

**Philip Kindred Dick's
The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch:
The will to power as the axiological source
of hallucinogenic and technological dystopia**

ADAM WEISS

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Abstract

The paper investigates the ways in which hallucinations induced by hallucinogenic drugs with the help of technological devices distort the human perception of reality within the fictional world of Philip K. Dick's novel, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. It also examines how the axiological order of this fictional world is negatively affected by power games played by the main protagonists and how these games refer to Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical notion of the will to power. By underlining the novel's narrative intersections between technology and axiology, this paper shows that within *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* the continuity of civilisational development proves to be dystopian in its essence.

Keywords

dystopia, the will to power, hallucinogens, technology, axiology, trans-humanism, Philip Dick

***Trzy stygmaty Palmera Eldritch* Philipa Kindreda Dicka:
Wola władzy jako aksjologiczne źródło halucynogennej
i technologicznej dystopii**

Abstrakt

Artykuł bada, w jaki sposób halucynacje indukowane przez halucynogenne narkotyki za pośrednictwem technologicznych urządzeń zniekształcają ludzką percepcję rzeczywistości w fikcyjnym świecie powieści Philipa Dicka *Trzy stygmaty Palmera Eldritch*. Sprawdza on ponadto, w jakiej mierze na aksjologiczny porządek powieściowego świata negatywnie oddziałują gry o władzę prowadzone przez główne postaci i jak odnoszą się one do wywodzącej się z filozofii Fryderyka Nietzschego idei woli mocy. Podkreślając te punkty narracyjne, gdzie przecinają się zagadnienia dotyczące technologii i aksjologii, artykuł wskazuje, że w fikcyjnym świecie *Trzech stygmatów Palmera Eldritch* ciągłość cywilizacyjnego rozwoju w istocie swej nosi znamiona dystopii.

Słowa kluczowe

dystopia, wola mocy, halucynogeny, technologia, aksjologia, transhumanizm, Philip Dick

1. Introduction

Philip Kindred Dick's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1964) is a novel that focuses on the human perception of reality, both on how this perception is subjected to a given state of mind and how it can be altered. Epistemological and ontological questions challenge the constructed reality of the text which, based on the characters' choices, generates complex dynamics of events and in which hallucinogens and technology play major roles.

In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* the main function of combining hallucinogenic drugs with technological devices is to change the user's perception. The reasons for altering the

state of mind are either hedonistic or driven by the thirst for power. For the purpose of clarity I will divide the protagonists of the novel into two main groups: those characters who rule over interplanetary colonists and make them dependent on illusions created by the use of hallucinogenic drugs enhanced by technology, and those characters whose living conditions are subject to the will of others, but who are no less egocentric than their rulers. There are also characters who would like to live peaceful and normal lives and who play the structural role of counterbalancing the axiological paradigm under which the members of the first two groups operate.

The plot of the novel is driven by the fact that the Earth became uninhabitable due to global warming and that the political power – embodied by the United Nations – is distracted and corruptible, letting drug dealers supply colonies in the Solar System with their illegal products. It may be claimed that, like in the utopian tradition, the axiological order of the world presented in dystopian fiction shapes its space and, at the same time, is shaped by the space of the fictional world.¹ The structure of the dystopian axiological order informs us about the source of dystopia *per se*, understood as an effect of the actions taken by human beings. *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* seems to be exemplary in this matter because of its detailed exploration of the motives that lie behind actions undertaken by a power-hungry group of individuals that have an impact on the living conditions of the colonists and other characters of the novel. The dialectics of the above division is in line with the argument of Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga that: “[t]he defining plot pattern of dystopia, focusing on the relation between the individual and the state, translates into a particular construction of space, in which the boundary between the space of the indi-

¹ The interrelation of spatiality and the axiological order as a defining feature of the utopian tradition is discussed by Artur Blaim in *Gazing in Useless Wonder: English Utopian Fictions, 1516-1800* (2013). See also Terentowicz-Fotyga's "Defining the dystopian chronotope: Space, time and genre in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*" (2018).

