

Supervisor's Report on M.A. thesis by

Mr. David Kudrna

"Mental and Ontological Simulacra: Non-Rationality and Non-Reality in Works by Philip K. Dick"

Mr. David Kudrna offers a critical and theoretical analysis of ontological and mental simulacra and their relation to non-reality and non-rationality in texts by Philip K. Dick. The thesis contains 68 pp. across some preliminary matter, an Introduction, a Chapter 2 on Literary Criticism with two subunits, a Chapter 3 on NON-RA and NON-RE Reality Shifting in PKD with three subunits, a Chapter 4 on Analysis of Dicks's Novels, a Conclusion, and a Bibliography.

Stylistically the thesis is well written and without significant errors. The argumentative strategy is sometimes very complicated though, and not as lucid in the lineaments of its larger arguments as it could be. Locally, however, its contentions are given good textual supports. For example, "The perspectives on Pris sketch her mind-set in the shifting light of varying sociability and emotionality levels ranging from the display of social and emotional disconnectedness (potentially with sociopathological overtones) to the seeking of interpersonal proximity and the showing of emotional vulnerability. These changing perspectives freely intersect with the shifting strength of the implication as to the dependency of her aloofness on her psychological condition" (38). This begs questions about simulacra, a central object of focus in the study. The candidate then states, "In other words, the question presenting itself to us is to what extent the manner of Pris's social and emotional interaction with others in the novel is a matter of choice as opposed to being symptomatic of the development of her illness" (38). **Here could the candidate clarify the answer to this question given in the thesis?**

Here is another example of Mr. Kudrna's close reading: "Though the perspectives on Pris oscillate around the relatively static psychological and emotional positions defined by her emotional coldness, by the end of *WCBY*, Pris's unavailability has been dulled of its formerly ego-/reality-shattering components for the narrator, who has been revived through his tussle with and outside the fugue realities. In this process, the narrator's rejuvenated ego has subliminally acquired the conception of reality not as being but as becoming by means of the creative participation in the continuously fluctuating reality fabric (in/of multiple realities)" (45). This is heady stuff that requires some processing from the reader. But it can be comprehended with some thoughtful effort. Next we read, "This conclusion to the overall evolution of the theme of reality in the novel prompts questions with existentially-laden overtones, questions that impact not only psychic and emotional life but the whole human condition, of which questions let me formulate two. Are we not better off striving to understand the illusoriness of reality and embracing its fluctuation rather than living "a dream within a dream" (Poe 11) and suffering when the dream finally collapses? Is it not better to know the world by engaging with its confusing multiplicity than to experience the world twice removed by living in the prison of an artificially frozen reality?" (45). Probably, yes for this reader. Mr. Kudrna also writes the following, to which I have a question following the extract: "The narrative realizations of the motifs of decay, entropy, destruction, and death

crystalize into an indictment of the dehumanizing, oppressive, exploitative, and lethal regimes and mechanisms of ideological orders in private, cultural, political, and economic spaces, which freeze life and reality in place to perpetuate themselves. Another thrust (shift) of meaning that originates in the narrative is the hint of the vector of unavoidable incompetence and internal dilapidation of such regimes and mechanisms (e.g. the mismanagement of/the lack of support for the Mars settlement by Earth authorities, like the UN)” (48). **Here could the candidate articulate what this all denotes?**

Not only this, we read, “In the novel, the destructiveness of ideological systems demonstrates itself also in the pressures that life in the setting of Earth exercises on individual psychology. Within the structural shifting of realities in PKD, frozen mental life is simultaneously a (contributing) cause and effect of mind-constructed unchanging realities circumscribing the human condition, the illness of the mind and the illness of reality being a continuation of each other. *MTS* makes this argument openly as part of the social critique” (48). **Is this the sum total of this problem here? Or are there other factors?**

The Conclusion does the best job of summing up what the candidate is arguing in this thesis when to give one example the candidate claims,

This thesis sought to represent the narrative reality in science-fiction works by Philip K. Dick, arguing that at the base of Dick’s fictional worlds is the universal *shifting* of reality that escapes the dichotomizing oppositions and hierarchies of the rational/irrational and the real/unreal. For this manner of ‘rationality’ and ‘reality’ I coined the expressions *non-rationality* (NON-RA) and *non-reality* (NON-RE), which I described by means of Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy of *difference* as situating PKD’s worlds in continued becoming through the multiplicity of fictional reality, which cannot be regarded in absolute categories (58).

Fair enough. In the very last words of the thesis we read, “What also matters, however, is most candidly articulated in *Clans of the Alphane Moon*: that all throughout our search for meaning, humanity leads with our hearts, not only our intellects, and values equality, cohabitation, cooperation and communication between all beings” (64). This is an apt coda for the study.

In light of the foregoing mentions, I hereby recommend the pre thesis defense mark of a 2 (velmi dobře) for the thesis work, which may be upgraded in the event the performance at the viva merits it.

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