking of sex and sexuality. I use the terms merely in their clinical sense, to describe an abnormal clinical condition" (Dick, 1957, p. 126).

⁸ The Jungian psychoanalysis of the psychological types is mentioned several times by Dick in the novels written during the psychoanalytical phase. For example, in *The Game-Players of Titan* (which Dick completed in 1963), Mrs McClain is described as follows: "She's what Jung described as an introverted feeling type; they run deep. They're inclined toward idealism and melancholy" (Dick, 1963b, p. 29.) In the novel *Dr Bloodmoney*, Barnes, who travels around the farming communities that survived the atomic holocaust by doing manual jobs, brings the bomb with him.

⁹ The references to psychoanalysis as therapy à la page are too many to list them all. We can mention here some aspects. In "Oh, To Be a Blobel!" (written in 1963) psychoanalysis is so widespread that there are "new fully homeostatic psychoanalysts" (Dick, 1964a, p. 359), mechanical analysts as easy to use as an appliance. As regards psychoanalysts as the professional elite, one may recall that in *Dr Bloodmoney* (written in 1963), Stuart McConchie, a store clerk, when referring to the psychiatrist whose office is right across the street says: "Doctor Stockstill had parked his foreign car in the lot; he could afford to

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pay five dollars a day. [...] Psychiatrists make a lot [of money]" (Dick, 1965b, p. 2). A similar comment on the professional fees charged by psychoanalysts can be found in the novel "What'll We Do with Ragland Park?" (also written in 1963): Sebastian Hada, the main character, is at the psychoanalyst's office: "He lay semisupine, arms behind his head, gazing at a Paul Klee print on the wall. . . or perhaps it was an original; good analysts did make a god-awful amount of money: Yasumi's charge to him was one thousand dollars a half hour" (Dick, 1963a, p. 75).

¹⁰ Dick was also impressed by two articles included in the book edited by May: the article "The World of the Compulsive," in which V. E. von Gebattel describes a case of obsession and phobia of contamination; and the article "Findings in a Case of Schizophrenic Depression" by Eugene Minkowski, in which the patient imagined that the entire world knew about his crimes. These articles inspired Dick to create the character of Kongrosian in the novel *The Simulacra* (Wolk, 1995, p. 114), written in 1963 and published in 1964.

¹¹ In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, Dick describes one of the charges that anti-psychiatry made to psychoanalysis: the transformation from a therapy to an impersonal diagnostic classification. Diseases were trivialized and diagnoses were automated with diagnostic manuals. In the novel, this automation is rendered through the invention of the automatic psychoanalyst. It is a simple briefcase that diagnoses mental disorders and describes them through units of measures called "freud." Barney, the main character who has to undergo the test, says: "I'm going to fail my mental," Barney said. "My precog ability tells me I am; it's helping me. I can't endure enough Freuds of stress to satisfy them—look at me." (Dick, 1964e, p. 23).

¹² In the other novels written during the same period, Dick includes phrases or scenes that reveal the characteristics of the United States during the anti-psychiatric period. In *Now Wait for the Last Year* (written in 1963-65 and published in 1967) the fol-

lowing claim is made: "Against that backdrop Himmel did not look so ludicrous. It was the times. Madness haunted the atmosphere itself, from the Mole on down to this quality-control functionary who was clearly disturbed in the clinical, psychiatric sense" (Dick, 1967, p. 18). Even *The Ganymede Takeover* (which was started in 1964 and published in 1967) contains many anti-psychiatric references: Balkani is a psychiatrist portrayed in a very negative way by Dick. He developed a psychotherapeutic technique intended to replace classic psychoanalysis. The conflict between the old and new psychotherapy is also exemplified in a symbolic way, when Balkani looks at Sigmund Freud's bronze bust statue and has the impression that Freud is smiling at him in a way that is anything but pleasant; afterwards, he uses it to kill Joan Hiashi (who he believes to be human but is a robotic copy instead, whilst the real Joan managed to escape from the clinic) and to break the intercom on the video-phone. He hopes that the psychological theory created by Balkani replaces "the universe of Freud, together with all the other people [who] would take this book as their Bible in the revolution of youth against age" (Dick, Nelson, 1967, p. 132). The idea is that a new movement will replace psychoanalysis, which is considered to be obsolete by then.