vidual and the space of the state becomes a crucial locus of signification” (Terentowicz-Fotyga 2018: 16). Even if the drug and technology dealers of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* who invade the bodies and minds of their clients are not the state’s representatives, they are in good standing with the novel’s United Nations, the sole and corrupted political hegemon while, by contrast, the colonists are deprived of any political power. The colonists are unable to go beyond the spatial boundaries fixed by a power-hungry group of individuals; they can either stay on polluted Earth or be relocated to one of the interstellar colonies where the living conditions are highly difficult. The fact that the main political body in the novel (the United Nations), is characterized as a “windowless monad” (Dick 1991: 10) points to its pathologically insulated nature. It turns out that the United Nations cares only about retaining its own status quo and its sphere of influence, regardless of the costs that both Earth’s inhabitants and the colonists bear in consequence of actions taken by the power-hungry individuals. That the United Nations lets drug dealers operate in the Solar System in exchange for huge bribes clearly points to the dystopian nature of the fictional world as “[t]he structuring theme of dystopia is the relations between the individual self and oppressive, monolithic state” (Terentowicz-Fotyga 2018: 15). In Dick’s novel, the state, embodied by its multiplied version the United Nations, is inert, immune and unreachable for the average individual, and immune, unprotective of its subjects from the hallucinogenic and technological dystopia that, in a sense, is an imaginative dystopia within a political dystopia. The United Nations’ insulation and corruption also signify the crisis of the axiological orders on the guard of which the member states stood in the past. In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, individuals are left on their own and therefore have to define their own axiological order.

My argument is that the individual ambitions of the novel’s main protagonists are driven by the will to power which is the axiological source of hallucinogenic and technological dystopia in the novel. As Adam Roberts observes in *The History of Science*

Fiction, “Nietzsche’s ‘will to power’ did not originally mean ‘power over others’ (it could equally well be rendered ‘creative power’ or ‘self-knowledge’); but it was taken by many [...] to mean exactly that” (Roberts 2006: 126). The will to power is not a will to life, it is a will to take risks, to overcome individual weaknesses, in order to become fuller in an egocentric, joyous and immoral way, and to develop one’s potential according to one’s needs, even if these may be considered evil by those who belong to the “unclean” mass: “[t]ruly, we do not prepare a home here for unclean men! [...] like a wind I will one day blow among them and with my spirit take away the breath from their spirit” (Nietzsche 1961: 122). As will be shown in the following chapters, Palmer Eldritch is able to possess the minds of other people when they take a drug, Chew-Z, which he brings from another galaxy. Eldritch’s attitude corresponds with Nietzsche’s logic of “the revaluation of all values” (Nietzsche 1968: 545) where the latter claims that it is desirable for highly developed individuals to rule in line with the values that they create for their own interest, even if these may cause others to suffer.

The will to power is understood in this article in the sense explained by Martin Heidegger in his *Nietzsche* monography: “[e]very willing is a willing to be more. Power itself only is inasmuch as, and so long as, it remains a willing to be more power. [...] In will, as willing to be more, as will to power, enhancement and heightening is essentially implied” (Heidegger 1991: 60). At this point the concept of the will to power meets a much more recent concept of transhumanism whose progressive model assumes overcoming the natural limitations of mankind in the pursuit of “broadening human potential by overcoming aging, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering, and our confinement to planet Earth” (humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-declaration/). As one of the founders of transhumanism, Max More, writes “[t]he essence of life is what Nietzsche called the will to power – life’s perpetual drive toward its own increase and excellence. Extropic life can thus never manifest self-sacrifice or worship of superior beings” (More n.d.).

In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, Dick explores the question of accelerated evolution and interplanetary voyages made possible due to scientific research and discoveries, but his dystopian vision is in contrast to transhumanist optimism. Transhumanist beliefs are based on the assumption that nature is insufficient, slow and blind, so it should be improved. Transhumanists declare that they “advocate the well-being of all sentience, including humans, non-human animals, and any future artificial intellects, modified life forms, or other intelligences to which technological and scientific advance may give rise” (humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-declaration/). *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* presents a world in which the higher beings would rather try to enslave others than to help them develop and attain a higher level of perfection.

The social order of the fictional world of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* seems to function as a negative utopia sensu Lyman Tower Sargent defining it as “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived” (Sargent 1991: 9). However, as Peter Stockwell observes “(d)ystopia is not the opposite of utopia. The contrary of utopia (no place) is our reality (this place); dystopia is a displacement of our reality (Stockwell 2000: 211)”. Sargent’s definition works as a theoretical frame of the structure of Dick’s novel chronotope as long as it maintains its “normal” attributes. Hallucinogens combined with technological devices change the very structure of the novel’s chronotope (sensu Bakhtin), thus the hallucinogenic and technological dystopia should be differentiated from the dystopia of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*’s “real” world characterized by the Newtonian space-time where the rules of classical physics construct the physical boundaries. The hallucinogenic and technological dystopia of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* functions within the theoretical frame of Stockwell’s definition where an ordinary (“normal”) chronotope

collapses and the reality is displaced in both the temporal and spatial dimensions.

