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MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND METAPHYSICAL SCI-FI

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně a předepsaným způsobem v ní uvedl všechnu použitou literaturu.

V Olomouci dne 15. května 2018   Tomáš Roztočil

No culture is able to achieve the integral fullness of the real, nor can any develop all the potentialities of the human being, for the latter is always in excess of itself…Each culture explores certain sectors of the real, privileges and develops certain dimensions of experience, and, because of this fact, sacrifices other dimensions, other possibilities, which return to haunt it (the return of the repressed!), against which the culture protects itself through a number of mechanisms.

—bertrand méheust, *Le défi du magnetisme*

Table of Contents

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to present a label within the field of literary studies – the metaphysical science fiction. This work is based on the premise that despite the fact that many works within the category of science fiction are preoccupied with metaphysical and ontological questions, there is no coherent category within literary studies that would reflect these themes in the context of science fiction and group together such works accordingly. The author of this thesis will, therefore, attempt to introduce such a category and later suggest its possible application in practice on an analysis of two selected works by major authors of science fiction, whose works are traditionally categorized under different labels. This thesis posits that this way of categorization would be able to draw more academic attention to the important, yet often hidden thematic connection between works of science fiction that might seem otherwise unrelated. Furthermore, the research in the field might, in turn, feed information back and bring new insights into the fields of cultural studies, philosophies including metaphysics and ontology, the study of mystical experience and religious studies that are initially used to construct the theory. The aim of this thesis is thus to present foundations of the theory of metaphysical science fiction.

The argument will depart from a discussion of various sources from the disciplines of religious studies, anthropology, psychology, and the theory of culture. The author of this thesis will then provide a synthetic interdisciplinary interpretation of these sources to create a basis of the theory of the metaphysical science fiction. In the first chapter, the nature of mystical experience and its typical features will be discussed to provide criteria for identification of such experiences in the literary analysis. Subsequently, the mystical experience will be put into the functional context of myth – the thesis will provide an argument that myth and mystical experience stand in the relation of manual and action. Furthermore, the myths will be shown as texts that in the past were part of the Sacred reality and thus for today's reader represent the plurality of realities, in which one can live. The second chapter will employ an interdisciplinary approach to the works of several theoreticians to present a theory that suggests that the reality as the human beings construct it, is never singular. The argument will follow an idea that there might be several simultaneously existing paradigms of what one can call the real. Moreover, the nature of mystical experience and its aspects will be discussed and subsequently, it will be argued that by undergoing a mystical experience, one can switch between these realities and gain the metaphysical insights from these ventures.

The same chapter will further discuss the theory of the archaic revival as it was introduced by Terence McKenna to foreshadow futuristic yet backward-looking nature of some of the science fiction texts. Following chapter will then employ observation from the preceding theoretical discussions and construct a synthetic theory that would connect several approaches of different fields into a literary theory of the metaphysical science fiction literature. To attest functionality of the theory and suggest a possible way of its application in practice, the thesis will then present analyses of two significant novels from the field of science fiction – *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* by Philip K. Dick, and *Neuromancer* by William Gibson. The main idea founding the theory of the metaphysical science fiction is that the texts of this category always suggest the possibility that the reality, in which the human beings live might be of plural nature and that such insight can be accessed by a mystical experience. Moreover, despite the common preconception that science fiction is mainly technologically oriented, this thesis argues that metaphysical sci-fi, in fact, use technology rather as a background, on which complex ideas of metaphysics and ontology of reality can be discussed.

The author of this thesis posits that applying such approach to science fiction literature might help the theoretical studies to rekindle discussion of many works that have been isolated by their categorization and thus revive an academic discussion in the field of science fiction literary studies. Moreover, the new emergent links between the works and their interpretations might, in turn, bring important insights into the fields focusing on human culture and the ways, in which one perceives and constructs reality. The author hopes that shedding a new light on the genre might again stress the importance of the science fiction literature in today's culture and show that in contrary to assumptions of many, this genre might be preoccupied with the questions that always were and will be central for the humanity to a greater degree than many dare to think.

Mystical Experience and Myth

In the first chapter, the author of this thesis aims to set the basic theoretical background defining shared aspects of mystical experience and myth. The author claims that despite the fact that there is a huge number of interpretations of these concepts, there are several functional similarities that might be seen as of greater importance than the differences. Following definitions and synthetic functional interpretation of concepts of myth and mystical experience will later serve as a point of departure for this thesis' argument that there is a need to establish a new category of works within the field of science fiction.

This thesis is based on the idea that a mystical experience is a subject worth scholarly attention in defiance of the views that see it as a marginal human experience. The argument departs from the view that despite being marginal in today's society, the mystical experience might be a valuable source of insights into the questions of the very nature of the reality that the human beings live in. The author's approach to mystical experience is founded on the presupposition that despite its seemingly inaccessible and individual nature, various facets of mystical experience can be studied in a multi-disciplinary way through the analysis of recurrent patterns involved in its manifestations, which are often depicted in cultural products such as literature. Moreover, there is a significant body of scholarly literature exploring the field from various points of view – these different facets of human experience will be aligned in this thesis and the author will attempt to combine them into a theory that can be used in the field of literary studies. Author wants to make clear that he is fully aware that literature of fiction cannot be used as a source for the study of nature of human mind and reality exclusively. Nevertheless, observations from the fields of literature and humanities in general can bring important insights into the research of human mind and metaphysical and ontological claims about the nature of reality. The complexity of mystical states of mind is according to the author of this thesis best captured by synthetic use of various theoretical frameworks from the wide range of fields including diverse approaches from literary studies, philosophy, psychology, and religious studies to psychology. The author takes into account that research in such field often tends to become a point of conflict of various disciplines and ideologies, nevertheless, the findings presented in this thesis might contribute to the already existing discussion by revealing further connections that the disciplines alone might overlook or avoid.

Mystical Experience

Human experience with the surrounding physical world varies immensely. Every single human being has slightly different modes of cognition, processing and interpreting the information gathered via sensuous input. However, comparing and categorizing certain kinds of experience is crucial for the fields of science and humanities that aim to explore and understand the nature of human consciousness as a whole. Thus, if one aims to look at human mind in its full complexity, he or she has to look deep in all the dark corners of the consciousness that shun the light of prevailing mundaneness of the everyday experience.

Mystical experience is, without a doubt, one of such states. First, it is necessary to describe what constitutes this kind of experience. One of the most influential philosophers and psychologists of the nineteenth century, William James, in his lectures about the religious studies compiled in *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study of Human Nature* (1842-1910) provides the support for the basic assumption of this thesis that mystical experience cannot be seen as a purely individual and immediate phenomenon but rather that it points to a certain recurrent state of human mind. In favour of this idea, James argues: "Personal religious experience has its root and centre in the mystical state of consciousness."[1] One can see that rather than seeing mystical experience as a temporary idiosyncratic phenomenon, he deems it to be a recurrent pattern specific for a human brain shared by many people across time and space. Closer defining concrete aspects of such experience, he traces four basic criteria that the prototypical mystical experience fulfils, namely ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity."[2] In the following paragraphs, the author of this thesis will discuss and interpret these defining aspects to be able to incorporate them into the theory presented in following chapters.

The Ineffability concerns the aspect of mystical experience that perhaps lays in midst of the reason for its frequent marginalization in the field of hard sciences. James states that the one who goes through such experience "immediately says that it defies expression, that no adequate report of its contents can be given in words."[3] However, such a starting point should not be a reason to abandon the study of the topic, rather, it should be taken as a starting point for a discussion. Such quality points to complete

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[1] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Centenary Edition* (London: Routledge, 2002), 294.
[2] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Centenary Edition,* 295-296.
[3] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Centenary Edition,* 295.

otherness of the mystical to everyday experience and its relation to language. Not taking a negative approach, James in this way warns that there will always be facets of such phenomenon that lay out of the reach of the faculty of language and far beyond the edge of the conventional constructs of culture. Following the idea further, he specifies: "In this peculiarity, mystical states are more like states of feeling than like states of intellect."[4] Thus, James clearly separates the knowledge gained during the mystical states from the intellectual knowledge we gain by reasoning. Furthermore, it is important to note that despite its quality of ineffability, discussion of such kind of an experience has clearly never been avoided by human discourse; quite conversely it has been always followed by many authors and narrators and became a central theme of vast number of narratives from oral storytelling via written myths and legends all the way into the literature of the present.

Following aspect of the mystical experience, is the Noetic quality. James argues: "Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect."[5] Such point is crucial for the argument presented in this thesis since it suggests existence of the possibility of wholly different knowledge than the one of currently prevailing discourse of mechanistic rationalism of cause and effect. One should note that this approach is not deconstructing the current dominating scientific paradigm, it rather suggests that science and humanities should not reduce mystical experience to a phenomenon unworthy of studying through labelling the mystical experience as a subjective emotional episode on the margins of useful insights that a human being can gain. Thus, if one follows the argument that mystical experience is not working on the plane of rationality, it must hence allow for an existence of an alternative paradigm of thought or a different source of knowledge than reasoning. If such paradigm exists parallelly to our base state of consciousness but still can manifest in the base plane of consciousness, one can see the mystical experience as imaginary doors to the other thinking mode and sources of knowledge.

According to James, another defining feature of the mystical experience is Transiency, which is connected with the temporary nature of the experience. The mystical state of consciousness can be according to James accessed only for a relatively

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[4] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Centenary Edition,* 295.
[5] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Centenary Edition,* 295.

short amount of time – as he argues: "Mystical states cannot be sustained for long."[6] However, the person that went through the experience might reflect the insights from the presupposed alternative source of knowledge across in the ordinary mode of reality and to a certain extent re-examine it by a rational mind. James further draws attention to the fact that such transition is a complicated one: "Often, when faded, their quality can but imperfectly be reproduced in memory."[7] The need to recreate, or in other words to translate, the knowledge is another argument for the independence and utter otherness of these at least two possible realities, allowing for their independent coexistence.

Last of the four basic aspects of mystical experience is according to William James the Passivity. He argues: "(…) the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations (…), which manuals of mysticism prescribe, yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power."[8] This definition again supports the idea of another realm of existence, in which our capability of controlling our own actions diminishes. Furthermore, this power is seen as a superior one. Rather than following it a direct interpretation of this phenomenon as a kind of godly force, the author of this thesis would like to point to studies of various psychologist beginning with Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) or Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) that suggest that one can see such force as a powerful part of human mind that we are not used to or able to control with one's ego.[9]

The important figure among other psychologist searching for the nature of human mind is a Czech psychologist focusing on transpersonal psychology, Stanislaw Grof. One of his major works focusing on shamanic and mystical experience is *The Ultimate Journey: Consciousness and the Mystery of Death* (2006). In this book, Grof terms the mystical experience generally as transpersonal experience, which he describes as follows: "Transpersonal, meaning literally 'beyond the personal' or 'transcending the personal.' Experiences on this level involve transcending the usual boundaries of the body/ego and the limitations of three-dimensional space and linear time, which restrict our perception of the world in the ordinary state of consciousness."[10] Furthermore, he supports the argument developed in this thesis with the following claim: "Transpersonal

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[6] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Centenary Edition,* 295.
[7] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Centenary Edition,* 295.
[8] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Centenary Edition,* 295.
[9] For further discussion see e.g. Jung's essays *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1933).
[10] Stanislav Grof, *The Ultimate Journey: Consciousness and the Mystery of Death* (Saline: McNaughton & Gunn, 2006),139.

experiences are best defined by describing how they differ from everyday experience. In the ordinary or 'normal' state of consciousness, we experience ourselves as material objects contained within the boundaries of our skin and operating in a world with Newtonian characteristics."[11] Again, this supposition suggests another possible source of human knowledge than the one built by reasoning on mechanistic rationalism. Complying with the assumptions presented by James, Grof also argues in favour of the idea that the mystical experience offers pure, direct knowledge while using wholly different means to achieve contact with such knowledge than reasoning, not undervaluing such knowledge.

> Those who go through the experience) seem to tap directly, without mediation of the senses, into sources of information that are clearly far beyond the conventional reach of the individual. Somewhere on the perinatal level of the psyche, a strange rearrangement occurs: what was previously deep intrapsychic probing starts yielding experiences of different aspects of the universe-at-large obtained by extrasensory means.[12]

Last but not least, as James, Grof again states that such knowledge is utterly different to the one, which is a product of reasoning: "The existence and nature of transpersonal experiences violate some of the most basic assumptions of mechanistic science."[13] Stemming from the similarities shown above, one can reach a synthetic view that grants the mystical experience the function to provide humans with the contact with the other paradigm of thought that cross-culturally shares certain qualities.

