

A World of Talent and Other Stories

author: Philip K. Dick

2026-06

Synopsis

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inLanguage	english

In a 1977 speech, Phillip K. Dick said "A novelist carries with him constantly what most women carry in large purses: much that is useless, a few absolutely essential items, and then, for good measure, a great number of things that fall in between. But the novelist does not transport them physically because his trove of possessions is mental. Now and then he adds a new and entirely useless idea; now and then he reluctantly cleans out the trash - the obviously worthless ideas - and with a few sentimental tears sheds them. Once in a great while, however, he happens by chance onto a thoroughly stunning idea new to him that he hopes will turn out to be new to everyone else. It is this final category that dignifies his existence. But such truly priceless ideas... perhaps during his entire lifetime he may, at best, acquire only a meager few. But that is enough; he has, through them, justified his existence to himself and to his God."

In this collection of five stories, all first published in the 1950s, Dick justified his existence by exploring a number of truly interesting ideas. In "Small Town" a man creates a perfect scale model of his own town, as a means of escaping his unbearable reality. In "Human Is" the wife of a scientist notices that her husband has returned from a scientific expedition a changed man, but she's not complaining. In "Foster, You're Dead" a father's unwillingness to participate in his country's preparations for a war that never happens, leads to unexpected consequences for his family. In "The Hanging Stranger" a man is unable to convince his fellow townspeople that something terribly wrong is happening to them all. Finally, in "A World of Talent", society's reactions against those who have unusual talents have pushed the situation to the brink of interplanetary war.

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