2. Exploring the hallucinogenic and technological dystopia

2.1. The hallucinogenic dystopia

The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch's fictional world is set in the future where habitable celestial bodies in the Solar System – the Moon, Mars, Venus, Saturn and Pluto – are colonized, due to the global warming that makes living on Earth extremely difficult. However, environmental conditions in the colonies are also adverse, which accounts for the massive use of the drug called Can-D. The following description of the colony on Mars illustrates conditions which average, poor human beings have to face:

For settlers on a howling, gale-swept moon, huddled at the bottom of a hovel against frozen methane crystals and things, it was something else again; Perky Pat and her layout were an entree back to the world they had been born to. But he, Leo Bulero, he was damn tired of the world he had been born to and still dwelt on.

"That Can-D," he said to Miss Jurgens, "is great stuff, and no wonder it's banned. It's like religion; Can-D is the religion of the colonists." He chuckled. "One plug of it, wouzzled for fifteen minutes, and –" He made a sweeping gesture. "No more hovel. No more frozen methane. It provides a reason for living. Isn't that worth the risk and expense?" (Dick 1991: 13).

Perky Pat Layouts, Inc. is responsible for the production and distribution of the equipment that, when employed together with Can-D, provides users with a mind-altering experience that lets them dissociate from the hardship of their actual existence and sink into a hallucinogenic vision. The equipment seems to be a miniaturized world of dolls whose names are Pat and Walt

and participants in the hallucinogenic sessions are able to play the roles of one of the characters as long as they are under the influence of the drug. It is not explained how exactly Can-D works in connection with the Perky Pat Layout. Nevertheless, this is how Sam Regan, one of the colonists on Mars, experiences the displacement of reality during a hallucinogenic-technological session:

He was Walt. He owned a Jaguar XXB sports ship with a flat-out velocity of fifteen thousand miles an hour. His shirts came from Italy and his shoes were made in England. As he opened his eyes he looked for the little G.E. clock TV set by his bed; it would be on automatically, tuned to the morning show of the great newsclown Jim Briskin. [...]

Walt shut off the TV, rose, and walked barefoot to the window; he drew the shades, saw out then onto the warm, sparkling early-morning San Francisco street, the hills and white houses. This was Saturday morning and he did not have to go to his job down in Palo Alto at Ampex Corporation; instead – and this rang nicely in his mind – he had a date with his girl, Pat Christensen, who had a modern little apt over on Potrero Hill.

It was always Saturday (Dick 1991: 23).

Enjoying his restful weekend, flying a Jaguar airship, watching TV, staying in bed, and dating, “Walt”, an employee in a corporation, leads a life of a single, wealthy person whose existence seems to be modeled on the hedonistic lifestyles propagated in soap operas and TV advertisements. Even though Sam-Walt has a job, he does not need to work because Saturday is a constant temporal frame in the imaginary San Francisco. Even though his body stays on Mars, his consciousness is displaced from his real life and explores “San Francisco”, due to the Perky Pat Layout and Can-D’s effects that engage only the mind of the user. His experience is consistent with scientific (neurobiological) findings:

Environmental objects might be altered in size (“Visual illusions”) or take on a modified and special meaning for the subject (“Altered

self-reference"). Subjects may perceive light flashes or geometrical figures containing recurrent patterns ("Elementary imagery and hallucinations") influenced by auditory stimuli ("Audiovisual synesthesia"), or they may envision images of people, animals, or landscapes ("Complex imagery and hallucinations") without any physical stimuli supporting their percepts (Halberstadt et al. 2018: 257).

The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch's exploration of the mind-altering potential of hallucinogenic drugs seems to be compatible with all of the above quoted brain effects. Sam Regan sees objects that are bigger than they really are. His environment, as well as his identity, are altered and he feels as if he is experiencing the whole parallel universe of imaginary life in the imaginary city. The effect of dissociation from the actual self is combined with the effect of spatial relocation, producing a simulation of an entirely different chronotope. Can-D visions hold Sam under a spell until the effects of the drug wear off. Nevertheless, Sam's memory prevents him from being fully involved in the enjoyment because, however convincing, hallucinatory visions cannot completely cover their insubstantiality.