The anti-psychiatric distaste for the irresponsible use of psychotropic drugs by psychiatrists is ridiculed by Dick in *Ubik* (started in 1966 and published in 1969): the facility that is home to a group of telepathic individuals on the moon is equipped with vending machines stocked with tranquilizers and stimulants, as if they were dispensers of candy or cigarettes. Ms Wirt says to the precogs: "All medication-dispensing machines, however, are coin-operated. I might say, in regard to this, that you will find in the game room of this suite a tranquilizer-dispensing machine. And, if you wish, we can probably have one of the stimulant-dispensing machines moved in from the adjoining installations" (Dick, 1969, p. 67).

Appendix

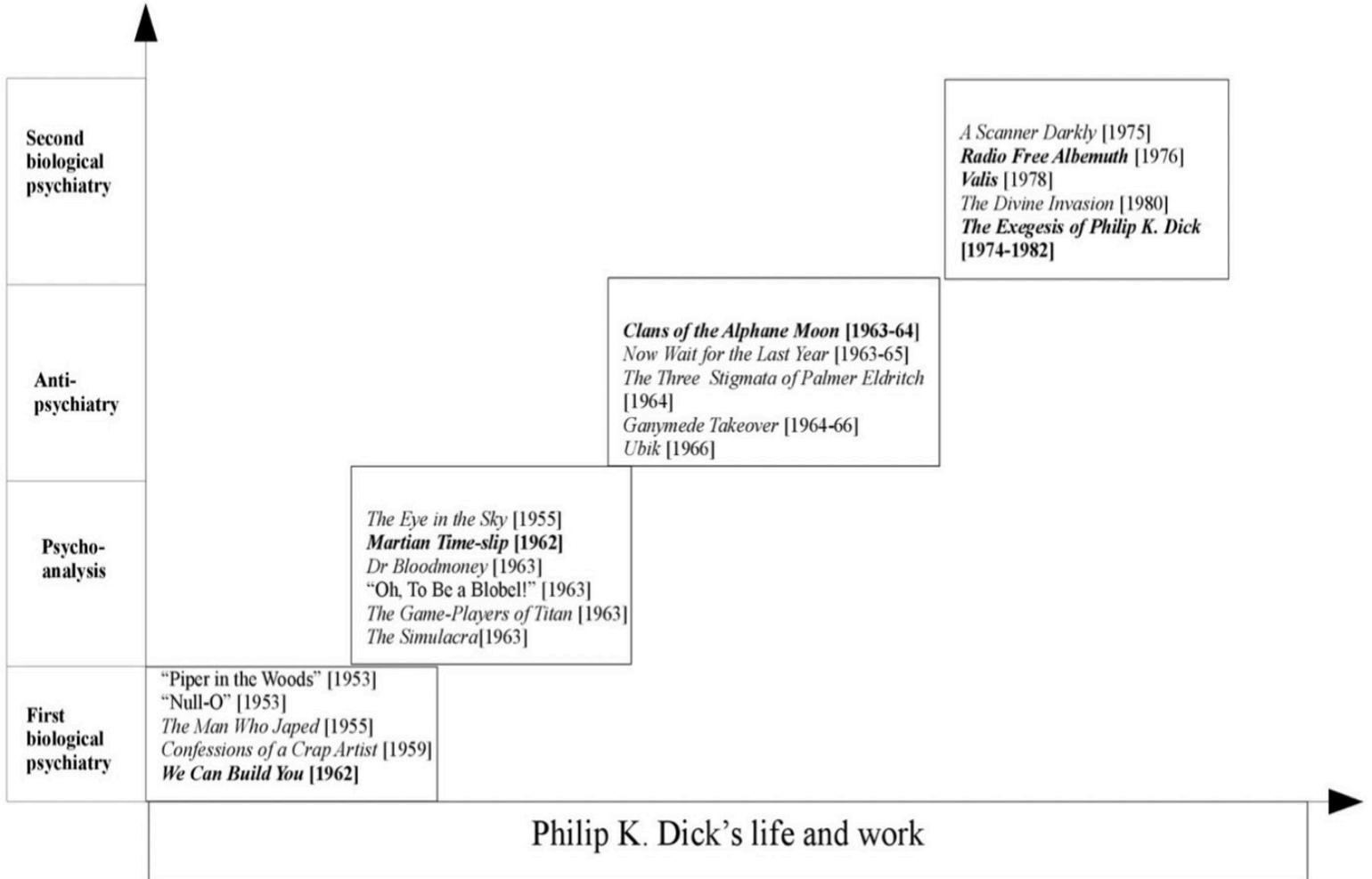


Fig. 1: Timeline of psychiatry in novels of Philip K. Dick. [Between square brackets the date of writing]

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