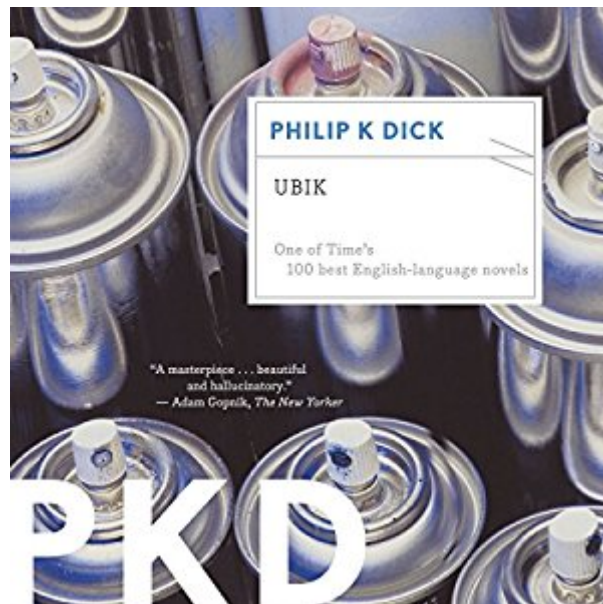


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Ubik



Synopsis

A mind-bending, classic Philip K. Dick novel about the perception of reality. Named as one of Time's 100 best books. Glen Runciter runs a lucrative business - deploying his teams of anti-psychics to corporate clients who want privacy and security from psychic spies. But when he and his top team are ambushed by a rival, he is gravely injured and placed in "half-life," a dreamlike state of suspended animation. Soon, though, the surviving members of the team begin experiencing some strange phenomena, such as Runciter's face appearing on coins and the world seeming to move backward in time. As consumables deteriorate and technology gets ever more primitive, the group needs to find out what is causing the shifts and what a mysterious product called Ubik has to do with it all.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a near-charter member of PKD's "cult following," I never thought I'd give *UBIK*, which I always considered one of his late masterpieces, anything less than 5 stars. The problem is that the original version, which I read soon after it came out in 1969, has been extensively revised--I hope by Dick himself. The result is a more elaborate and probably a structurally superior novel, with more characters and an additional major plot line. *UBIK* was one of Dick's novels that the critics at the time saluted as a work of "genius" which, however, was "flawed." Also, the revised version may be seen to be closer to Dick's central theme, that we all create our own worlds and no one knows what's really going on until near the end of the story, if then. However, the more rational plot

development loses some of the intensity and plain terror of the more focused treatment given the original antagonist, and therefore the immense relief I remember feeling when his power is finally blunted. It's as though some of Dick's critics rewrote his book. Still, it's a good read; and I don't doubt that the added aspects, particularly the new plot line based on "deconstruction" theory, are pure PKD.

Wow! *Ubik* was a wild ride, even by Philip K. Dick's standards. Or perhaps a better way of putting it is the book meets the high standards he creates for his works, and then some! As the book begins, we meet Glen Runciter, head of the world's top anti-psi agency (to combat all of the psi organizations that have arisen now that it is 1992 -- heh!), located in New York City. He confers with his late wife, Ella, who is dead and buried in a Swiss moratorium, where she is in a suspended state of "half life," through "cold-pac" --- something like our cryogenics. The world's top psi's are disappearing, and Runciter wants his wife's opinion on what to do. She thinks they should advertise more. We then go off to meet Joe Chip, Runciter's top man, who is dirt poor and in debt. A Runciter scout has brought a young woman named Pat by to meet Joe. Pat has an unusual ability to nullify events before they even happen. Her psi tests are off the charts, and Joe marks on her report that she should be watched, that she could be dangerous. Runciter has a visitor from a businessman with a business on Luna (the moon?), in need of immediate anti-psi help. Runciter agrees to overlook some typical preliminaries, since it's an emergency, and soon he's leading Joe, Pat, and nine others to Luna to save this company. Where they're sabotaged. A bomb goes off in the room in which they're gathered and Runciter takes it the worst. He's pretty much dead, and the team rushes to get him into cold-pac in the spaceship so he can be saved and consulted with his wife. Joe starts planning on how to get back at their enemies from that moment forward. And from that moment forward, things start unraveling. It gets really PKD-like as alternate realities are discovered and time moves backward. Joe starts receiving odd messages from Runciter while members of the team start dying off, decomposing quickly. Soon the surviving members find themselves back in 1939 in Des Moines IA -- Joe has to get there by bi-plane. They're there for Runciter's funeral, but by now, Pat is under deep suspicion for being behind this, plotting with their enemies, and Joe's really ticked. Soon the reader doesn't know who is dead and who is alive! I won't give away the ending, but I'll just let you know that it's a typical PKD mind-f*** which is immensely satisfying while still being a bit confusing. It's a lot to swallow at once. *Ubik* rears its head at the beginning of each chapter in the form of an unusual ad for an unusual product, and *Ubik* plays a real role at the end of the book, but it's a bit mysterious at that. Suffice it to say that it's a miraculous spray can that is Joe's only way to

stay alive. Philip K. Dick's eye for minutia is especially good in this novel as he highlights magazines from 1939 (real ones), early cars, etc. And this book is a fast paced thriller too. I read it in less than a day. I couldn't put it down. No wonder Time magazine chose it for inclusion as one of their "100 best English-language novels!" No argument there. I don't know if this is my favorite Philip K. Dick book, but if not, it's close. It's got the usual PKD themes like unreliable and alternate reality, time running backward, precognition (Minority Report, anyone?), telepathy, paranoia, hallucinations, and even spirituality. It's got a fantastic ending. It's a great introduction to Dick, if you're unfamiliar with him, and if you're a fan, it's a must read. You won't be able to put it down. Highly recommended.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading *Ubik* although I don't think it will necessarily leave a lasting impression; however, some of the ideas, like being able to prolong the death of a loved one for many years, and also being able to communicate with them, definitely inspired some deep thinking. The world created, the characters, and the general plot seemed well thought out. It did, however, seem like the intention of the book was to keep the twists constant, which can sometimes lead to a disorganized feeling. And the end... I think I had just been too spoiled by big plot twists that by the time I actually got around to reading this book, it was only natural for me to guess (accurately) how the book would end. Nonetheless, it's the meat in the middle that makes it worth it. I liked *Ubik*, but I doubt it will be among the Phillip K Dick books that I will go back and re-read.

This was my first book that I read by PKD. It did not disappoint. I'm really into sci fi so I'm not sure how I messed his works in the past but plan on reading more in the future. I think it's pretty hard to go into a lot of detail without giving it away. It deals a lot with psychics etc and a process of death where people who are basically dead are put in chambers in which they have brain function and are in a dream like state. So pretty sci fi. lol I don't think it's too crazy. I guess I was a bit worried that his books would be so far out there that it would be hard to grasp. I didn't find this book to be this way. He explains everything to understand it in due time. Well maybe not everything. lol It is a book to make you think and question existence etc. Pretty interesting all around. I plan on reading more of his works.

I like books that I can re-read, to get a better understanding of plot nuances, and to catch little details that I missed the first time around. On the other hand, I *don't* generally like books that I *must* re-read to fully understand what's going on. This book, I'm afraid, is the latter. In fact, it might be worse than that; I'm not sure that even after a re-read I'd have a good handle on things. This is

not to say that I didn't follow the plot -- in its own way, the story is straightforward enough. I'm just not sure that I'm understanding how it all fits together.

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Ubik

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