An illusion, he thought, pausing in his shaving. In what way? He tried to think back; Sam Regan and Mars, a dreary colonists' hovel... yes, he could dimly make the image out, but it seemed remote and vitiated and not convincing. Shrugging, he resumed shaving, puzzled, now, and a little depressed. All right, [...] maybe he did remember that other world, that gloomy quasi-life of involuntary expatriation in an unnatural environment. So what? Why did he have to wreck this? (Dick 1991: 24)

Firmly resolved not to care about the hardship of his existence on Mars and to lead Walt's life, – at least as long as Can-D works – Sam calls Pat, his beautiful companion. He gets disoriented once again when she recalls their recent conversation which he is sure they did not have. Probably Pat remembers a conversation she had with some other Mars colonist who "visited" the world of Perky Pat and played the role of Walt just before Sam

entered it, using the layout belonging to him without his consent. When they meet and go to the beach, Pat asks him about the time they are in and his confusion increases; but still, he does not want to ruin the atmosphere of a careless holiday: “Well, I guess it’s –’ And then he could not recall; it eluded him. ‘Damn,’ he said crossly. ‘Well, it doesn’t matter’” (Dick 1991: 25). The ontological structure of the San Francisco Sam is in does not really interest him; he only wants the experience to continue. Additionally, he wants to do things that he would not do in the colony as he knows they are morally wrong. For example, he plans to have an affair with Fran Schein, another colonist. They are both married and – what Sam seems to overlook – by deciding to take a drug together, they betray their partners before the Can-D session take them into the drug-induced reality. Fran-Pat says to Sam-Walt, trying to justify herself: “‘I used to be Fran,’ she said over her shoulder, ‘but that doesn’t matter now. I could have been anyone before, Fran or Helen or Mary, and it wouldn’t matter now. Right?’ ‘No,’ he disagreed, catching up with her. Panting, he said, ‘It’s important that you’re Fran. In essence’” (Dick 1991: 25). It seems that Fran’s line of reasoning, justifying their cheating is based on the separation of the body from the mind: “ ‘We’re here,’ she said presently, ‘to do what we can’t do back at the hovel. Back where we’ve left our corruptible bodies. [...] And since we’re here, and we can do things denied us at the hovel, then your theory is we ought to do those things. We ought to take advantage of the opportunity’” (Dick 1991: 25). From the above statement, one can draw the conclusion that Sam and Fran believe morality to be a set of rules imposed on them “back there”, and in contrast, “here” they are given a chance to live a different life, so these rules may – or even should – be discarded, in accord with the egocentric attitude that characterizes almost every individual in the novel with the significant exception of a Christian woman, Anne Hawthorne. She alone consciously tries to stand against the predominant axiological order of the novel’s fictional world (and eventually fails by taking Can-D). Nevertheless, Sam’s conversation

with Fran is interrupted by the voice of Fran's husband, Norm, that Sam hears from the inside of himself:

[...] in the limbs of his body, an alien mastery asserted itself; he sat back, away from the girl. "After all," Norm Schein thought, "I'm married to her." He laughed, then.

"Who said you could use my layout?" Sam Regan thought angrily.

"Get out of my compartment. And I bet it's my Can-D, too."

"You offered it to us," the co-inhabitant of his mindbody answered.

"So I decided to take you up on it." (Dick 1991: 25).

The most important element of the scene which is quoted in part above is the possibility of not only the human mind but also the human body to be possessed – at least partly – by some alien force or being (one not acknowledged by the possessed subject as their own). By the same token, the two most important boundaries that should separate an individual from the outer world – the boundaries between their body and mind and what lies beyond them – are breached without their consent. The eponymous Palmer Eldritch also appears as such an abusive, violating, and thus dystopian force; the description of him possessing Barney Mayerson, the precognitive consultant at Perky Pat Layouts, Inc., corresponds with the experience Sam Regan has: "[h]e heard, then, a laugh. It was Palmer Eldritch's laugh but it was emerging from – Himself" (Dick 1991: 106). The question of Palmer Eldritch's possessive power appears to be partly answered by Leo Bulero, the head of Perky Pat Layouts, Inc., in his conversation with Felix Blau, the head of a private police organization: "Eldritch's power works through that drug,' Leo said. 'As long as he can't administer any to me I'm fine.'" (Dick 1991: 97). Palmer Eldritch's power operates via the drug called Chew-Z, creating an illusionary pseudo-reality that – from the external point of view (that is, from the point of view of those who comprehend the danger that Eldritch constitutes for drug users) – bears the signs of dystopia understood as an unpleasant displacement of reality. The ontological status of such a pseudo-reality can be defined as a simulacrum. Simulacrum,

