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fantastic, *a.* and *n.*

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(fæn'tæstɪk) Forms: *α.* 4 **fantastik**, 5-7 **fantastike**, **-tyke**, **-tique**, **-tyque**, 6-8 **fantastick(e)**, 7- **fantastic**. *β.* 6-8 **phantastick(e)**, 6 **phantastike**, 7 **phantastique**. 7- **phantastic**. [ad. med.L. *fantastic-us*, late L. *phantasticus*, a. Gr. *φανταστικός*, f. *φαντάζειν* to make visible (middle voice *φαντάζεσθαι*, in late Gr. to imagine, have visions): see [FANTASY](#). Cf. Fr. *fantastique*.

The form *phantastic* is no longer generally current, but has been casually used by a few writers of the 19th c., to suggest associations connected with the Gr. etymology.]

A. adj.

1. †**a.** Existing only in imagination; proceeding merely from imagination; fabulous, imaginary, unreal (*obs.*). **b.** In mod. use, of alleged reasons, fears, etc.: Perversely or irrationally imagined.

α **1387** [TREVISA](#) *Higden* (Rolls) V. 279 What is i-seide..of Merlyn has fantastik getyng. *Ibid.* VIII. 63 Kyng Arthures body [was founden] þat was i-counted as it were fantastik. **1529** [MORE](#) *Supplic. Soulys* Wks. 338 A very fantastike fable. **1627** *F. E. Hist. Edw. II* (1680) 11 His fantastique Happiness. **1721** [SWIFT](#) *South Sea* viii, He longs to rove in that fantastick scene. **1775** [HARRIS](#) *Philos. Arrangem.* Wks. (1841) 299 A fourth sort..may be called fantastic, or imaginary; such as centaurs. **1816** [J. WILSON](#) *City of Plague* I. i, I could smile at such fantastic terrors. **1876** [M. ARNOLD](#) *Lit. & Dogma* 157 His hearers and reporters were sure to verse it on their own fantastic grounds also.

β **1678** [CUDWORTH](#) *Intell. Syst.* 481 All those other phantastick Gods, were nothing but Several Personal Names. **1742** [YOUNG](#) *Nt. Th.* i. 94 My soul phantastic measures trod O'er fairy fields.

†**2.** Pertaining to, or of the nature of, a phantasm. *Obs.*

α **1483** [CAXTON](#) *Gold. Leg.* 19/2 He shewed that he was veryly rysen..by etyng openly, and by no art fantasyke. **1491** — *Vitas Patr.* (W. de W. 1495) I. xlii. 68a/1 [I am] noo thyng fantastique, but a sparcle of fyre; Asshes, and flesshe.

1598 YONG *Diana* 127 A meere dreame, or some fantastick illusion. **1624** FLETCHER *Rule a Wife* IV. iii, Is not this a fantastic house we are in, And all a dream we do? **1648** BP. HALL *Rem. Wks.* (1660) 198 One will allow of his humanity..another will allow a divine soul with a fantastick body.

§ **1635** A. STAFFORD *Fem. Glory* (1869) 145 That He had a phantasticke Body, not made of his Mothers Flesh. **1691-8** NORRIS *Pract. Disc.* IV. 377 Aery Banquets, Phantastick Food. **1716** SOUTH *Serm.* (1741) VII. 16 An aerial phantastic body.

†**3.** Of or pertaining to phantasy, in its various psychological senses (see FANTASY n. 1, 4) as denoting either the faculty (and act) of apprehending sensible objects, or that of imagination; imaginative.

1483 CAXTON *Cato* Fviiijb, By cogytacyon or thynkyng fantasyke and by illusyon of the deuyll. **1592** DAVIES *Immort. Soul* xx. ii. (1599) 47 [Phantasie] in her Ballance doth their values trie, Where some things good, and som things il do seeme..in her phantasticke eye. **1649** JER. TAYLOR *Gt. Exemp.* Pref. ¶43 There is as much phantasticke pleasure in doing a spite, as in doing revenge. **1678** CUDWORTH *Intell. Syst.* 29 The different Phancies in us, caused by the respective Differences of them..Which Phancies or Phantastick Idea's are [etc.]. **1793** T. TAYLOR *Sallust* viii. 38 The irrational soul..is sensitive and phantastic life.

†**b.** Of poetry: Concerned with 'phantasy' (Gr. *φαντασία*) or illusory appearance. *Obs.*

[See Plato *Sophistes* xxiii, li. In quot. 1581 the word may be merely a transliteration of Gr. *φανταστική*.]

1581 SIDNEY *Apol. Poetrie* (Arb.) 54 Mans wit may make Poesie, (which should be *Eikastike*, which some learned haue defined, figuring foorth good things,) to be *Phantastike*: which doth contrariwise, infect the fancie with vnworthy obiects. **1669** GALE *Crt. Gentiles* I. III. i. 18 Phantastic Poesie is that, which altogether feigns things.

4. Of persons, their actions and attributes: †**a.** Having a lively imagination; imaginative (*obs.*). **b.** Fanciful, impulsive, capricious, arbitrary; also, foppish in attire. Now in stronger sense: Extravagantly fanciful, odd and irrational in behaviour.