If one looks at the four basic features that James defined and the observations made by Grof, one can see that all of them point to the idea that the core of the mystical experience is not merely individual emotional, nor is strictly dependent on a chosen form of religious practice or cultural background. Instead, its function is always to provide one with the contact with a plane of consciousness that differs from the one that humans experience daily. Such definition might be overly reductionist for the investigations of religious studies, or of psychology but it is firm enough to describe the basic functions of mystical experience that this work later employs in joined discussion of the relation of myth, mystical experience and literature. Handled by various religions

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[11] Grof, *The Ultimate Journey: Consciousness and the Mystery of Death,* 139.
[12] Grof, *The Ultimate Journey: Consciousness and the Mystery of Death,* 142.
[13] Grof, *The Ultimate Journey: Consciousness and the Mystery of Death,* 144.

and ideologies, this realm of the other can be described using extensively varying terms. Nevertheless, the basic, unifying knowledge one can get from such experience still stays the information that the reality we perceive is a mere part of the whole situation, certainly not its entirety. James further suggests that these experiences "bring a sense of mystery and of the metaphysical duality of things, and the feeling of an enlargement of perception."[14] According to his interpretation, the content of the mystical experience may vary but it always provides one with the knowledge that the reality we live in is of a dual nature. He also does not see it as an alien phenomenon but rather an extension of our normal sensory abilities. The idea of the duality of reality winds in different forms thought the very backbone of the arguments presented in this thesis and will be in varying contexts discussed in following chapters.

Myth and its Functions

In today's academic as well as popular discourse, meaning of the word *myth* became lost in the thick haze of ambiguity. As to 27.2. 2018, definitions of the headword *myth* on the webpage of *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* involve "(1) a usually traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the worldview of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon; (2) a popular belief or tradition that has grown up around something or someone; especially one embodying the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society"; (3) an unfounded or false notion."[15] The author now wants to make clear that for the purposes of this thesis, only the scope of the definition (1) is relevant. However, for any academic discussion, such definition still remains to be overly vague. Thus, the following section will be devoted to various definitions of myth with the aim to reach a synthetic consistent set of features that would allow one to operate with the term in the following discussion. The main emphasis is put not on its structures, which are subject to an extensive cultural variation but its general functions that are shared across different societies.

There are several problems with the aforementioned definition (1) provided by the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*. First and foremost, it heavily relies on today's prevailing western approach to the myth as a fictional story by using the word *ostensibly*, ignoring its dominant function in different cultural contexts. However,

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[14] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Centenary Edition* 298.
[15] "Myth." *Merriam-Webster.com* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/myth (accessed February 27, 2018).

according to many anthropologists, the original and primary function of a myth is not that of a literature of fiction. The anthropologist and sociologist Bronislaw Malinowski in collection of his works *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (1948) argues: "Studied alive, myth, as we shall see, is not symbolic, but a direct expression of its subject-matter; it is not an explanation in satisfaction of a scientific interest, but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality."[16] In this way, he calls for the shift from the distant approach to myth to the more direct and close one, in which one focuses on the performative function the myth takes in certain societies. Where the myth has not yet been marginalized as a fictional story, it has a profound impact on the social reality by providing instructions to rituals reviving what Malinowski calls *primeval reality* – a reality that is displaced from the place and time of the culture, in which the myth exists. Author of this thesis proposes that such function is closely analogous with the one of the mystical experience – both suggest the possibility of the existence of another plane of reality and the possibility to access such realm of being.

Both mystical experience and myth contribute to a discussion of non-homogeneity of what we call the real. As Malinowski states: "Myth fulfils in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief."[17] The core of any belief is exactly the presumption that besides a basic mode of reality, there is a certain realm of the sacred, containing the god or the sacred, unlimited knowledge. Malinowski further supports his argument with the following claim: "Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of the primitive faith and moral wisdom."[18] Thus in myth-dominant cultures, the plurality of reality is seen as being real and describing real events and ontologies, not just symbolic or metaphorical system. Of course, late western society tends to reject such definitions because of the current prevailing rational paradigm that builds a value system mostly on the basis of scientific reasoning and rational thinking paradigm, whereas the realm of the sacred lies deep within the field of irrationality. For that reason, Malinowski suggests that myths may point to: "Order of ideas entirely different from the scientific relation of cause and effect, of motive and consequence."[19] Again,

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[16] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1948), 79.
[17] Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays,* 79.
[18] Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays,* 79.
[19] Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays,* 120.

one should note the similarity between this definition and aforementioned definition of transpersonal experience provided by Stanislaw Grof. Interpretation of this link is further useful for the discussion presented in this thesis – again it is the one of the duality – despite many cultural differences, myth always prompts humans to look at the real not as a firm logical construct but as an amalgam of more, coexisting planes of being.

Another scholar that focuses on such function of myth in societies was Mircea Eliade. In his work *Myth and Reality* (1963), he introduces a functional approach that he tries to apply to a vast number of case studies on different cultures. He defines the myth in following way: "As it was understood in the archaic societies, (…) 'myth' means a 'true story' and, beyond that, a story that is a most precious possession because it is sacred, exemplary, significant."[20] One can see that he shares the same standpoint as Bronislaw Malinowski – both of them see the function of a myth as supporting religious beliefs and being exemplary to human behaviour, and importantly, they deem their validity as *real* in the certain archaic societies. The examples that myth provides usually concern the ways, in which the other paradigm of thought can be accessed. In one another of Eliade's theories, he defines the common feature of myths as follows: "(…) myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the 'supernatural') into the World."[21] His stance thus further confirms opinions of Bronislaw Malinowski and one of the basic assumptions of this thesis that universal function of the myth is to suggest the plurality of reality and provide humans with instructions of how to reach the other mode of consciousness through a mystical experience. In the last part of the first chapter of this thesis, the author will follow the way the myth and mystical experience function together in their functional interplay.

Through Myth to Mystical Experience

The concepts of myth and mystical experience have been already defined. It has been argued that both of these phenomena share the central function of pointing out the possibility of the plural nature of the reality and suggest that such reality can be accessed by humans by involving in certain (though formally differing) practices. What is thus left to be said in order to complement foundations of this thesis, is whether, and if yes then how, the myth and mystical experience are related.

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[20] Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1963), 1.
[21] Eliade, *Myth and Reality,* 6.

Eliade argues in favour of the functional interpretation of a myth that allows for its informative function as well as the performative one. From his point of view, the myth can be seen as a *manual* that describes the way to access a mystical experience through ritual. His explanation is: "by knowing the myth, one knows the 'origin' of things and hence can control and manipulate them at will; this is not an 'external,' 'abstract' knowledge but a knowledge that one experience ritually, either-by ceremonially recounting the myth or by performing the ritual for which it is the justification.[22] By this definition, he proposes that the myth does not mainly serve to provide knowledge directly as a text but rather gives directions to the way, in which the knowledge can be accessed – the way of the ritual that leads to a climax of the mystical experience. Despite its presumed traditional function, it can be argued that myths are in today's western society seen rather as texts. For the sake of the argument presented in this thesis, it is useful to disregard whether one chooses to follow myth as functional manual or a symbolic text – one can argue that the myth always keeps the function of pointing towards possible plural nature of the reality. Concluding what has been shown so far, both the mystical experience and a myth suggest the possibility of the plurality of reality – the difference is that the myth is an oral or a written text describing such state of the reality, while mystical experience enables one to see the duality personally.

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[22] Eliade, *Myth and Reality,* 18-19.

The Plurality of Reality

Following the basic arguments presented in the first chapter, this thesis will further follow the premise that the reality that humans usually perceive as single is in fact at least double, possibly infinitely plural. One can argue that our perceiving something as real stems from the learned cultural and linguistic patterns and norms. As it has been shown, both myth and mystical experience have the function of suggesting the possibility of the plurality of what we call the real. The scope of this thesis cannot be devoted to the study of all possible interpretations of this ontological problem. However, using relevant sources, the author will present a theory proposing that many literary texts today take the function that follows the same ontological suggestions as myth and mystical experience. Because such narratives explore the ontological and metaphysical issues that lie at the very core of our concepts of knowledge about the world we live in, the author chose to label this literature as metaphysical. To establish a basis for a discussion that will argue for the possibility of such a new category within the science fiction literature, this chapter will discuss various interpretations of reality. These interpretation will follow and complement observations made in the preceding chapter.

The Sacred and the Profane

One of the interpretations of the world we live in from an anthropological and religious point of view suggests that the reality is not singular but (at least) dual. Such standpoint was presented e.g. by Mircea Eliade in his widely known study *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (1957). For him, the main line where the possible realities break is a border between the perception of the sacred and the profane world. The realm of the sacred can be seen upon encounter with so-called hierophany, which he defines as follows: "To designate the act of manifestation of the sacred, we have proposed the term hierophany – that something sacred shows itself to us."[23] The attribute of the sacred can be assigned to any object in the physical reality – it is rather a paradigm of thought that gives an object or phenomenon a quality of the sacredness than a graspable or measurable quality. Eliade further explains the phenomenon: "It is impossible to overemphasize the paradox represented by every hierophany, even the most elementary. By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else, yet it

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[23] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959),11.

continues to remain itself, for it continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic milieu. A sacred stone remains a stone."[24] In this way, the objects in physical reality become in semiotic terms a kind of a sign – there is no inherent connection between the stone as it is discussed in the example and its sacredness, rather, the attribute of sacredness becomes spontaneously assigned to it by the mind which undergoes a mystical experience. Following this example, to see such a stone as a sacred one, one must be in contact with the wholly different paradigm of thought that allows for the existence of the wholly different sacred plane of existence. Any object can bear such attribute, as Eliade shows: "(…) for those who have a religious experience all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality."[25] Eliade's view thus allows for parallel coexistence of the two distinct ontological paradigms, which have been already suggested in the discussion of mystical experience and myth.

For this part, it is first important to establish the basic criteria for the experience of the sacred reality and incorporate them into the argument presented by this thesis. Following the main idea of this work, as it was said in the preceding chapter, one must go through the mystical experience in order to open the way to the sacred During the mystical experience, one is confronted with the hierophany – the manifestation of the parallel reality in certain objects or phenomena. Entering the new paradigm implies a profound change in one's sense of time and space. The sacred space can be clearly distinguished from the profane one, though they occur parallelly. Eliade supposes: "For (the one that undergoes the experience), space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of' space are qualitatively different from others."[26] Experience of such space immediately brings the experience of the sacred – once the plurality of the world is revealed, the whole new ontological notion of reality is changed in the subject that undergoes the experience. Quoting Eliade: "The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world. In the homogeneous and infinite expanse, in which no point of reference is possible and hence no orientation can be established, the hierophany reveals an absolute fixed point, a centre."[27] It is important to note that such a new paradigm enters the human experience not as though or hallucination but a parallel sense of reality. Eliade describes such phenomenon as follows: "Where the sacred

[24] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion,* 12.
[25] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 12.
[26] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 20.
[27] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 21.

manifests itself in space, the real unveils itself, the world comes into existence."[28] Such is the sacred space – parallel but ontologically different.

Another important aspect of the realm of the sacred is its temporal quality. As with space, the concepts of time also become plural for the one who undergoes the mystical experience – a sharp distinction between the sacred and the profane concepts of time emerges. Eliade discusses features of the sacred time as follows: "Religious man lives in two kinds of time (…) sacred time (manifests as) a circular time, reversible and recoverable, a sort of eternal mythical present that is periodically reintegrated by means of rites."[29] Thus, in the realm of sacred, the time has a wholly different form that the one that has been dominantly seen as objectively existing. Everyday human experience with time might suggest that it consists of a linear, causal, dynamic succession of events. The linearity of time was thus often followed in by numerous theories of time centred on causality. However, numerous theories including Eliade's concept of mythical time offer different possibilities. Mythical time of the sacred plane is entirely independent of the causal concept of time. Moreover, such temporal configuration is rather static – it seems to be fixed and always accessible through the mystical experience, which is a climactic part of a ritual. Eliade further reasons: "By its very nature sacred time is reversible in the sense that. (…) It is a primordial mythical time made present."[30] In this way, myth and mystical experience again come into play by exposing its receivers to the existence of a different time, a different paradigm of thought.

To sum up the argument concerning the sacred so far: in order to confront a sacred paradigm, one has to go through a mystical experience. Such experience can be accessed in various ways (spontaneously, by performing a formally governed ritual etc.) however, it always involves manifestation of the sacred space that subsequently provides whole new ontological knowledge about the nature of reality one lives in – from single it suddenly becomes at least dual. Moreover, the plane of the sacred works on basis of different temporal rules. The sacred time is non-sequential, fixed, and primordial, relativizing the whole fixed notion of time that we live in.

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[28] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 63.
[29] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 70.
[30] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 68.