Jean Baudrillard's famous term (1981), is understood here in the following sense:

Baudrillard sketches four successive phases of simulacra. Firstly, he argues, the image is taken as 'the reflection of a profound reality'. Then the image 'masks and denatures a profound reality'. The first phase Baudrillard associates with Platonism and the second with Marxism. Thirdly, following Nietzsche, Baudrillard contends that the image also 'masks the absence of a profound reality', and finally, with simulation, 'has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum' (Pawlett 2010: 198).

The hallucinatory vision's absence of substance does not lessen the effect it has on distorted human perception. When Eldritch's staff manages to capture Leo Bulero, inject him with Chew-Z, a drug made of the lichen brought by Eldritch somewhere from the Proxima Centauri system, and tie him to a chair in an almost empty room, Eldritch informs Bulero that he stole the lichen from the Proxers, who "use it themselves, in religious orgies. As our Indians made use of mescal and peyotl" (Dick 1991: 41). After that, Palmer Eldritch starts to claim that the Chew-Z experience is genuine, in contrast to Can-D which "is obsolete, because what does it do? Provides a few moments of escape, nothing but fantasy" (Dick 1991: 47). Trying to convince Leo Bulero, Eldritch points at a "gluck", a monster he invents and places in a hallucinatory surrounding of their conversation: "the glucks showed you with absolute clarity that this is not a fantasy. They could actually have killed you. And if you died here that would be it. Not like Can-D, is it?" (Dick 1991: 47). The possibility of being killed by non-existent creatures seems to be a decisive factor that supposedly proves the genuineness of the experience Chew-Z provides. However, even if Palmer Eldritch's imagination is able to envision surroundings that appears as "real" on the level of the intoxicated mind, the natural-born body is the one which "awaits" its "owner" until the Chew-Z effects wear off:

"When we return to our former bodies – you notice the use of the word 'former,' a term you wouldn't apply with Can-D, and for good reason – you'll find that no time has passed. We could stay here fifty years and it'd be the same; we'd emerge back at the demesne on Luna and find everything unchanged, and anyone watching us would see no lapse of consciousness, as you have with Can-D, no trance, no stupor. Oh, maybe a flicker of the eyelids. A split second; I'm willing to concede that."

"What determines our length of time here?" Leo asked.

"Our attitude. Not the quantity taken. We can return whenever we want to. So the amount of the drug need not be –"

"That's not true. Because I've wanted out of here for some time, now."

"But," Eldritch said, "you didn't construct this – establishment, here; I did and it's mine. [...]" "Every damn thing you see, including your body." (Dick 1991: 47).

Palmer Eldritch, as a ruler of the hallucinatory realm, is able to fully govern it as long as he wants, claiming that the effects of Chew-Z depend neither on Newtonian time nor on the Chew-Z dose taken by the user. It seems, then, that what Chew-Z does exactly with the structure of reality, apart from its visionary potential that can be directed by Palmer Eldritch, is time-stopping when the mind leaves the body for the time that the Chew-Z works. Nonetheless, without the body the mind cannot operate within the frames of the material reality that is conditioned not only by the laws of classical physics, but also – on the social level – by the desires of egocentric individuals and corrupted political institutions.

The type of the hallucinogenic dystopia that is induced by Chew-Z is, then, characterized by two main features: it is timeless and experienced only on the level of the mind, while the natural-born body of the experiencer stays in the place where the rules of classical physics are applicable. Taking into consideration that "Newtonian mechanics could not be applied to events in which there occurred velocities comparable to the velocity of light" (Heisenberg 2000: 58), it is sensible to assume that in the world of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* the

visions induced by Chew-Z occur at the speed of light, because only then can time stop, according to Einstein's findings that "time does 'stop' at relativistic speeds, but you have to get to practically the speed of light itself to get the most extreme situation" (einstein.stanford.edu/content/relativity).

When Leo Bulero finally escapes from the insane labyrinth of the hallucinogenic dystopia that Palmer Eldritch has envisioned in an attempt to possess Bulero's mind, Leo realizes that there is no escape from both the hallucinogenic and political dystopia other than in a spiritual order "that underlies the play of phenomena which we call 'reality'" (Dick 1991: 58). This hidden spiritual force is extrinsic to, and thus independent of, any individual existence: "it's something in me that even that thing Palmer Eldritch can't reach and consume because since it's not me it's not mine to lose" (Dick 1991: 121). Its nature, however inexplicable, is different than the immoral and egocentric will to power that drove Bulero until his encounter with Eldritch.

