THESIS REPORT

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Thesis Title:  
‘Pictorial Possible Worlds’

Author:  
Petr Spelda

Summary

In my opinion, the revised thesis, which incorporates a number of suggested revisions detailed in my previous report, meets the threshold for award of a PhD.

Detailed Analysis

This report pertains to Petr Spelda’s revised PhD thesis. The thesis remains a challenging, but very interesting read, which attempts a meaningful synthesis of work in various philosophical domains with computing and seeks to apply this to the still online visuals produced by the so-called ‘Islamic State’s’ (IS).

In my initial report I stated that “[s]ome major revisions—not to the substance of the research, but to its presentation—are…in order prior to the viva voce.” It is these revisions that are the focus of this report.

My major concern previously was that the language used in the thesis was overly complex and frequently serves more to obscure than to elucidate what are already complex ideas and approaches. The revised text is somewhat clearer, but would nevertheless require even further work in order to render the text publishable. Having said this, efforts have clearly been made to simplify things as far as was possible in the time available, including making the connections between concepts more explicit.

Two further, more minor, structural problems, have also been addressed. The Candidate reduced the number of chapters as suggested and revised the Introduction so that it now has a more conventional structuring, including summaries of the text’s core purpose(s), theory, methods, and findings. An Abstract has now also been provided, though the text still lacks a descriptive sub-title.

Overall, the revised text’s coherence and readability have been considerably improved.

I stand by the observation in my original report that:

“…truly interdisciplinary research and analysis of the sort presented in this thesis is very important, but difficult. A major hurdle for such analyses is progression through the PhD process, particularly its examination component, arising from the different requirements for what constitutes a ‘good’ thesis within
different disciplines. I therefore commend the Candidate on his innovative synthesising of a very diverse set of ideas and approaches and his perseverance as regards completion of this project in the face of what were no doubt considerable scholarly trials and tribulations."

I am not, unfortunately, in a position to be able to take part in the *viva voce*, but I am satisfied that the research presented in this revised text meets the standard for award of a PhD.