The Sacred Reality

From the definitions given above, it might seem that the experience of the sacred world has always been a culturally marginal situation, occurring only during certain ceremonies. However, Eliade further argues that even today's society opted almost exclusively for the profane, in archaic times, it was, in fact, the basis of the reality: "The man of the archaic societies tends to live as much as possible in the sacred (…) for primitives as for the man of all premodern societies, the sacred is equivalent to a power, and, in the last analysis, to reality."[31] Moreover, he sees today's dominating profane paradigm as a historically recent phenomenon, an outcome of desacralization: "completely profane world, the wholly desacralized cosmos, is a recent discovery in the history of the human spirit."[32] While the outcome of the profanation process is today's viewing the world as firmly single and mechanistic, the archaic mind sees two possibilities, taking the sacred for the grounding paradigm of the reality – the first one being the profane world and the second one, juxtaposed, the sacred one. Eliade argues: "spatial nonhomogeneity finds expression in the experience of an opposition between space that is sacred-the only real and really existing space and all other space, the formless expanse surrounding it."[33] Automatically, by selecting one reality as a grounding paradigm, the other becomes suppressed. Eliade confirms this supposition as follows: "unconsecrated space (stands for) a mere amorphous extent into which no orientation has yet been projected, and hence in which no structure has yet arisen – for the religious man, this profane space represents absolute nonbeing."[34] Thus, according to Eliade, the profane space becomes in human mind synonymous with chaos and death, while the sacred space represents a refuge, a life. Thus, today's dominant view of the reality is, in fact, shifted more into the realm of single, profane reality – it detaches further from the primordial dualist view of the world we live in. Despite the extensive profanation, though, many people still opt for the dual view, however, they often do so under the formal teaching of various religious doctrines, not spontaneously. another side of the coin – the profane one. Following the definitions of mystical experience and myth proposed in the first chapter of the thesis, one can propose that myth points the way to mystical experience, which consequently opens the door to the realm of the sacred. Whether one actually performs the ritual or approaches the myth as a fictional text is not

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[31] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 12.
[32] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 13.
[33] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 20.
[34] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 64.

important – it's basic function always remains the same: in Eliade's terms, reminding humans that there is another dimension of reality juxtaposing the one there are located in.

Contemporary western view of the ontology often opts for the profane interpretation. As Eliade argues: "(It) is only in the modem societies of the West that nonreligious man has developed fully. Modern nonreligious man assumes a new existential situation; he regards himself solely as the subject and agent of history, and he refuses all appeal to transcendence."[35] This process is based on detachment from the realm of the sacred, from the primordial religious views, quoting Eliade: "The perspective changes completely when the sense of the religiousness of the cosmos becomes lost. This is what occurs when, in certain more highly evolved societies, the intellectual elites progressively detach themselves from the patterns of the traditional religion."[36] However, even the institutionalized religions, which one could see as subjects that strive to preserve the sacred in today's time are in fact involved in its marginalization. By institutionalizing the mystical experience and setting rigid rules that enable access to it only for certain people and under certain conditions, the realm of sacred becomes the inaccessible other. Once the spontaneous basis for the reality is set completely apart from the everyday life into the temples and under certain people's authority. According to Eliade, first steps of profanation that lie in the beginnings of what we call today's culture lie in the birth of monotheistic religions as Christianity and Judaism that favour so-called historical time at the expense of the original sacred time marked by the absence of causal chronology: "(H)istoricism arises as a decomposition product of Christianity; it accords decisive importance to the historical event (which is an idea whose origin is Christian) but to the historical event as such, that is, by denying it any possibility of revealing a transhistorical, soteriological intent."[37] Following such institutionalized religion, one has no longer the access to the primordial mythical sense of time, Eliade proposes: "Definitively desacralized, time presents itself as a precarious and evanescent duration, leading irremediably to death."[38] By this process, humans lose the connection with the sacred time that was discussed earlier in the definition of the sacred paradigm and get trapped in the firm, causal history.

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[35] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 203.
[36] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 107.
[37] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 112.
[38] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 113.

The realm of the sacred though, has not disappeared entirely from the human society, though. Quoting Eliade: "(M)ost of the situations assumed by a religious man of the primitive societies and archaic civilizations have long since been left behind by history. But they have not vanished without a trace; they have contributed toward making us what we are today, and so, after all, they form part of our own history."[39] This thesis proposes, that such paradigm of thought has always been present in the human culture despite the aforementioned desacralization of human worldview in late western societies. However, pushed to the margins of today's reality, mystical experience and myth have become questioned as fiction. Its bits and pieces can be today found not only in the natural dwellings of primal tribal societies living in close connection to nature but also in the very core of the modern western society itself. For example, according to Eliade, such accounts of the sacred are often captured in the narratives focusing on nature: "Experience of a radically desacralized nature is a recent discovery (…). For (majority) nature still exhibits a charm, a mystery, a majesty in which it is possible to decipher traces of ancient religious values. No modern man, however irreligious, is entirely insensible to the charms of nature."[40] The accounts of such mystical experience and narratives following the structure of myth can be today traced in arts, often in written narratives. The contact with the sacred, though, is often circumscribed in terms that are more easily digestible by the contemporary culture.

As with the active function of the myth in archaic societies, literature offers an escape from the paradigm of thought set by the dominating culture and historical narrative. Eliade argues in favour of this view as follows: "Reading includes a mythological function, not only because it replaces the recitation of myths in archaic societies and the oral literature (…), but particularly because, through reading, the modem man succeeds in obtaining an "escape from time" comparable to the "emergence from time" affected by myths."[41] However, one cannot truly see the function of literature as purely religious. It is certain that in most of the cases, the reading does not produce a true mystical experience in a reader. Following the rules for the reality set by dominating culture, reader can only partially escape the mechanistic time and dominating cultural narrative – as Eliade concludes: "But as long as the (mythical) symbol (…) does not awaken (one's) total consciousness and "open" it to the universe,

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[39] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 202.
[40] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 151.
[41] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 205.

it cannot be said to have completely fulfilled its function. It has only partly "saved" (one) from (his or hers) individual situation but it has not yet raised him to spirituality that is, it has not succeeded in revealing one of the structures of the real to him."[42] Even if such process is not completed, though, the primary function of the mystical experience and myth as it is discussed in this thesis, has taken place in such situation. The suggestion of the plurality of reality has indeed been communicated. Eliade closes his study with an observation that is crucial for the concepts presented in following chapters of this work:

> Nonreligious man has lost the capacity to live religion consciously (but) in his deepest being, he still retains a memory of it, as, after the first "fall," his ancestor, the primordial man, retained intelligence enough to enable him to rediscover the traces of God that are visible in the world. After the first "fall," the religious sense descended to the level of the divided "consciousness"; now, after the second, it has fallen even further, into the depths of the unconscious; it has been forgotten.[43]

Eliade thus presumes that the sacred paradigm of thought has long been central for human beings and the process of desacralization only pushed it to the margins of experience. However, the sacred cannot be completely erased – during the recent history it becomes realized in many forms across the human society and its main function remained untouched. The mythical narratives might not be forming today's human reality in its entirety, but they offer a view that points back to the archaic knowledge of the plurality of what we see as real.

One Brain More Worlds

The author of this thesis is aware that definitions provided by Mircea Eliade might seem misleading when used in literary studies because of the terminology he employs. However, one can find his analysis of the reality we live in extremely useful when he or she applies them across the border of disciplines. Thus, the following part of this thesis will interpretation of his ideas of the sacred and the profane discussed above in the context of works of other theorists that are closer to the study of the relation of the

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[42] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 212.
[43] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 213.

nature of reality, culture, and language. The author further wants to make clear that for the complete understanding of the following chapter, one often has to look back into the definitions of Eliade that were commented on earlier.

One of the intellectuals probing nature of human mind and mystical experiences is previously cited Aldous Huxley. In his essay "Drugs That Shape Men's Mind" (1958), he suggests the possibility of transcendence into another thinking paradigm that grounds the way we assess what is real: "The ordinary waking consciousness is a very useful and, on most occasions, an indispensable state of mind; but it is, by no means the only form of consciousness, nor in all circumstances the best."[44] While agreeing with Eliade on the presupposition that the experience of the reality can be plural, his interpretation suggests that such paradigm is not of an external nature but stems from the human mind itself. In aforementioned *Doors of Perception*, he further elaborates on the nature of the mind: "The function of the brain and nervous system is to protect us from being overwhelmed and confused by this mass of largely useless and irrelevant knowledge (…) leaving only that very small and special selection which is like to be practically useful."[45] Thus, Huxley considers the human mind to be largely incapable of integrating the experience from the different reality and sees the experience with the world previously discussed as profane as an outcome of the reducing process in one's brain. Moreover, he centres on the human brain as a creator of reality itself and thus sees the other realm as an integral part of our mind, which is, however, restricted from us. Such an idea can be again inferred from his following quote: "To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funnelled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system."[46] Despite their ontological difference of subject and object, the parallel observations of Huxley and Eliade might show important connections between their concepts of reality and synthesizing their findings, one can proceed in the discussion of the nature of reality in a more complex way. Aligning their terminology, one can see Huxley's *Mind at Large* as a parallel term to Eliade's *Sacred* – in both cases, these plains of existence or thinking are removed from today's everyday experience, yet they are still accessible to our brain and contain a different type of knowledge than the rationalized one. From this analogy, one can similarly proceed to link Huxley's view of the outcome of the reducing function of the brain – the limited

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[44] Aldous Huxley "Drugs That Shape Men's Mind" in *Collected Essays* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 338.
[45] Aldous Huxley, *Doors of Perception* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1968), 21.
[46] Huxley, *Doors of Perception*, 21.

notion of the reality to Eliades concept of *the Profane*. Simply put, the human brain functioning on today's daily basis is in contact with the reduced, profane world, while states (including mystical ones) that are based on enlarging the scope of the mind can access another realm of *Mind at Large*, or in less mental and more physical term the *Sacred*.

Moreover, both of the authors agree in the point that the reduced/profane reality has been historically relatively new. One can see that from the following observation made by Huxley: "To formulate and express the contents of this reduced awareness, man has invented and endlessly elaborated those symbol-systems and implicit philosophies which we call languages."[47] Thus, for Huxley, the switch to the paradigm of limited consciousness is inevitably linked with the emergence of language. Huxley further comments on such reduced thinking paradigm: "The (human) confirms (himself) in the belief that reduced awareness is the only awareness and as it bedevils his sense of reality so that he is all too apt to take his concepts for data, his words for actual things."[48] Further, Huxley follows Eliade's idea that this reduced awareness lately became an actual basis for what we call the real: "The human confirms himself in the belief that reduced awareness is the only awareness and as it bedevils his sense of reality so that he is all too apt to take his concepts for data, his words for actual things."[49] Such choice of a reality is thus presented as an outcome of the emergence of human language and consequently, culture. Naturally, this change cannot be abrupt but gradual, corresponding to Eliade's views on the process of profanation.

From the comparison given above, it is clear that both Eliade and Huxley support the idea that the reality, in which we live, is of a plural nature. The basic difference in their terming might be seen in the ontological opposition of external/internal or subject/object. While Eliade suggests that the Sacred is at least partially external feature of the physical world and the human gets into contact with it by encountering external manifestation of the *Sacred* – the hierophany, Huxley grants the paradigm of the *Mind at Large* to the faculty of human mind. Both interpretations, though, take the notion that there are more realities as a starting point, suggest the possibility of transcendence of borders between these planes and opt for the theory that

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[47] Huxley, *Doors of Perception*, 21-22.
[48] Huxley, *Doors of Perception*, 22.
[49] Huxley, *Doors of Perception*, 22.

in archaic times, the mind at large, or the sacred paradigm of thinking was the dominant one.

The Archaic Revival

The idea that the knowledge concealed behind the curtain of another reality is of an archaic nature is further supported by the research of an American philosopher and ethnobotanist Terence McKenna. While Eliade turns his gaze into the depths of the history of archaic societies and Huxley suggests that our sense of reality is produced by a present brain-filter, McKenna looks on a history as a whole and, analysing its global patterns, aims for the horizon of singularity at the end of the of time as we know it. Such a complex idea is densely summarized in the following proposition presented in his influential book *The Archaic Revival: Speculations on Psychedelic Mushrooms, the Amazon, Virtual Reality, UFOs, Evolution, Shamanism, the Rebirth of the Goddess, and the End of History* (1992):

> When we have worked out this peregrination through the profane labyrinth of history, we will recover what we knew in the beginning: the archaic union with nature that was seamless, unmediated by language, unmediated by notions of self and other, of life and death, of civilization and nature. These are all dualisms that are temporary and provisional within the labyrinth of history.[50]

Perhaps, it would be now proper to provide in-detail analysis of this statement in the context of previously discussed approaches. As Eliade, McKenna sees the whole concept of history as profane, the opposite of the sacred. In contrary to Eliade's views, though, he suggests the future possibility or even the tendency of human to reunite with the sacred. Paradoxically he comes to the conclusion that the revelation of archaic knowledge is, in fact, taking place in human future, at the end of history. Furthermore, similarly to Huxley, he sees language as one of the main factors in desacralization of reality, or disconnection from the archaic paradigm of thinking. For McKenna language becomes a mediator or even a re-creator of reality – that is perhaps the central information of his widely known and quite mesmerizing quote, in which he states that reality is made of language: "Reality is made of words. Reality is made of symbolic

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[50] Terence McKenna, *The Archaic Revival: Speculations on Psychedelic Mushrooms, the Amazon, Virtual Reality, UFOs, Evolution, Shamanism, the Rebirth of the Goddess, and the End of History* (New York: Harper and Collins, 1992),18.

interlocking linguisto-mathematical constructs."[51] Further, he suggests that all the basic notions that we often see as foundations of current prevalent thinking paradigm are only temporary, to quote: "Ego may be a fairly modern invention – meaning the last one or two thousand years – a fairly modern adaptation of the psyche to its environment."[52] According to McKenna, the ego is the element preventing human from accessing the archaic knowledge present in the other/sacred thinking paradigm that he terms as *Overmind* in the following proposition: "It is dissolving of the power of ego, allowing it to contact with what I call the Overmind (…), this much larger, much wiser organizing force that we all carry around inside ourselves (…)."[53] Thus, McKenna takes a similar stance to Huxley – he sees this paradigm as internal to human mind rather than an external feature of reality. McKenna's stance can be further seen as optimistic – he takes the stance that the Sacred thinking paradigm might be subordinated to the rational, profane one today, but that the eventual merging with the sacred is the gravitational momentum at the end of the time that inevitably draws the whole history towards that moment. Furthermore, to confirm previously mentioned theories and align McKenna's findings with other discussed theorists, the author of this thesis wants to point out that McKenna his theories again support the notion that there might be more realities than one.