2.2. The technological dystopia

Palmer Eldritch is "the well-known interplan industrialist [...], who had gone to the Prox system a decade ago at the invitation of the Prox Council of humanoid types; they had wanted him to modernize their autofacs along Terran lines. Nothing had been heard from Eldritch since" (Dick 1991: 8). From the above quotation, the reader learns that the range of the fictional world of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* goes beyond the borders of the Solar System, for human-like species have settled colonies as far as the Proxima Centauri system, and possibly even further into interstellar space as no one knows where Palmer Eldritch really was. The fact that the exploration of outer space is possible due to technological progress is crucial as it is technology that structures the dystopian dynamics of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. Not only does technology allow for interplanetary voyages and colonization but it also is responsible

for the production, distribution and operation of the Perky Pat Layout.

It is significant that Eldritch's first appearance in the novel takes the form of a voice transmitted from an electronic device. As the plot unfolds, the eponymous character manifests himself in many forms with the help of multiple technological transmitters, either creating holographic representations or speaking through electronic devices. Also, the stigmata of Palmer Eldritch's body appear as technological improvements:

He had enormous steel teeth, these having been installed prior to his trip to Prox by Czech dental surgeons; they were welded to his jaws, were permanent: he would die with them. And – his right arm was artificial. [...] And he was blind. At least from the standpoint of the natural-born body. But replacements had been made – at the prices which Eldritch could and would pay; that had been done just prior to his Prox voyage by Brazilian oculists. They had done a superb job. The replacements, fitted into the bone sockets, had no pupils, nor did any ball move by muscular action. Instead a panoramic vision was supplied by a wide angle lens, a permanent horizontal slot running from edge to edge (Dick 1991: 86).

Technological advancement, known as cyborgization, has changed Palmer Eldritch's human body into a partly robotic organism. Such advancements are welcomed by transhumanists who view them in terms of desired "morphological freedom": "We favour allowing individuals wide personal choice over how they enable their lives. This includes use of techniques that may be developed to assist [...] possible human modification and enhancement technologies" (humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-declaration/). Dick's vision seems to challenge the very source of the transhumanist view of the postulated posthuman – by showing that such a view is no less dystopian than any other corrupted utopian ideal. And this source is the will for never ending progress for the sake of an imagined state of constant happiness, a "lasting bliss" (Bostrom n.d.) without suffering.

The transhumanist posthuman seems to be a philosophical construct that assumes a peaceful coexistence of highly developed entities without paying sufficient attention to the fact that the moral development inscribed into a transhumanist perspective should not be taken for granted, for it may not accompany the development of consciousness. Even though at the time Dick was writing *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* the notion of transhumanism was not in use yet, the view of the future posthuman in a transhumanist sense is deconstructed in the novel's dystopian vision of its characters' wavering identities as they steal one another's projected lives.

Palmer Eldritch and Leo Bulero are more intellectually developed than most humans because they have undergone a treatment called "E Therapy" offered by an "ex-Nazi-type German doctor" (Dick 1991: 107). "E Therapy" increases brain function by accelerating its natural evolution. Those who were treated by Dr. Denkmal are called "bubbleheads" due to their enormously large frontal lobes. Nevertheless, "E Therapy" did not make Leo Bulero and Palmer Eldritch more empathetic and the price they have to pay in consequence is their aching loneliness which seems to drive their need to possess not only things, but also – as it is in Palmer Eldritch's case – the minds and bodies of others: "[w]ith vast trailing arms he extended from the Proxima Centaurus system to Terra itself, and he was not human; this was not a man who had returned. And he had great power. He could overcome death. But he was not happy. For the simple reason that he was alone. So he at once tried to make up for this; he went to a lot of trouble to draw others along the route he had followed" (Dick 1991: 107). Palmer Eldritch's loneliness seems to be caused by his refusal to empathize with other human beings; he only wants them to feel what he feels. There is no reciprocity on his part because he sees himself as a human being of the highest order.