α **1488** CAXTON *Chast. Goddes Chyld.* xix. 50 Whether he haue a sadde knowyng or felinge or elles a soden wytte or fantasyk. **1591** SHAKES. *Two Gent.* II. vii. 47 To be fantastique, may become a youth Of greater time then I shall shew to be. **1628** WITHER *Brit. Rememb.* II. 1 Let no fantastique Reader now condemne Our homely Muse. **1683** TRYON *Way to Health* 577 The..fantastique Directions of ignorant Physitians. **c1760** SMOLLETT *Ode to Indep.* 100 And all her jingling bells fantastic Folly ring. **1790** BURKE *Fr. Rev.* 312 The fantastick vagaries of these juvenile politicians. **1847** EMERSON *Repr. Men, Montaigne Wks.* (Bohn) I. 350 Great believers are always reckoned..impracticable, fantastic, atheistic.

§ **1600** E. BLOUNT tr. *Conestaggio* Aiijb, He that talking of a young gentleman, shoulde say, that he was phantasticke, cholericke, amorous..doth hym no wrong. **1702** STEELE *Funeral* II, I have long..bore with your Phantastick Humour.

5. Arbitrarily devised. Now *rare*. Cf. FANCY *a.*

1658 BRAMHALL *Consecr. Bps.* iii. 29 They say..the..Protestant Bishops..were consecrated..by a new phantastick forme. **1846** TRENCH *Mirac.* i. (1862) 115 Phantastic and capricious miracles. **1876** HUMPHREYS *Coin-Coll. Man.* xxvi. 396 Occasionally fantastic variations of well-known inscriptions occur.

6. Having the appearance of being devised by extravagant fancy; eccentric, quaint, or grotesque in design, conception, construction, or adornment.

α **1616** R. C. *Times' Whistle* III. 1077 Drusus, that fashion-imitating ape, Delights to follow each fantastic shape. **1728** YOUNG *Love Fame* iii. Wks. (1757) 107 The masquerade's fantastic scene! **1750** GRAY *Elegy* xxvi, Yonder nodding beech, That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high. **1841** SPALDING *Italy & It. Isl.* II. 221 Vaulted halls adorned with the usual fantastic arches. **1856** STANLEY *Sinai & Pal.* i. (1858) 30 The Arab traditions..are too fantastic to be treated seriously. **1871** B. TAYLOR *Faust* (1875) I. vi. 109 The witch with fantastic gestures draws a circle.

§ **1618** WITHER *Motto, Nec Curo*, Each phantastique Garb our Gallants weare. **a1713** T. ELLWOOD *Autobiog.* (1714) 242 Written in such an affected and phantastick stile.

b. Arbitrarily used by Milton for: Making 'fantastic' movements (in the dance);

hence in later allusions to Milton's phrase. So in Comb. ***fantastic-footed***.

1632 MILTON *L'Allegro* 33 Trip it as you go On the light fantastic toe. **a1790** WARTON *On Approach of Summer* 59 Haste thee, Nymph! and hand in hand..Bring fantastic-footed Joy. **1826** DISRAELI *Viv. Grey* v. xv, Mr. St. Ledger..prided himself..on his light fantastic toe.

7. In trivial use: excellent, good beyond expectation. colloq.

1938 M. ALLINGHAM *Fashion in Shrouds* xi. 175 Oh, Val, isn't it *fantastic*?..It's amazing, isn't it? **1971** *New Statesman* 5 Feb. 176/3 A friend tells me of a recent experience..which really does rate that over-worked adjective, *fantastic*. **1973** *Brand New Monty Python Papperbok* (1986) 27 For the past seventeen weeks Janet has been on a fantastic package tour to Malaga. **1987** *Los Angeles Times* 5 Sept. v. 2/3 'Only..very nice?' he asked woefully. 'Oh, it's great! I mean, it's fantastic!'

B. n.

1. One who has fanciful ideas or indulges in wild notions. Obs. exc. arch.

1598 MARSTON *Pygmal.* III. 148 Thou art Bedlam mad..And glori'st to be counted a fantastick. **1621** QUARLES *Div. Poems, Esther* (1717) 111 Power..to perverse fantasticks if conferr'd..spurs on wrong. **1706** E. WARD *Hud. Rediv.* (1715) I. vii, The Church-men justly growl to see..that the Force of Toleration..Should set each canting proud Fantastick Above their Courts Ecclesiastick. **1882** SHORTHOUSE *J. Inglesant* II. xv, A Fantastic, whose brain was turned with monkish fancies.

1630 R. BRATHWAIT *Eng. Gentl.* (1641) 3, I would be glad to weane this Phantasticke from a veine of lightnesse.

fig. **1675** G. R. tr. *Le Grand's Man Without Passion* 132 Opinion is the Fountain, this Fantastick which seduceth our understanding, etc.

†2. One given to fine or showy dress; a fop. Obs.

a1613 OVERBURY *Charac.*, A Phantastique, An Improvident young Gallant. **1628** MILTON *Vac. Exerc.* 20 Trimming..which takes our late fantasticks with delight. **a1680** BUTLER *Rem.* (1759) II. 131 A Fantastic is one that wears his Feather on the Inside of his Head.

3. A fanciful composition. *Obs.*

1641 *G. H. (title)*, *Wits Recreations, Containing..Variety of Fancies and Fantasticks.*

4. Power of fancy or imagination. *Obs.*

1764 *Public Advertiser* 31 May in *N. & Q.* 3rd Ser. IV. 385 It [Mozart's playing] surmounts all Fantastic and Imagination.

5. That which is fantastic, strange, eccentric or odd.

1908 *Daily Chron.* 17 Mar. 3/3 The tradition of the fantastic which has clung to the memory of Buckingham.