The Desert of the Real

Yet another view on the nature of the reality offers a postmodern philosopher Jean Baudrillard. In his grounding work *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), he supports the idea that through the history, human beings are gradually drawing from perceiving the original primordial reality towards empty, artificial constructs based on multiple simulations. He describes such process as follows: "It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real, that is to say of an operation of deterring every real process via its operational double, a programmatic, metastable, perfectly descriptive machine that offers all the signs of the real and shortcircuits all its vicissitudes."[54] His view thus supports the standpoint that this thesis previously discussed in the context of different theoretical works – that the human is able to live in multiple realities, Baudrillard then

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[51] Terence McKenna, *Intentionality in Language-Created Realities* (a talk, audio and transcript available on: https://terencemckenna.wikispaces.com/Intentionality+in+Language-Created+Realities).
[52] McKenna, *The Archaic Revival*, 10.
[53] McKenna, *The Archaic Revival*, 10.
[54] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 4.

adds that modern cultures opt for the artificial construct of reality, which is far away from the original notion of the reality. In this way, his views would correlate with those of Eliade, who also sees human history as a process of detachment from the original Sacred reality towards the Profane reality. He argues that such progress is artificial, empty and destructive, describing the reality we live in as unreal while presented as being real. He further draws attention to the way we construct the contemporary reality as follows: "Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal."[55] A further example of Baudrillard's concept of hyperreal is by him compared to the artificiality of the reality within such constructs as Disneyland: "Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulacra. It is, first of all, a play of illusions and phantasms: the Pirates, the Frontier, the Future World, etc."[56] Such simulated world thus metaphorically draws from the social constructs of real-world America, while presenting a reality of its own, no longer referring to the preceding phases of the simulation. In this way, Baudrillard presumes that the hyperreality is of a completely different nature than the original reality. It is not even based on mimesis of the original, it is a simulation of simulation emptied of any original meaning. His definition can be employed in the analysis in this thesis in the way one can interpret the artificial reality – the cyberspace.[57] To avoid any ambiguity with the visual arts etc., one should note that the term *hyperreal* will be in this thesis used solely in the contexts of Jean Baudrillard's philosophy presented in this chapter. Baudrillard furthermore sums up the process of detaching from the original reality in its successive stages: "Such would be the successive phases of the image: it is the reflection of a profound reality; it masks and denatures a profound reality; it masks the absence of a profound reality; it has no relation to any reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum."[58]

Baudrillard further confirms ideas presented earlier in this thesis that despite its marginalization in today's culture, the sacred or the truly real reality has not disappeared from our world entirely: "When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There are a plethora of myths of origin and of signs of reality

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[55] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 3.
[56] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 10.
[57] See later analysis of *Neuromancer*.
[58] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 6.

– a plethora of truth, of secondary objectivity, and authenticity. Escalation of the true, of lived experience, the resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared."[59] Author of this thesis would now like to stress the importance of the concepts of *nostalgia* and *resurrection of the figurative* – these are manifestations of the human urge to connect with the sacred in the world that has been made almost entirely profane and rational. As Baudrillard, McKenna follows the notion of this urge, in his own terms, the archaic revival as well, however, he sees the possible invention of artificial reality as an outcome of this longing rather than human's tendency to draw further from it. This thesis argues that such nostalgia might well be manifested exactly in the narratives that follow mythical structures in popular literature as science fiction, function of such narratives might then be seen as the resurrection of the figurative, in other terms of the revival of archaic connections between texts and the sacred reality, or the suggestions of the plural nature of the real. Of course, today the historical and social context is completely different from the original myths in the age of the dominant sacred reality, and thus one cannot argue that any narratives would be today able to perform the very same function. Baudrillard draws attention to this difference while describing science fiction as follows:

> Perhaps science fiction from the cybernetic and hyperreal era can only exhaust itself, in its artificial resurrection of historical worlds, can only try to reconstruct in vitro, down to the smallest details, the perimeters of a prior world, the events, the people, the ideologies of the past, emptied of meaning, of their original process, but hallucinatory with retrospective truth.[60]

From this definition, one can infer that the original function of mythical narratives is in science fiction extensively deformed by the fact that it already originates in the hyperreal. However, despite the massive gap in time, space and function, such narratives would still in a way point the way to the different realm of being. The dominant function of such narratives despite its heavily modified nature is still to remind us of the plural nature of the reality. In following parts, this thesis will follow this analogy as one of the basic definitions of metaphysical science fiction literature.

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[59] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 6.
[60] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 82.

Metaphysical Science Fiction

So far, this thesis followed works of various theoreticians that from various points of view explore nature of reality as human beings experience it. Despite the differences in the various cited approaches to the problem and in the terminology employed in the discussion, all of the presented authors supported the notion that reality is not a fixed phenomenon. According to their theories, humans can possibly experience more than one reality and can get knowledge of which source lies way out of the rational and scientific paradigm that is dominant in the late western cultures and approaches to thinking. The presented theories also agreed on the fact that in the course of history, the hierarchy of the perceived realities changed and shifted from the realm of perpetual embeddedness in the realm of the Sacred towards the Profane reality, with only occasional intrusions of the Sacred. The archaic human lived in a single, sacred reality, later, during the process of historicization, the human detached from it and started living partially in the world of the Sacred and partially in the world of the Profane. The idea of this plurality of reality was since then captured in many narratives, starting with traditional myths, which further served as practical manuals for rituals or as circumscriptions and records of mystical experiences that subjects of these rituals undergo. Mythical narratives today might serve as a textual source of knowledge about the duality of reality while ritual practices lead to the mystical experience that enables one to experience the plurality of reality personally. This thesis follows the idea that suggestion of such plurality of reality is for today's reader suggested not only in the traditional myths but saturated even the contemporary popular literature, although the actual function of such texts and the cultural context, in which they are embedded, differs to a large extent.

The author of this thesis will now focus specifically on the theme of the duality of reality and the way this theme is captured in selected works from the field of science fiction literature. The author will argue that across the vast number of sub-genres labeled under science fiction umbrella term, this recurrent theme is strong enough to establish a new coherent category. So far, sub-genre labels within this genre are often classified with respect to the temporal setting in which the works were written or degree of their faithfulness and devotion to scientific concepts although they might differ thematically – in contrary, the theory presented by this thesis is rather theme-oriented. This thesis follows the idea that such a new classification might reveal so far hidden connections within the genre. In following part of this thesis, author will define the

metaphysical sci-fi category and subsequently provide examples of interpretation of selected works of science fiction literature that might be seen as belonging to this sub-genre. The author of the academic work departs from an assumption that the label metaphysical sci-fi might be applied to works that stand out in the genre as quasi-myths – they discuss mystical experience, ritual practises, archaic revival in the futuristic context, and transhumanism, which is by *Oxford Dictionaries* defined as: "The belief or theory that the human race can evolve beyond its current physical and mental limitations, especially by means of science and technology."[61] Such category of science fiction thus can be interpreted via the lens of the theories presented earlier in this thesis. The following chapter aims to define the category of metaphysical science fiction departing from the traditional definition of the genre towards the ones that already allow for such interpretation of sci-fi.

Science or Fiction

Despite the prejudice and lack of scholarly attention that the science fiction had to face at its birth, today, sci-fi has become a fully developed genre that is discussed in an extensive body of academic research. As it has been already stated, author of this thesis aims to further contribute to the discussion of the genre in a context of myth, religion studies, ontological arguments and postmodern studies of literature. First, before developing the subgenre of sci-fi, it is necessary to depart from the general definitions of the genre. The discussion will thus now focus on broader concepts of the science fiction genre and the way they already allow for their interpretations that point towards the importance of the theme of the duality of reality and mystical experience.

Definitions of the genre of science fiction vary to a great degree. The argument presented in the following part of this thesis will now proceed from the most general definitions to the development of the proposed sub-genre within the genre. It would be useful to depart from such general concept as a vocabulary definition of the term science fiction because such definition should usually reflect the broad public view of the meaning of the term. For example, *Merriam Webster's Dictionary* focuses primarily on the word science in the discussed label: "Fiction dealing principally with the impact of actual or imagined science on society or individuals or having a scientific factor as an

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[61] "Transhumanism." *Oxford Living Dictionaries*
https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/transhumanism (accessed April 20, 2018).

essential orienting component."[62] However, such a definition overlooks the possibility that is stressed by many scholars of the genre today. For example, Judith Merill, an essayist, science fiction writer and a theorist labeled science fiction rather as a *speculative fiction* to shift the stress from the word science to the more important aspect of questioning of the basis of reality that the science fiction literature performs: "Speculative fiction: stories whose objective is to explore, to discover, to *learn*, by means of projection, extrapolation, analogue, hypothesis-and-paper-experimentation, something about the nature of the universe, of man, or 'reality'."[63] Following such view, the author of this thesis disagrees with the definitions that would stress solely the importance of the theme of science and technology – thus the scientific factor mentioned in the vocabulary definition might not be seen as the major one. One can argue that scientific aspects of the discussed genre are produced by the fact that science fiction stories take place prototypically in future that is built on the hypothetical continuation of today's society that already stands on the basis of technological progress. However, it is important to note that in numerous works within the genre, the science and technology can be seen not as the central theme but rather as a form, or background for the central philosophical, or metaphysical discussion including discussion of such topics as religion, ontology, the suggestion of the duality of reality etc. Surprisingly enough, such works even tend to be unfaithful to hard sciences, using the science as a form, setting, or even spectacle than complex and logically built functional structure. Obviously, the science still plays important role in such works, providing a context, in which such philosophical topics can be discussed. Such idea is further supported for example by David Hartwell, a significant American critic, publisher, and editor of science fiction and fantasy literature, in his discussion of literary theory in the context of science fiction *Age of Wonders: Exploring the World of Science Fiction* (1984): "Science fiction's appeal lies in its combination of the rational, the believable, with miraculous**.** It is an appeal to the sense of wonder."[64] As one can see, rather than stressing solely the scientific aspects of science fiction, Hartwell focuses on the sense of wonder that stands for the complete opposite – the irrational experience that can perhaps be seen as being close to the personal experience with the ungraspable – the

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.[62] "Science Fiction." *Merriam-Webster.com* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/myth (accessed March 3, 2018).
[63] Judith Merril, in *Extrapolation* (issue May, 1996).
[64] David Hartwell, *Age of Wonders: Exploring the World of Science Fiction* (New York: Walker and Company 1984), 42.

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mystical experience. It can be argued that both labels for such personal experience encompass irrational, mystical aspects, that were discussed earlier in this thesis in the context of the mysticism. The idea of such a focus of certain science fiction narratives is further stressed by a more recent theorist Edward James in his work *Science Fiction in the 20th Century* (1994): "If the appeal of SF is in a combination of the rational and the miraculous, then we ought to think about ways in which SF fulfils a role once fulfilled by religion in an age in which for many the power of traditional religion has disappeared totally."[65] Later, he develops the argument as follows: "(…) it can create a rival sense of wonder, which acts almost as a replacement religion."[66]James thus courageously shifts the discussion of focus of science fiction even further – he explicitly suggests that in today's society, science fiction can take the function of sacred texts. However, the author of this thesis would like to note that this statement about the religious nature of science fiction is highly reader-relative – it cannot be easily proved as the reader's reception of such texts might vary to a great degree.

While some of the readers might, in fact, approach certain book as a part of the sacred reality, other can perceive it rather as a pure fiction and read the texts for the sole pleasure of reading, for example, the dramatic events of the plot. Disregarding such interpretations, though, what is clearly suggested by James, is that science fiction clearly follows mythological and religious topics, and that the miraculous often plays similarly important role in the genre as the rational. In this way, he confirms the possibility of such interpretations and justifies further research in the topic. Abovementioned authors agree on the fact that despite the word *science* contained in the label *science fiction*, the works of the genre often have completely opposite focus that the rational and logical science – the irrational and mystical experience that belongs in terms of previously cited theoreticians to the realm of sacred. As Erik Davis in his work focusing on mystical aspects present in science fiction *Techgnosis* (1998) suggests about such thematic tendencies: "These signs are not just evidence of a media culture exploiting the crudepower of the irrational. They reflect the fact that people inhabiting all frequencies of the socioeconomic spectrum are intentionally reaching for some of the oldest navigational tools known to humankind: sacred ritual and metaphysical

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[65] Edward James, *Science Fiction in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 106.
[66] James, *Science Fiction in the Twentieth Century*, 106.

speculation, spiritual regimen and natural spell."[67] Davis thus not only takes mystical science fiction into account but sees it as being bound to a socioeconomic situation of today's western world. Departing from his stance, the study of metaphysical science fiction would be able to reveal some of the insights into a contemporary state of human mind. The author of this thesis would now like to draw attention to the fact that despite such important analogies, the topics of the irrational and the mystical have long been overlooked in the discussion of the genre. Davis explains this blank space within the field as follows: "Today you often need to dig beneath the garish, commercialized, and oversaturated surface of the information age to finds its archetypes and metaphysical concerns."[68] Hence the need of the shift of focus proposed by this thesis and the subsequent definition of a new subcategory within a genre that stresses importance of the sacred, religious, mystical – the irrational, as the main theme of various works.