Palmer Eldritch's view of himself corresponds with Nietzsche's view on the superman who should go through absolute solitude to discover himself and who should not care about

those whom he has categorized as belonging to the rabble: "[l]ife is a fountain of delight; but where the rabble also drinks all wells are poisoned" (Nietzsche 1961: 120). Nietzsche glorifies solitude – a price which must be paid for the freedom that allows an individual's will to power to manifest and act. However, without others, solitude is neverending, and because of that it may turn into the thirst for power over those who are despised because of their inability to be on the same level of advancement as the superman; and thus „[o]ur longing for a friend is our betrayer" (Nietzsche 1961: 82).

The poetic pathos Nietzsche uses to stress the assumed extraordinariness of the position of the superman as an enlightened entity that knows and feels much more than common people seems to be echoed in one of the most prominent transhumanists manifestoes, Nick Bostrom's *Letter from Utopia*: "I fear that the pursuit of Utopia will bring out the worst in you. Many a moth has been incinerated in pursuit of a brighter future" (Bostrom n.d.), and further: "I am one of your possible futures. One day, I hope, you will become me". It is Palmer Eldritch who hopes that one day everyone will be possessed by him, but not because he would like them to be like him, but because he does not care about beings who he considers worse than himself. Leo Bulero becomes dispirited when he thinks about his clients' ungratefulness: "what is there of equal value for us? he asked himself, and felt melancholy. He had, by manufacturing the Perky Pat layouts and raising and distributing the lichenbase for the final packaged product Can-D, made life bearable for over one million unwilling expatriates from Terra. But what the hell did he get back? My life, he thought, is dedicated to others" (Dick 1991: 14). It is, then, resentment rather than contentment that grows out of the economic exploitation of others (as they pay for his products), which indicates that solitary achievements dictated by the will to power are not enough to bring lasting satisfaction.

Richard Hnatt and his wife Emily, who was once married to Barney Mayerson, also go to Munich to take the risk of being

treated by Dr. Denkmal. The risk associated with the “E Therapy” is that of possible mental regress, instead of progress. Even though Emily does not feel comfortable with the whole idea, she acquiesces to her husband, who is eager to become more evolved than he is at present:

"It makes me nervous," Emily whispered; she held a magazine on her lap but was unable to read. "It's so – unnatural."

"Hell," Hnatt said vigorously, "that's what it's not; it's an acceleration of the natural evolutionary process that's going on all the time anyway, only usually it's so slow we don't perceive it. I mean, look at our ancestors in caves; they were covered with body-hair and they had no chins and a very limited frontal-area brain-wise. And they had huge fused molars in order to chew uncooked seeds."

"Okay," Emily said, nodding (Dick 1991: 36).

The atmosphere of Dr. Denkmal's clinic, intertextually gothicized, evokes something rather gloomy and gruesome: “They faced a gigantic chamber of scientific gadgets and two Dr. Frankenstein tables, complete with arm and leg brackets. At the sight Emily moaned and shrank back. ‘Nothing to fear, Frau Hnatt. Like electra-convulsive shock, causes certain musculature reactions; reflex, you know?’ Denkmal giggled. ‘Now you must, ah, you know: take off your clothes.’” (Dick 1991: 37). It appears that neither the country in which the clinic is placed, nor the atmosphere is incidental. It is common knowledge that the Nazis experimented with people, and dreamed of breeding a perfect race, based on the supposed “Aryan features”. The source of such ideas might be traced back to Nietzsche's superman who creates his own values rather than follow any traditional morality:

[t]here are those who sit in their swamp and speak thus from the rushes: ‘Virtue – that means to sit quietly in the swamp. We bite nobody and avoid him who wants to bite; and in everything we hold the opinions that is given us.’

And again, there are those who like posing and think: Virtue is a sort of a pose. Their knees are always worshipping and their hands are glorifications of virtue, but their heart knows nothing of it (Nietzsche 1961: 119).

Even if Nietzsche condemns any idea that restrains individual progress (for example, the racism on which the Nazi movement was based), his somehow bellicose writings were used for Nazi propaganda purposes. Where Nietzsche addresses nature in his idea of the progress that should lead to the superman, the Nazis combined pseudo-scientific jargon with actual experiments on enslaved human beings in order to create their version of the superman. Richard Hnatt emphasizes that "E Therapy" is "natural", whereas Emily is frightened and considers the process unnatural. As it has been mentioned previously, there is also a risk of regression:

Denkmal bent down beside him, suddenly serious. "I want you to understand; every now and then this therapy – what do you say? – blasts back."

"Backfires," Hnatt said gratingly. He had been expecting this.