Defining Metaphysical Science Fiction

The author of this thesis will now proceed to propose possible definitions of a subcategory of works within the genre of science fiction literature – the metaphysical science fiction. First, it is necessary, to sum up the entire argument as it has been developed in this thesis up to the current point of discussion. As it has been previously argued, a significant body of narratives within a human culture are for today's reader suggesting the possibility of the plurality of reality and a possibility of transcendence between these modes of being/thinking – these narratives include for example traditional myths or various descriptions of the mystical experience. Referencing works of various influential scholars, it has been shown that such texts are often discussing the mystical experience that leads to the perception of the plurality of reality. These sacred texts can further provide readers with practical manuals for rituals with a goal of experiencing the realm of the sacred not only theoretically but directly, personally. Furthermore, it has been argued that even in today's world, which has been shown to be based on rationalism and profane experience, the literature of the sacred still survives, though its form and extent of functionality has been significantly changed. Surprisingly enough, despite the fact that discussion on today's world usually leaves out the problems of the sacred as the contemporary culture is largely based on profane

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[67] Erik Davis, *TechGnosis: Myth, Magic, and Mysticism in the Age of Information* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2015) 4-5.
[68] Davis, *TechGnosis: Myth, Magic, and Mysticism in the Age of Information*, 8.

principles of reasoning, the theme of the sacred is by many theoreticians shown to be strong even in present-day literature. The preceding sub-chapter departed from the basic interpretation of science fiction towards those that stress the sacred as a possible main theme of many works of science fiction. The author of this thesis suggests that basis of the metaphysical science fiction genre is the dorsal theme of duality or plurality of reality and a discussion of the variety of the mystical experience. These themes, which have been discussed in their complexity in the first chapters of this thesis, will be traced in selected major works of science fiction literature. Author of the thesis will analyse the content of the selected works using his own framework based on the synthetic interpretation of the theories presented earlier, namely the theory of the sacred and profane by Mircea Eliade, the concept of the archaic revival as discussed by Terrence McKenna and various approaches to mystical experience that were cited previously. In this way, the author will attempt to answer the need to establish a sub-genre within sci-fi in order to draw more attention to this major, yet often left-out theme. The mystical side of sci-fi hides many connections that point far out of reach of the traditional definitions of this genre and might reveal important insights in possible following multidisciplinary research in the field of literature, religion studies, and when followed further, might even serve as a foundation for research of ideas about the very nature of the reality that the human beings live in and continually strive to understand.

Philip Kindred Dick – The Paranoia of Drugged Gods

This thesis will now focus on metaphysical elements in the selected works of Philip K. Dick. If there was a canon of metaphysical science fiction literature, Dick would according to the theory proposed by this thesis belong to one of the most prominent writers of the category. For the analysis, the novel *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965) was chosen. The following analysis will argue for the possibility of application of the label metaphysical science fiction to the title complying with the theories presented earlier in this thesis. Moreover, themes present in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* are generally deemed to be typical and defining for Dick, and thus its analysis might point to the possibility that the metaphysical properties found in these texts might be found in the other works of the author. To provide the necessary context for the discussion, the analysis will be preceded by a short introduction to the author's biography, work and prominent themes in his writing.

Philip K. Dick – a Short Biography

Philip Kindred Dick was born December 16, 1928, in Chicago, Illinois and died aged 53 on March 2, 1982, in Santa Ana, California. He studied at the University of California, Berkley for one year and then switched to become a full-time professional writer. As it is with many other science fiction writers of his period, he often published his stories in pulp magazines. His most appreciated works include *The Man in the High Castle* (1962, Hugo Award), *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968), which was later successfully adapted by the director Ridley Scott as an iconic movie *Blade Runner* or *A Scanner Darkly* (1977). During his life, Dick remained to be mostly unacknowledged and underappreciated outside of the core of science fiction fandom. His fiction has reached a wider audience and became famous as late as at the beginning of 21st century with numerous film adaptations of his works including *Total Recall* (1990 and 2012)*, Minority Report* (2002)*, Scanner Darkly* (2006). Moreover, many of his thoughts are loosely adapted and reflected in the iconic movie of the 21st century pointing out the postmodern cyber condition of today's society *The Matrix* (1999).[69] Today, Philip Kindred Dick has become one of the most cited authors in contemporary science-fiction literature as well as popular culture – perhaps because his thoughts and themes are

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[69] Biographical data are taken from *Encyclopædia Britannica Online.*
https://www.britannica.com/biography/Philip-K-Dick (accessed 10 March, 2018).

becoming ever more topical. The author's themes relevant to the metaphysical analysis of his work will be presented in the following subchapter.

Phildickian Metaphysics

Philip K. Dick's writing has been famous for following a relatively closed set of themes, all of them having something to do with the relativity and uncertainty of the reality that the human beings live in. In his article "Reality as Ideological Construct: A Reading of Five Novels by Philip K. Dick", Peter Fitting describes the philosophical foundations of Philip K. Dick's work as follows: "The realization that my world, with all its security and comfort, is only a stage set, constructed for reasons I do not understand. Nor is this solipsism; I have not created this world. This dream-or this fantasy is at the heart of (the) fascination with the fiction of Philip K. Dick."[70] Fitting precisely captures the most prominent Phildickian theme – the one of ultimate metaphysical and ontological uncertainty.

Characters in Dick's fictional worlds often go through a breakthrough experience that can be likened to the mystical experience as it was described earlier in this thesis, however, rather than any coherent knowledge, all they often receive is the chaotic view on the universe and crumbling realities. Commenting on the theme of metaphysics in Dick's writings, Fitting proposes: "One of the most familiar responses to the disintegrating and hallucinatory realities within Dick's novels is what I shall call the appeal to metaphysics. Dick's characters often react to the discovery of a breakdown in reality by attempting to find something or someone "behind" phenomenal reality."[71] Such a view of the author's prominent themes already points to its possible interpretation according to the theory of metaphysical science fiction presented in this thesis. In this way, Dick's characters are often forced to transcend the reality they live in into different realm of being – in order to escape the chaos, they are forced to seek the ungraspable.

Linking these theories to those of Eliade, such chaos corresponds to his descriptions of profane world, and might be described as follows: "The unknown space that extends beyond his world – an uncosmicized and unconsecrated space, a mere amorphous extent into which no orientation has yet been projected, and hence in which

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[70] Peter Fitting. "Reality as Ideological Construct: A Reading of Five Novels by Philip K. Dick" (*Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1983), 219.
[71] Fitting, "Reality as Ideological Construct: A Reading of Five Novels by Philip K. Dick", 221.

no structure has yet arisen."[72] Moreover, as it will be shown in the following analysis, their quest for the Sacred or the order is often driven not by a voluntary longing for spiritual enlightenment but rather by a sheer necessity to stabilize the reality. Eliade shows, that such chaos brings only death: "If, by some evil chance, (one) strays into it, (one) feels emptied of his substance, as if (one) were dissolving in Chaos, and (one) finally dies."[73] Facing the paranoid, shattered realities, Dick's characters thus must try to find or reconstruct the order, in other words the Sacred, and save their lives or even whole universes. According to Fitting, the characters facing such cosmic dilemmas in Dick's works tend to opt for the most physical solution available: "Practical solution, typical of those many novels of Dick's where the problem of reality is resolved pragmatically (a' la Alexander the Great's solution to the "problem" of the Gordian knot), through action- more specifically, in a character's turning to manual and/or artisanal work."[74] However, the author of this thesis does not fully agree with Fitting concerning this aspect of Phildickian metaphysics – indeed, the characters react to the ontological puzzles they have to solve through action, but the action still remains to be ritualistic and oriented towards the mystical experience, rather than purely physical or manual.

In their attempts to turn the chaotic reality into an order, Dick's characters encounter various manifestations of the sacred including false gods, ersatz realities, divine drugs and spontaneous enlightenments. Wherever their struggle ends, the ultimate message always remains the same – the world humans live in might well be of completely different nature than one dares to imagine. In the following analysis, the author of this thesis will focus on the themes of religion, ontology, mystical experience, and metaphysics in Dick's two novels: *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* respectively. The analysis will follow these themes in order to attest and show the application of the synthetic theory of metaphysical science fiction in practice.

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[72] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 64.
[73] Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 64.
[74] Fitting, "Reality as Ideological Construct: A Reading of Five Novels by Philip K. Dick", 223.

Analysis – The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch

The author of this thesis assumes that a reader of the following analyses is well-accustomed with the literary works discussed, nevertheless, for the sake of sufficient context, the plots of the works will be shortly introduced during the analysis. Following analysis of the first of the novels will depart from the discussion of setting to the analysis focusing on crucial parts of the plot, in which it will follow the major themes and motifs of the novel. The author will follow mainly those themes and motifs that are connected with what was earlier defined as specific traits of metaphysical science fiction literature. The author also proposes the following form and structure of the analysis as a possible template, which can be further used for research in the field.

Setting Analysis

The novel *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* takes place in a universe typical for many Phildickan works – an unspecified close future, in which mankind was due to changed conditions of the environment on Earth forced to emigrate to different planets in the Solar System. The details of this setting change with different books, nevertheless, Dick's view of the future society is always dystopian. The setting itself can be seen as a paradox and a prime theme suggesting the plurality of realities and the Phildickan ontological uncertainty. Dick is providing his readers with hints that many of his fictional universes are interconnected by using similar fictional cultural artefacts and labels – to name few: names for the cosmic objects Terra for Earth, Sol for Sun, Prox for Proxima Centauri etc., special human abilities as precognition (the ability of so-called Precogs) or names for communication technologies vidphone. Differences between these universes, though, suggest that each world is unique – author of this thesis supports the view that the paradox, which lies in the core of many Dick's stories is not random but carefully designed by the author to suggest the possibility of the existence of various parallel universes.

Evidently, the multiplicity of reality is one of Dick's favourite themes, as Brooks Landon argues in his work Science Fiction After 1900: From the Steam Man to the Stars (2002): "Three main and interrelated themes are explored again and again in Dick's writing: the multiple and subjective nature of reality, the distinction between human and machine, original and simulacrum, and – at the end of his career – the

explicit search for god."75 In this way, the setting becomes the first metaphysical motif that the discussed book presents to its reader – the uncertain, yet possible multiplicity of universes or realities. One should note that the same intertextual motif is employed in the novel Do Androids *Dream of Electric Sheep*. As it will be evident later, such setting only pre-shadows what becomes the central theme of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*.

Plot Summary

The plot of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* revolves mainly around the illicit drug CAN-D, which is popular among the colonist of nearly every colonist on the plants within the Solar System. The compulsory recruitment for the colonization is seen almost as a death sentence – the planets are inhospitable, and the colonization involves living in small cells and hard, futile work. The desperate colonizers use the illicit drug on a regular basis as a form of escape from their grim everyday reality into a dreamy state, in which they participate on the seemingly real everyday life on Earth. Moreover, the drug works on basis of transmigration of one's consciousness into miniature models that represent a typical household on planet Earth – the models are called layouts and are manufactured by a company Perky Pat Layouts, Inc. The protagonist of the book, Barney Mayerson, is working at this company as so-called pre-fash precog – he uses his ability of precognition (to foresee the future, used in numerous Dick's works) to predict the demand on the market with the Perky Pat layouts. He is the one who decides, which real-life products from planet earth would become fashionable in the miniature layouts used in extra-terrestrial colonies in future. Based on his opinion, the company selects various products, of which they make miniature models. The P. P. layouts company is dependent on the illicit trade with CAN-D while their business remains legal.

The situation complicates when a new product, CHEW-Z appears on the market. It is brought by a famous entrepreneur Palmer Eldritch, who returns after many years spent at Proxima Centauri. The new drug threatens to take over the drug market at colonies because it is designed to be officially approved by UN. Moreover, it seems to be much more addictive than CAN-D. Most importantly it does not require any layout to be functioning – thus, Leo Bulero decides to do whatever he can to stop the proliferation of CHEW-Z. Bulero decides to travel to Palmer Eldritch in order to talk to

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75 Landon Brooks, *Science Fiction After 1900: From the Steam Man to the Stars* (London: Psychology Press, 2002), 114.

him about the competition of the substances even though he is informed by his precogs including Barney Mayerson that in the future, he will eventually murder Eldritch. Bulero gets captured by Eldritch and is involuntarily administered CHEW-Z. He finds out that the new drug is completely different to any other – it does not distort one's concept of reality, it rather transports the user into a wholly different universe. In contrast to CAN-D, though, it does not have the empathic qualities of sharing the experience with other users, it rather locks you in an individual universe ruled by the projected persona of Palmer Eldritch himself. In the psychic universe, Leo Bulero kills Eldritch and while he travels into future, he discovers a statue to himself that praises him as an assassin of Eldritch. Bulero is then woken up by Eldritch and is told that he will never kill him, and that the statue was just reflection of his longing.

Bulero then travels back to Earth and dismisses Mayerson for not saving him, even though Mayerson knew that he got captured by Eldritch. Mayerson gets desperate and sees his only future in being colonist – the option he long avoided. He leaves for Mars and soon gets an offer by Bulero to be a double agent who would cause eventual prohibition of CHEW-Z. His task is to take the drug and afterward swallow a toxin that would induce in him a rare and possibly deadly form of epilepsy – in this way, the UN would have to acknowledge that CHEW-Z is dangerous and would ban the substance globally. While on CHEW-Z, Mayerson travels into different futures, in which he repeatedly fails to return to his wife. He also realizes that the reality of the drug is controlled by Palmer Eldritch, who always manifests through three stigmata – robotic hand, slotted eyes, and steel teeth. Eldritch seems to be trying to help Mayerson, who repeatedly fails to resolve his mistakes. As the drug's universe works on a completely different concept of time, Mayerson finds out that he would spend there what will seem as hundreds of years and decides to die rather than to live in the world controlled by a godly and unearthly figure of Eldritch. By this point, a reader gets several hints, that Palmer Eldritch, who has returned from the Proxima Centauri system might be a wholly different (perhaps alien) entity than the man who left years ago. Palmer Eldritch comes up with the idea that would enable him to avoid his future death by switching bodies with Mayerson, in this way, Mayerson would get killed by Leo Bulero and Eldritch would survive in Mayerson's body on Mars. The drug timeline, however, is abruptly cut just a few moments before the future assassination of Mayerson in Eldritch's body by Bulero – Mayerson gets slapped back into a conscious state by Bulero, who came to check on the sabotage. Thus, Eldritch stays in his own body and he gets inevitably

killed. Mayerson then refuses to use the toxin since he knew that Eldritch will die anyway. Mayerson then ponders possibilities of Eldritch's godly origin. The novel ends with the scene when Bulero flies back to the earth and realizes that the plane he sits in is filled with various manifestations of the three stigmata of Palmer Eldritch.

Metaphysical Analysis of The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich

First, the analysis will focus on the theme of mystical experience in the discussed novel and the way the particular depiction of such experience suggests ontology of reality and its certain features. The author of this thesis stands the point that drug experiences with CAN-D and CHEW-Z as they are presented in the novel correspond to mystical experiences as they were discussed in the first chapter of this thesis in the context of theory by William James. Each of the drugs, though, induces different states, one of which is closer to regular profane experience.

The persons under influence of the drug are able to unite as a mind of a single human body, namely one the protagonist of the miniature model – Perky Pat or her boyfriend Walt. Within this transmigrated consciousness, they can experience the emotions they long for – the feeling of being back at the planet Earth, love, and sexual desire, which is in the context of small colonist hovels a problematic issue. According to the theory presented earlier in this thesis, this experience can be well described as a mystical one because to different degrees, it bears aspects discussed by William James in the first chapter of this thesis; namely: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity. Moreover, it deserves this label because it corresponds to the theory of at least dual reality as it is described by Mircea Eliade. For instance, it's users call the experience a translation and claim: "Even the characters in the book approach the drug as something sacred as it is evident from the following passage: "And he and the others, joined together in the fusion of doll-inhabitation by means of the Can-D, were transported outside of time and local space."[76] This translation can be seen as a transitory experience between realities, in Eliades's words, switch from the realm of the Profane – the suffering and chaos, into the realm of the Sacred. Moreover, the regular users are labeled as believers and the world they join their minds in, is actually perceived as real rather than hallucinatory or symbolic, which is evident from the following passage: "Many of the colonists were as yet unbelievers; to them the layouts

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[76] Philip K. Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (New York: Random House, 1977), 23.

were merely symbols of a world which none of them could any longer experience. But, one by one, the unbelievers came around."[77]

As for the aspects discussed by James, the outside-of-body experience include such states as merging personalities, this implies ineffability as well as noetic quality. Such novelty knowledge that surpasses boundaries of precise descriptions and raises metaphysical questions is represented e.g. in the following passage: "Two in six, Sam Regan thought. The mystery repeated; how is it accomplished? The old question again."[78] The experience is further only temporal, complying with the aspect of transiency. As for the passivity, this aspect of the CAN-D experience is rather different – it's users are actively able to act within the confined universe of the layout according to their free will. The religious nature of CAN-D is further stressed in the passage that describes the experience with the substance as a Sacred one:

> 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?[79]

While CAN-D manifests some of the aspects of mystical experience, it still seems to be more of an escapist and recreational drug than the later CHEW-Z. While the experience with CAN-D is labeled as translation, the one with CHEW-Z is called transition. This metaphor can be read in a way that CAN-D translates some of the aspects of reality – it changes the code in which it is transmitted to its receivers (experiencers of the altered states), while CHEW-Z transports one into a parallel reality in both mental and physical sense. It is no longer a metaphor that would consist of experiencing one thing in another code, it is a pure embodied experience. Such qualities are clear from the following passage describing the users' experience: "It isn't fantasy, they enter a genuine new universe."[80] If CAN-D was earlier in this thesis approximated to an agent of mystical experience, CHEW-Z can be likened to a much stronger version of that experience, the character of Palmer Eldrich describes its potency as follows: "'God', Eldrich said,

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[77] Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, 23.
[78] Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, 29.
[79] Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, 15.
[80] Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, 54.

'promises eternal life. I can do better; *I deliver it.*'"[81] And further compares is it to CAND-D: "Can-D is obsolete, because what does it do? Provides a few moments of escape, nothing but fantasy. Who wants it? Who needs that when they can get the genuine thing from me?"[82] By the genuine thing, Eldrich means the genuine reality – another possible realm of being that can perhaps be likened to the Sacred world as it is described by Eliade.

From the comparison of the two substances given above, it is clear that while CAN-D effects share some of their aspects with mystical experience, CHEW-Z approximates to it much closer. The states of CHEW-Z are much more ineffable, provide the users with literally otherworldly knowledge and because the Palmer Eldrich serves as a god-figure in the realities produced by the drug, the passivity of the experience is way higher than the one of CAN-D. It is important to mention, that the first experience with CHEW-Z described in the book serves as a kind of breaking point for the credibility of the novel itself. It serves as a certain metatextual device that destabilizes Dick's fictional universe. Once administered to one of the protagonists, a reader gets mixed signals about the firmness of reality, in form of intrusions of the three stigmata of Palmer Eldritch into bodies of different characters. Such way of destabilization of reality and unreliability of the whole fictional universe seems to be typical feature of Dick's works; Norman Spinrad in his essay *Transmogrification of Philip K. Dick* describes this feature as: "Dickian concept of the multiplexity of reality, and, in that sense at least, of the lack of a hard and clear-cut distinction between "reality" and "illusion," "authentic" and "ersatz.""[83] If the whole situation about the CHEW-Z drug, raises many metaphysical questions about origins and stability of reality itself, then the character, who brings the substance on the scene seems to be even more enigmatic.

Palmer Eldritch represents a figure that is possibly of godly origin. His intentions are not clearly stated but his powers are. One can see the extent of his influence on the very nature of reality in the following passage where Leo Bulero ponders nature of Eldritch: "What we have here, he realized, is not an invasion of Earth by Proxmen, beings from another system. Not an invasion by the legions of a pseudo human race. No. It's Palmer Eldritch who's everywhere, growing and growing like a

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[81] Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, 53.
[82] Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, 53.
[83] Norman Spinrad, "The Transmogrification of Philip K. Dick." (*Science Fiction in the Real World*. By Spinrad. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 203.

mad weed."[84] And he further reflects his influence of individual realities: "Eldritch somehow controls each of the hallucinatory worlds induced by the drug (…). The Fantasy world that the CHEW-Z induces, he thought are in Palmer Eldritch's head."[85] Later, the ultimate paranoia of realities no longer being stable and trustworthy culminates with Bulero's statement: "And the trouble is, he thought, that once you get into one of them you can't quite scramble back out; it stays with you, even when you think you're free. It's a one-way gate, and for all I know, I'm still in it now."[86] From this point of view, the mystical experience with CHEW-Z can be seen as a transitional ritual that pulls one through a conceptual breakthrough after which the world is never the same again. It is the world ruled by the god that came from the stars.

The problem in this situation is that a reader is not acquainted with the intention of Palmer Eldritch. Depending on it, the reality one enters after using the drug can be either labeled as hyperreal or as a true reality; if Eldritch's reasons for administering the drug to human population is its control and exploitation by producing a false sense of the real, the resulting reality might be labelled as hyperreal if, oppositely Eldritch wants to open the eyes of humanity to greater complexity or even multiplicity of reality, then it might mean entering the realm of the true real or in Eliade's terms the Sacred. What remains true in either of these options is that CHEW-Z takes a role of an inducing agent of mystical experience that leads one towards the direct experience outside of the borders of the everyday reality – it directly shows it's plural nature. Metaphorically, then, the book leaves a reader wondering about the stability of what we tend to see as fixed and trustworthy reality.

The analysis given above was focusing mostly on the theme of mystical experience in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and the way the mystical experience in this work points towards the knowledge about the plurality of reality. Furthermore, it shortly discussed a character of Palmer Eldritch as a possibly godly figure. This analysis should be read in context on the discussion provided earlier by this thesis, and a great deal of interdisciplinary attitude shall be employed to understand the analysis properly. Naturally, the metaphysical analysis of the text could be executed in greater detail, nevertheless, the main intention of the author of this thesis is to show an example of its application of his theory in practice and justify the label metaphysical

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[84] Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, 115.
[85] Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, 116.
[86] Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, 116.

science fiction for the selected novel. In following part, which is traditionally categorized under different sub-genre label will be discussed and again analysed as a metaphysical science fiction. One should, therefore, pay attention to the analogies between the books and the way the theory applies to both of the works despite their differences. Author of this thesis believes that the hidden patterns within these works that surface during this way of analysis might be worthy of further academic attention.

William Ford Gibson – Cyberspace and Punk

The following analysis will focus on the major work by an American science fiction author, William Gibson. His most famous work *Neuromancer* (1984) became widely acknowledged as a founding book of an aesthetic category, cultural phenomenon, and perhaps a genre called cyberpunk. Thus, after introducing the author, the thesis will discuss the phenomenon of cyberpunk and in the context of *Neuromancer*, its possible relations to the theory of metaphysical science fiction presented earlier. The following analysis will focus on the main themes present in the novel focusing on the metaphysical and mystical aspects of the work and argue for the possibility of application of the metaphysical science fiction subgenre label to *Neuromancer* along the traditional cyberpunk categorization.

William Gibson – a Short Biography

William Gibson was born March 17, 1948. He is an American-Canadian writer and essayist commonly acknowledged as a founder of the phenomenon of cyberpunk. His first major success, as well as the grounding work for his later writing, is a short story "Burning Chrome" (1982), in which he coined a term *cyberspace*, which became a major motif in his later most famous novel *Neuromancer* (1984). This novel was later followed by *Count Zero* (1986) and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (1988) – the triptych that forms so-called Sprawl trilogy. Furthermore, he contributed to the forming of the genre known under a label *steampunk* with a novel *The Difference Engine* (1990). Lately, he shifted his work in the direction of realism with the works as *Pattern Recognition* (2003) or *Zero History* (2010). Since Neuromancer, his work has had a massive influence on the development of the popular cyberculture, the following part will discuss his crucial coinages, cyberspace and the movement of cyberpunk.

Cyberspace and Cyberpunk

This part of the thesis will foreshadow the analysis by discussing the major aspect of Gibson's writing – cyberspace and the way this concept might serve as a departure point for possible definitions of the cyberpunk. In 1982, Gibson brought a term *cyberspace* to the modern culture in his short story "Burning Chrome". Cyberspace reflects the anxiety of the modern age produced by the merging of virtual spheres with the everyday reality humans live in. As Adam Charles Roberts states in his theoretical work *Science Fiction (The New Critical Idiom)* (2005): "'Cyberspace' is a term in increasing currency today.

It refers to the notional space of the internet and the virtual reality, to the computer-generated environments into which human beings can enter through a computer or a virtual-reality suit."[87] Since its introduction, Gibson's cyberspace implied overlap of the virtual world and the physical sphere which humans generally deem to be real. This concept can be aligned alongside the postmodern theories of Baudrillard discussed earlier. In his theory of the hyperreal Baudrillard describes tendencies of contemporary societies as follows: "The characteristic hysteria of our times: that of the production and reproduction of the real."[88] Such hysteria of creating simulacra is precisely reflected by the ultimate purpose of virtual realities – to recreate the sense of the real, to create a cyberspace superimposed on the base reality. Mike Feathersome and Roger Burrows in their theoretical work *Cyberspace Cyberbodies Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment* (1996) define cyberspace as follows: "Technologies promise, literally, a new world in which we can *represent* our bodies with a greater degree of flexibility. Technologies which have collectively become known as *cyberspace.*"[89] Their definition adds an important aspect to the notion of cyberspace in the literature of cyberpunk – there is always a human body present to interact with the cybernetic world – the cyberspace serves as an innovated, yet artificial environment for human beings.