"But mostly we have successes. Here, Herr Hnatt, is what the backfires consist of, I am afraid; instead of evolving the Kresy Gland is very stimulated to – regress. Is that correct in English?"

"Yes," Hnatt muttered. "Regress how far?"

"Just a trifle. But it could be unpleasant. We would catch it quickly, of course, and cease therapy. And generally that stops the regression. But – not always. Sometimes once the Kresy Gland has been stimulated to –" He gestured. "It keeps on. I should tell you this in case you might have scruples. Right?"

"I'll take the chance," Richard Hnatt said (Dick 1991: 39).

Richard Hnatt's ambition of intellectual superiority over the majority who cannot afford "E Therapy" costs irreparable damage to his wife's brain, which manifests both through her pottery drafts and her lack of memory: "The ideas were good – but Emily had done them already. Years ago, when she had designed her first professionally adequate pots: she had shown him sketches

of them and then the pots themselves, even before the two of them were married. Didn't she remember this? Obviously not" (Dick 1991: 40). That Richard Hnatt wants to use Emily's pots as part of the Perky Pat layout for Can-D users seems to be just another indicator of his exceedingly ambitious character driven by the will to power. He does not have scruples in his efforts to get a better position on the social ladder, being ready to sacrifice even his relatives for the sake of his career.

"E Therapy" is an element of dystopian reality of the first level ruled by the laws of classical physics. Nonetheless, between this and the next level, governed by the laws of modern physics, there is a vast realm of technologically created, flexible non-places that can be described with the help of the category of simulacrum mentioned in the previous chapter. Simulacrum is "produced from miniaturized cells, matrices, and memory banks, models of control – and it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times from these" (Baudrillard 1994: 3) as artificial, immaterial (not palpable) visual representations that blur the boundaries between the real and the unreal. They are non-places – not in the anthropological sense defined by Marc Auge (1992), but because they do not physically occupy any territory. As Baudrillard expresses it, "the ideal coextensivity of map and territory disappears in the simulation whose operation is nuclear and genetic, no longer at all specular or discursive. It is all of metaphysics that is lost" (Baudrillard 1993: 3). A technologically created simulacrum does not change the original structure of space-time as presented in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch's*, however it prolongs the hallucinogenic effect of drugs because of the fact that it distorts perception. The dystopian dimension of the technologically induced hallucinations lies in their intentional nature: in Dick's novel, simulacrum is intended to enslave the perception of its targeted subject by those who are projecting it. When Leo Bulero refuses to cooperate with Palmer Eldritch, the closed room they are in suddenly blows up in his face (Dick 1991: 41). Shortly thereafter he finds himself in totally different setting: "[h]e opened his eyes, and found

himself sitting on a grassy bank. Beside him a small girl played with a yo-yo” (Dick 1991: 41). There are no limits in creating simulacra other than the imagination of its creator when it comes to hallucinogenic dystopia, but there are technical limitations when it comes to technological dystopia as the latter form of dystopia depends on the technological progress of mankind. Thus, the hallucinogenic dystopia in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* is not independent of technology; the two kinds of dystopia specified at the beginning of this article work together, changing the perception of reality whose ontological nature may be best described as follows: “[r]eality is that which when you stop believing in it, it doesn’t go away” (Dick 2011: 67).

3. Conclusion

In this article I tried to prove that the dystopian axiological order of Philip Dick's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch's* is rooted in Friedrich Nietzsche's notion of the will to power. All dystopias' axiological sources lie in the choices that human beings make, and, by the same token, are connected with the will. Dick's novel explores the issue of technology, the constitutive structural element of the science-fiction genre, and is essentially a product of the progress of science, i.e. an effect of the human effort to understand and change their environment for the better. However, science is of no use if deprived of the physical impact which can obviously be produced and gradually strengthened by technology. A progressive, scientific worldview may fuel development in many fields and make people's lives easier, but on the other hand, it may also be damaging because of its pursuit of a never ending change for better living conditions. Dick's vision shows that the supposedly utopian vision of constant progress, which in point of fact exploits human beings and nature as its resources, has a dystopian potential. *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch's* multidimensional dystopia also puts a special emphasis on hallucinogenic drugs that, when combined with

technology, have damaging effects on human beings who, by taking drugs, try to lessen their suffering caused in huge part by the overambitious supermen of their devastated world.

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Adam Weiss
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-9903-8134
Instytut Anglistyki i Amerykanistyki
Uniwersytet Gdański
ul. Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
rewe.weiss@gmail.com