If one sees cyberspace as the most frequently recurrent motif in Gibson's works, it might be further employed to define the category of cyberpunk, of which he was one of the pioneers. Roberts agrees with the idea that cyberspace could be a defining concept for cyberpunk in the following claim: "In reality this 'space' is fairly limited, but many science-fiction texts posit a time when cyberspace is an exciting and dynamic realm of possibilities. Its cognate SF sub-genre is cyberpunk."[90] Perhaps too generally, however, he later claims: "Cyberpunk is that contemporary mode of SF most implicated with technology."[91] Such statement might be seen as partially true, nevertheless it is hardly complete and imprecise – according to the argument presented in the following analysis in this thesis, in the case of *Neuromancer*, the defining novel of the genre itself, the technology might play a role of a semantic bridge to the discussions of ontology, metaphysics and the mystical, not being the primary concern of the novel. Moreover, as it has been shown earlier, in general definitions of science fiction literature, technology

[87] Adam Roberts, *Science Fiction: The New Critical Idiom* (New York: Routledge, 2006) 167–168.
[88] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 17.
[89] Mike Feathersome, Roger Burrows, *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment* (London: SAGE, 1996), 5.
[90] Roberts, *Science Fiction: The New Critical Idiom*, 168.
[91] Roberts, *Science Fiction: The New Critical Idiom*, 168.

is always one of the main pillars of the genre and thus cannot be sufficient aspect to differentiate the specificity of cyberpunk. Perhaps the definition provided by Featherstone and Burrows points the way towards understanding cyberpunk more precisely: "The term cyberpunk refers to the body of fiction built around the work of William Gibson and other writers, who have constructed visions of the future worlds of cyberspaces, with all their vast range of technological developments and power struggles."[92] It is notable that this definition of the sub-genre itself contains the name of the author – it could be thus further argued that even the erratic formal style of writing presented by Gibson in Neuromancer could be taken as a defining aspect of cyberpunk. Furthermore, Featherstone and Burrows list additional criteria for the cyberpunk label: "Cyberpunk takes the twin themes of technological body modification and the notion of cyberspace and allows them to intersect in various urban settings."[93] As it will be shown in the analysis, this criteria certainly can be applied to *Neuromancer* as a defining novel of the genre, nevertheless, they might not be sufficient to label the novel precisely.

One should note that despite various aforementioned definitions capture surface aspects of cyberpunk, including typical urban settings, and some of the motifs as the modification, and cyberspace, they avoid focusing on the thematic range of the cyberpunk. Thus, the author of this thesis claims that rather than a truly independent sub-genre of science fiction, cyberpunk should be taken as a typical mode or pattern of writing that might nevertheless thematically vary to a great degree. A cyberpunk novel might well be discussing gender, politics, social issues, religion, myth or any of the mentioned in various combinations and it would still get only the general label of cyberpunk due to some of the surface properties of the plot.

Thus, in case of labelling a novel as being a part of the cyberpunk movement, it would be perhaps useful to add more specification based on its thematic content. The following analysis will focus mainly on the motif of cyberspace in Gibson's *Neuromancer*. It will be argued that in its very core, the novel focuses on the ontological issues behind the reproduction of reality, the intrusion of technology into the matter of reality, religious concepts of technology and the Baudrillardian concept of hyperreal. The author will attempt to show that such seemingly opposing labels as metaphysical science fiction and cyberpunk might well be applied to a single piece of

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[92] Feathersome and Burrows, *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*, 3.
[93] Featherstone and Burrows, *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment,* 10.

literature. Such new way of categorization then, might provoke more insights into the both areas of research – of metaphysical science fiction and of cyberpunk.

Analysis – *Neuromancer*

Similarly to the analysis of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, the analysis of the novel will be preceded by a short summary of its plot and an analysis of the novel's setting, which will be due to its importance longer than the former one. The analysis of the novel will then follow mainly the backbone theme of cyberspace and its connotations with mystical experience and the metaphysical or ontological question it raises about the nature of reality.

Setting Analysis

In *Neuromancer*, the setting does not represent a mere passive coulisse, in which the actions of the plot take place. The environment plays a crucial role itself. Its importance is suggested as soon as with the opening line of the novel that became perhaps the most iconic and representative image of all the cyberpunk aesthetics: "The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel."[94] This sentence pre-sets several important facts for the Gibson's fictional universe as well for the genre of cyberpunk as a whole. First, as it was already mentioned in the discussion of cyberpunk subgenre, the environment, in which the novel is taking place is ninety percent urban, the rest is taking place in more or less abstract cyberspace. Second, the physical reality itself is invaded by information technologies. It is important to note that the sky is not figuratively of the colour of a dead TV channel but rather physically displays the notorious television snow.

It is not by chance that Gibson first presents the urban reality of his version of human future rather than any of the protagonist – he rather suggests the power and importance of the setting. Interdisciplinary scholar focusing on relations of cyberspace and urban landscapes, Mike Davis in his essay "Beyond Blade Runner: Urban Control and the Ecology of Fear" describes such cityscape as urban cyberspace, which he imagines to be a simulation of city's information order, a simulacral landscape.[95] His reference to Baudrillard here is obvious – the city becomes copied and then simulated and re-simulated in recurrent cybernetic realities until no real city remains and all that is present is a mere empty simulacrum – the television sky. One of the further examples from passages describing the relation of cyberspace and the physical reality is for

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[94] William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (New York: Penguin Group, 1984), 3.
[95] Mike Davis 13 Beyond Blade Runner: Urban Control and the Ecology of Fear

example: "The pattern might have represented micro-circuits, or a city map."[96] The power of technology is clearly superimposed to the one of the city and its people: "Night city wasn't there for its inhabitants, but as a deliberately unsupervised playground for technology itself."[97] This quote suggest that the global cyberspace has even greater power than the individuality of human minds. Such superimposition of technology on human beings is clear from passages where human traits or experiences are described in mechanical terms as in the following passage: "I guess it's just the way I'm wired."[98] Therefore, during reading *Neuromancer*, one can constantly follow the suggestion of such ontological plurality of reality and references to the theory of hyperreal – in this way, the setting itself becomes a first signal for labelling of Gibson's novel as a metaphysical science fiction.

Plot Summary

The novel starts with the main protagonist, Case, who tries to survive in the streets of a dystopian megalopolis, Chiba. Once a successful hacker, Case is living the life of an unemployable street thug because certain parts of his nervous system needed for connection into the global cyberspace – the matrix, were burned by one of his ex-employers. In midst of a manhunt aimed at him, Cased is saved by Molly, a mercenary of a mysterious employer Armitage, who offers to cure Case's neural damages under a condition that he will be willing to work for him. Case accepts even though he senses that there is something wrong about his new employer. His ability to connect into a cyberspace is restored and he starts doing so-called runs for the Armitage. Accompanied by an artificial intelligence construct of his old dead friend he repeatedly succeeds in what seems to be an aimless series of sabotages. By his own investigation, though, he later finds that Armitage is not a fully human personality but consists of what was left of the psychically damaged veteran Corto, which is now operated by an incredibly powerful artificial intelligence called Wintermute. The novel alternates between action passages focusing on different instances of both fights in physical reality as well as runs in the cyberspace. For the sake of the following analysis, the final part of the book is the most important. In it, it is revealed that Wintermute's ultimate goal is to unite with its

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[96] Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 9.
[97] Gibson, *Neuromancer*,11.
[98] Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 25.

brother artificial intelligence called Neuromancer. Wintermute succeeds and the whole new superconsciousness emerges.

Metaphysical Analysis of the *Neuromancer*

To proof that *Neuromancer* should be labeled as metaphysical science fiction, the following analysis will be focused mostly on the central theme of the novel – the cyberspace and its interpretation from the point of view of the theories discussed earlier in the thesis. Mainly the theory of the hyperreal, the Sacred and the Profane and the mystical experience will be employed to discuss different facets of the experience in the cyberspace. Furthermore, the character of the artificial intelligence, Wintermute, will be shortly discussed as a metaphor for a god of the contemporary age.

As it has been already discussed, cyberspace stands for a digital reality existing parallelly with the physical one. In Neuromancer, Gibson presents his vision of cyberspace as follows:

> Cyberspace: A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts... A graphical representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the non-space of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding...[99]

There are several implications that can be deduced from his presentation of such space. First, Gibson describes cyberspace as a consensual hallucination. Such label can be seen as a paradoxical one – the hallucination is usually seen as a deviation from the consensual views of reality, while cyberspace is a consensual hallucination – that means a hallucination agreed upon by the majority of the society. As it is confirmed by billions of legitimate operators, one may see cyberspace rather as an alternate reality rather than a pure hallucinatory phenomenon. Furthermore, Gibson implies that the cybernetic and the human are in his fictional future universe merged – the cyberspace is described as lines of light ranged in the non-space of the mind. By such juxtaposition of the artificial and the real, Gibson achieves a similar suggestion as Dick in his work analysed earlier – the suggestion that the reality might be of a plural nature and that it is not as stable as it

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[99] Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 51.

might be seen. Roberts confirms such a view as follows: "One of the things Gibson does best is that he creates the same sense of ambient technological paranoia that Philip K Dick achieves so perfectly."[100] Furthermore, in Eliade's terms, cyberspace might be likened to the realm of the Sacred. Roberts further argues: "Underlying this streetwise, distressed tech narrative is an almost Zen artistic vision, where infinity can be glimpsed in the simplest thing (…). The effect of this is presumably to elevate cyberspace into a near-magical realm, a realm where humanity is freed from the constraints of the flesh, what the novel calls 'meat', so that we can soar like the angels. Cyberspace becomes an almost religious experience."[101] Thus, it should be now attested whether or not cyberspace possesses some of the features of the Sacred, which is, as it has been argued in the first two chapters of this thesis accessed through a mystical experience.

Following this assumption, in the novel, there are several instances, where the protagonist, Case, describes his experience in the cyberspace – the Matrix – employing terms that might well be used to circumscribe a mystical experience. The transcendence into the matrix is always accompanied with the sense of extended consciousness, extrasensory perception, and the ultimate goal of these ventures is always to access the knowledge from the different source than the basic reality and the processes of reasoning. First, correlating with concepts of a void in religions such as Buddhism, case observes: "the infinite neuroelectronic void of the matrix,"[102] later; towards the climax of novel, he transcends even the void of the matrix and goes through even more radical experience of depersonalisation, margining with the void itself and encountering utterly different realms of being: "Nothing. Gray void. No matrix, no grid. No cyberspace. The deck was gone. His fingers were. And on the far rim of consciousness, a scurrying, a fleeting impression of something rushing forward him, across leagues of black mirror. He tried to scream."[103] It is highly important to note that mystical experience and the transmigrations of mind into the realm of sacred in *Neuromancer* are always mediated by technology and cybernetics superimposed on the human body and mind – that is what was argued before as one of the significant features of the cyberpunk. Thus, the theory of the reduplication and remaking of the real – the hyperreal – can be employed in the case of *Neuromancer*'s fictional universe hand in hand with the theories of the Sacred and the mystical experience. In the following part of the analysis, it will be

[100] Roberts, *Science Fiction: The New Critical Idiom*, 169–170.
[101] Roberts, *Science Fiction: The New Critical Idiom*, 174.
[102] Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 115.
[103] Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 233.

shown that these concepts, although traditionally perceived as far from each other, are in Gibson's prose often merging into an ecstatic remix of the human body, mind, and a machine.

When Case experiences a full encounter or even merging with one of the master artificial intelligences, the Neuromancer, he goes through states that can be described as an Archaic revival merged with the mystical experience governed by the hyperreal mechanisms of the reality production by machine: "His vision crawled with ghost hieroglyphs, translucent lines of symbols arranging themselves against the neural backdrop of the bunker wall. He looked at the backs of his hands, saw faint neon molecules crawling beneath the skin, ordered by the unknowable code."[104] Although such analysis might seem overly complex, it can be seen as appropriate because such semantic saturation of the prose seems to be almost defining for *Neuromancer*'s style and even the whole aesthetic category of cyberpunk. The sentence contains both ancient hieroglyphs, terms as a neural backdrop that suggest artificiality and hyperreality of the whole situation, blended terms as neon molecules suggesting simultaneous cybernetic and organic aspects, which are nevertheless again conducted by an unknowable mechanistic code. Such postmodern oversaturation of text with symbols might be interpreted not as a deliberate choice to overfeed reader's perception but rather as a prod towards metaphysical questions about the nature of reality in human future, where technology might well replace religion and an emptied Sacred space within late western societies. Another example of such blended symbolism of technology, body, and the mystical mind can be seen in the following passage describing yet another account of the mystical experience: "His vision was spherical as though a single lined the inner surface of a globe that contained all things, if all things could be counted. He knew the number of grains of sand in the construct of the beach (a number coded in a mathematical system)."[105] This passage reflects Gibson's vision of what can be termed as the mental transhumanism – the extension of the human mind with technology. Perhaps the most intense moment in the novel that describes merging of a human with a machine is the one, when Case experiences fusion with two different artificial intelligences at once: "Case's sensory input warped with their velocity. His mouth filled with an aching taste of blue."[106]

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[104] Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 241.
[105] Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 258.
[106] Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 257.

The paradox of the archaic, and the essentially human being described and experienced through the hypermodern and cybernetic constructs is further discussed by Roberts as follows: "This is the atavistic scheme underlying the apparently forward-looking ethos of the novel; and it is at this point that technology and magic become, as is often the case in SF, only a matter of perspective. In this sense, *Neuromancer* is as nostalgic, as backward-looking an American SF text as any."[107] In his argument, Roberts stresses the role of technology in the way it has been already presented in this thesis – in *Neuromancer* it serves not only as a visionary future element but also a tool that enables or even forces protagonists of the book to undergo a mystical experience in form of the archaic revival mediated by the cybernetic and face primal human questions of ontology, metaphysics, and religion. Roberts further argues that by presenting the oversaturated text, the book, in fact, offers reader the both possibilities of interpretation, according to his argument *Neuromancer* is: "capable of being read either as a gritty-realist account of actual existence or as a symbolist text, almost an allegory, of the epistemological hunt, the search for knowledge and meaning. This double perspective feeds through into all sorts of aspects of Gibson's descriptive world."[108] Thus, instead of a pure pursuit of the future of technology, the novel's main theme might be seen as an author's vision of the future of religion and mystical experience in the age of postmodern and overly-cybernetic society.

From the analysis presented above, one can see that despite being traditionally labeled as cyberpunk because of its orientation towards technology, *Neuromancer* primarily employs cybernetics and the cyberpunk aesthetics as a background, on which the complex issues of ontology, metaphysics, and questions about religions might be explored. Besides the philosophical question of nature of the reality and repeated suggestion of its plural nature, the text itself presents itself as an oversaturated symbol pointing towards the theme of merging of the human and the cybernetic. Keeping the cyberpunk as a sub-label, the author of this thesis would thus like to categorize the novel under the label metaphysical science fiction.

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[107] Roberts, *Science Fiction: The New Critical Idiom*, 172.
[108] Roberts, *Science Fiction: The New Critical Idiom*, 173.

Reflection of Analyses

The analyses of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and *Neuromancer* presented above argued for application of a new label – the metaphysical science fiction – to both of the books. Although the books certainly differ terms of style and certain themes, the analyses were focused on the themes that the author of this thesis seen as central ones. The main purpose of the analyses was to show the practical application of the theory that was presented in the first part of the thesis, and to show that the new category introduced by this thesis might be applicable to the works that might else be viewed as utterly different, showing their important shared aspects. One should note that both of the analyses rather justified the possible future field of research than provided in-depth studies of the whole novels. The initial motivation for a presentation of such theory was either to prove or disprove the assumption that certain works of science fiction share important aspects of themes as they discuss metaphysics, ontology, and mystical experience. Based on the analyses of the chosen books, the theory was partly proved, nevertheless, the author of this thesis is aware that only a greater number of studies that would compare aspects of more novels within the genre could truly prove the hypothesis. Thus, the aim of this work was to provide a departure point for a possible discussion within parts of the field of science fiction literature that were yet left relatively empty.

Conclusion

This thesis introduced a new approach to literary studies of the science fiction genre. The author suggested applying the label of the metaphysical science fiction to works that alongside their typical features of science fiction discuss complex questions of metaphysics and ontology. Another theme present in these works was suggested to be the mystical experience that allows protagonists of such novels to transcend their everyday reality into another paradigm of thinking and being, in which they can access different sources of knowledge than the ones of rational reasoning, which are prominent on daily basis.

The author of this thesis felt the need to introduce such label because despite the fact that many works that are categorized under different sub-genres of science fiction, in fact share these important themes. The thesis assumes that grouping of these works might bring important insights both into the field of literary studies of the genre but also across the disciplinary border into the discussion of metaphysics, ontology and the mystical experience. The theory departed from the discussion of important works of influential theoreticians from the fields of anthropology, religious studies and cultural studies including for example Mircea Eliade, William James, Terence McKenna, Jean Baudrillard, and Aldous Huxley. This thesis then used such theories as the foundation of a theory of a new categorial label for the literature.

First, the notions of metaphysical experience and myth were discussed. It was shown that a metaphysical experience despite its different manifestation usually shares certain criteria as set by a psychologist and a philosopher William James. Furthermore, the author of this thesis argued, that such experience leads the individuals who undergo it to the finding that the reality that humans live in is not of singular but of plural nature. In the following part, the function of a myth was discussed and it was shown that for a contemporary human, the myth might have a similar function as mystical experience – both point to the assumed the plurality of reality. Nevertheless, the traditional myth remains to be of textual nature and communicates the ontological knowledge about reality in words whereas during mystical experience, one can access such knowledge personally. Drawing from the discussion of myth and mystical experience, the author of this thesis has shown that the suggestion of the plurality of reality through quasi-mythical narratives or mystical experiences of protagonists is one of the defining themes for the metaphysical science fiction.

Following part of this thesis then discussed plurality of reality to a greater detail. Successively analysing and aligning works of Mircea Eliade, Aldous Huxley, Terence McKenna and Jean Baudrillard, the author has applied a multidisciplinary approach to create a basis for his later theory and criteria of metaphysical science fiction literature. The main argument again followed the presumed central theme of the works of the metaphysical sci-fi – the plurality of reality and mystical experience. Differing points of view of the various theoreticians allowed the argument to take into account many possibilities of interpretation of the duality of reality and in turn, served to make the later theory as flexible and objective as possible. In the final section of the theoretical part of this work, the author finally presented his theory of metaphysical science fiction departing from the traditional definition of the genre of science fiction literature towards such definitions that allow or even stress the importance of the mystical and irrational in sci-fi.

The practical part of this thesis presented analyses of two major works by important science fiction writers – *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* by Philip K. Dick and *Neuromancer* by William Gibson. Despite the fact, that the novels are usually labeled under different sub-genre labels, the author of this thesis has shown how and why these works should be labeled as šparts of the category metaphysical science fiction. First, the writers and their works were presented in their short biographies. Subsequently, their major themes and motifs were discussed in a general introduction to their work referencing the works of theoreticians from within the field of science fiction literary studies. Then, the analyses were provided to show the application of the theory present earlier in practice. After the author justified application of the label presented by this thesis, he further added a reflection of the analysis, which served as a disclaimer noting that the analysis presented in this work should first and foremost serve to present the theory in practice and that they should be taken as a hint for further in-depth analysis of the selected works (and many others) – only more extensive research on the topic might prove or disprove the theories presented in this thesis. The author would like to add that he hopes that the theory he suggested in this work will be further re-examined, applied or even improved by other scholars in the field. He believes that using metaphysical and mystical theoretical frame on the literature of science fiction might help to surface many exciting findings in the field that are yet waiting to be revealed.

Czech summary

Cílem této práce bylo definovat nový přístup k žánru science fiction literatury v rámci podžánru metafyzické science fiction literatury. V rámci interdisciplinárního přístupu se autor nejprve zaměřil na teoretické práce, které se přímo literatuře fikce nevěnují, ale s tématem metafyziky, ontologie a mystického prožitku souvisí. Mezi tyto autory patřili například antropolog a religionista Mircea Eliade, filozof a psycholog William James, spisovatel a teoretik Aldous Huxley, či etnobotanik a filozof Terence McKenna. Přes značné rozdíly v přístupech těchto autorů se tato práce zaměřila na otázky s přínosem pro později představenou teorii metafyzické science fiction literatury, ve kterých se shodnou. V analýze jejich vlivných děl se autor dobral zjištění, že dané teorie poukazují na pluralitu reality, ve které žijeme a podtrhují mystický prožitek jako jeden ze způsobů získání vědomostí o této pluralitě. Autor se rozhodl využít tak mnohotvárných zdrojů, aby zaručil objektivitu a pružnost vlastní výsledné teorie.

Prvním nosným tématem byla zvolena mystická zkušenost. V rámci této diskuze autor využil především poznatků vlivného amerického psychologa a filozofa, Williama Jamese. Po definování základních rysů mystické zkušenosti, které později sloužily k identifikování tohoto tématu v dílech literatury fikce, autor uvedl tuto zkušenost do funkčního vztahu s tradičním mýtem. Závěrem první části této diplomové práce bylo, že jak mýtus tak mystická zkušenost odkazují k pluralitě reality, a že tyto dva fenomény se liší především v bezprostřednosti přístupu k této znalosti. Zatímco mýtus pro dnešního člověka pojednává o dualitě či pluralitě reality textově, mystický prožitek dává tuto zkušenost zakusit osobně.

Následující část této práce se detailně věnovala názorům několika již zmíněných teoretiků, jež podporují možnost, že realita, ve které žijeme není jednotná a může se sestávat z několika dílčích realit, mezi kterými lze za různých podmínek přecházet. Mircea Eliade rozlišuje především mezi posvátnou a profánní realitou – posvátná je ta, ve které archaický člověk žil v bezprostředním kontaktu s přírodou, kterou zároveň vnímal jako nejvyšší svátost, zatímco profánní je ta, do které se během procesu vynálezu historie postupně dostal. Aldous Huxley zase tvrdí, že pravá zkušenost je nekonečně plurální, a že lidský mozek funguje jako redukční filtr, který danou realitu omezuje na její pouhou výseč, ve které se již zvládáme orientovat. Terence McKenna navazuje na Eliadeho teorii a posouvá ji do světonázoru, který vidí veškeré lidské pokusy o náboženské konstrukty jako výsledek podvědomé touhy navrátit se do stavu primordiální archaické extáze. Dle něj však tento návrat nečeká hluboko v minulosti ale

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naopak ve výsostném futurismu na konci dějin. Tato teoretická kapitola byla pak uzavřena postmoderní teorií francouzského filozofa Jeana Baudrillarda, který navrhuje model tzv. hyperrealisty, ve kterém tvrdí, že člověk se čím dál více vzdaluje původní realitě, ve které žil opakovaným procesem simulace, během kterého vznikají modely podobné vyprázdněným kulisám – simulakra.

Další kapitola pak shrnula dosavadní diskuzi uvedenou v této práci a na základě syntézy a interpretace poznatků jednotlivých teoretiků představila teorii metafyzické sci-fi literatury. Autor se s tímto označením rozhodl přijít, neboť byl přesvědčen, že mnohá díla sdílejí témata mystického zážitku, ontologických a metafyzických otázek, přičemž tato skutečnost je dnešní teorií science fiction literatury víceméně ignorována. Dle autora této práce by tento způsob přístupu ke science fiction mohl poukázat na nové spojitosti mezi díly, které by jinak tradičně byly zařazeny v nespojitých kategoriích, a že by tyto nové vyvstanuvší spojitosti mohly přinést další poznatky jak pro studium literatury tak v důsledku i pro obory, ze kterých autorem představená teorie vychází.

Praktická část práce pak ověřila funkčnost této teorie při její aplikaci v literárních analýzách dvou děl od význačných autorů science fiction literatury – *Tři stigmata Palmera Eldritche* od Philipka K. Dicka a *Neuromancer* od Williama Gibsona. Analýza se zaměřila především na hlavní témata těchto románů a sloužila k tomu, aby poukázala na to, že tato díla mohou být i přes jejich tradiční kategorizaci označena jako metafyzická science fiction. Dalším smyslem prezentace těchto analýz byl návrh, jak by taková analýza metafyzického science fiction měla vypadat, a na které aspekty děl by se další teoretici zkoumající tuto oblast měli zaměřit. V reflexi analýz bylo pak uvedeno, že díla by se samozřejmě dala tímto způsobem studovat do mnohem větší hloubky, ale že smyslem této práce bylo především poukázat na existenci často přehlíženého tématu v rámci science fiction – práce by tedy měla sloužit jako výchozí bod pro další zkoumání v tomto oboru.

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Annotation

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Abstract:

In my thesis I present a theory of metaphysical science fiction. I apply interdisciplinary approach to works several theoreticians from the fields of religious studies, anthropology, psychology, and philosophy to create a synthetic theory of literature that would allow for an innovative way of categorization. The main aim of this thesis is to built this theory from its foundations and to apply it to the works *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* by Philip K. Dick and *Neuromancer* by William Gibson to attest its functionality and suggest its possible use in practice.

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Anotace

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Klíčová slova

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Abstrakt

Tato práce představuje teorii metafyzické science fiction literatury. Autor v ní uplatňuje interdisciplinární přístup k teoriím vědců z oborů religionistiky, antropologie, psychologie a filosofie, ze kterých následně vypracovává syntetickou teorii literatury, která zavádí inovativní přístup ke kategorizaci literárních děl. Hlavním cílem této práce je vystavět tuto teorii od samého základu a následně ji atestovat aplikací při analýze děl *Tři stigmata Palmera Eldritche* od Philipa K. Dicka a *Neuromancer* od Williama Gibsona.

Souhlasím s půjčováním diplomové práce v rámci knihovních služeb.