

Damian Podleśny
University of Bielsko-Biała
dampod@gazeta.pl

Representation of mental oddity in two novels by Philip K. Dick

Philip K. Dick's fiction, which is mostly labelled as science-fiction, approaches the issue of mental otherness or oddity quite frequently. Suffering from serious mental problems, including schizophrenia, the writer had a first-hand experience of what it means to live in an alternative world of one's own mind. Throughout his career, Dick made frequent use of characters suffering from various forms of mental disorders. And it is mental illness that constitutes one of the recurring motifs, shaping the reality for both the characters and the readers, be it in his science fiction or mainstream realistic fiction.

The paper discusses two novels featuring examples of Dick's characters who experience mental incapacities, breakdowns or suffer from serious mental states, i.e. *Martian Time-Slip* and *A Scanner Darkly*. The altered state of perception is, on the one hand, a curse for the characters involved, but, in a broader perspective, it enables them to go beyond the superficial borders of perception, as they are commonly delineated. The motif recurs in other novels dealing with reality breakdowns – e.g., *Time Out of Joint*,¹ *We Can Build You*,² *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*³ – all of which feature characters who suffer from various forms of mental conditions. The

¹ Philip K. Dick, *Time Out of Joint* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2012).

² Philip K. Dick, *We Can Build You* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2012).

³ Philip K. Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2011).

novels investigated in this article, however, focus on the mental state itself; and the reality breakdown is just an end result of the characters' condition. Both novels put the distorted individual perception of reality against the apparently sane and rational society.

In *Martian Time-Slip* (1964), the writer makes use of the possibilities of the space-opera setting to create a dramatic narrative featuring two people whose comprehension of the surrounding reality differs from that of the "normal" characters. The novel focuses on the social incongruity of those who are considered mentally ill, and their struggle to overcome society's conformity and ignorance when it comes to accepting such people in society. The two focal characters are Manfred Steiner and Jack Bohlen; the former is an autistic child and the latter suffers from a latent form of schizophrenia. Both of them struggle to survive in the grim and oppressive environment of human colonies on Mars.⁴ In a much later novel, *A Scanner Darkly* (1977), Dick explores the process of gradual disintegration of human mind resulting from excessive use of drugs. Bob Arctor, a local junkie, who is, in fact, an under-cover government agent, infiltrates the community of drug users. His cover forces him to take drugs, which leads him to a serious brain damage resulting in schizophrenic fits and imminent mental disintegration.⁵

Martian Time-Slip

Martian Time-Slip belongs to the rich tradition of novels set on the "red planet." It is sometimes viewed as one "that condemns discrimination of human beings in general,"⁶ but I believe it focuses more on the social incongruity of those who are considered mentally ill, and their struggle to overcome society's conformity and ignorance. If, as Carlo Pagetti notes, "all the characters [... of the novel] are implacably impelled towards neurosis, madness, homicide, suicide, adultery,"⁷ its focus is mental disability of the those who form the microcosmic Martian society.

Both main characters – Steiner and Jack Bohlen – struggle to survive in this harsh microcosmic society. They are involuntarily working for the only "power" on the planet – Arnie Kott, a trade union leader, who has become a feudal baron and has control over the most precious Martian commod-

⁴ Philip K. Dick, *Martian Time-Slip* (London: Gollancz, 1999).

⁵ Philip K. Dick, *A Scanner Darkly* (London: Voyager, 1996).

⁶ Leila Kucukalic, *Philip K. Dick, Canonical Writer of the Digital Age* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 47.

⁷ Carlo Pagetti, "Dick and Meta Science Fiction," in: *On Philip K. Dick: 40 Articles from Science Fiction Studies*, eds. R. D. Mullen and Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. (Terre Haute and Greencastle: SF-TH Inc., 1992), p. 183.

ity – water. Many critics agree that, first, the fact that Mars is destitute of water serves as a metaphor for the inequities of power and resources; and, second, that the way its people spend and withhold water indicate their moral character; and, third, that therefore, the struggle dramatised in the novel is a moral one.⁸ Thus, the principal background of the novel is the issue of ownership, but not just ownership of resources – first and foremost, it is the ownership of people and their lives.

Each individual is flawed in some way, but the novel shows degrees of evil and intention, which mark the boundary between the good and the bad. Moral choices and their results are best expressed in the way Arnie Kott acts. The local overlord manipulates people he employs with impunity; not only does he hire people's labour but also usurps to own their fate. This strengthens the colonists' helplessness and vulnerability to the institutional, but also to the individual power on both Mars and Earth. We encounter Kott early in the novel, when he refuses to share water with the indigenous Martians (a nearly extinct tribe called the Bleekmen); and, later, when he shows off his wasteful use of water during a lavish steam bath he and his "court" enjoy. Kott meets Bohlen during a rescue operation and becomes Jack's patron by having bought his contract from the previous employer. This is not an act of kindness. Kott is driven by the fact that Bohlen might be able to help him in communicating with the schizophrenic Manfred and make use of the boy's apparent skill to see into the future. Kott's ultimate goal is to find out which plots of land on Mars will be most valuable, and purchase them before the predicted boom starts. This becomes the basis for the moral and psychological struggle on which the three characters embark.

Interestingly, both Jack's and Manfred's "disorienting" perception of reality cannot be easily discredited, even though it practically isolates them from the community. When Jack perceives people as machines, the narrative, as Kucukalic sees it, "establishes his perceptions as belonging to absolute reality or an aspect of eternity."⁹ The experience of seeing the world in a different way is both frightening and utterly exhausting for Jack; yet it is not presented as a mere delusion. What is more, another character observes that "maybe there's something in your vision, however distorted and garbled it's become."¹⁰ Manfred, on the other hand, seems to be completely isolated, as he is unable to communicate effectively at all. He is presented

⁸ Andrew M. Butler, "Water, Entropy and the Million-Year Dream: Philip K. Dick's *Martian Time-Slip*," *Foundation*, No. 68 (Autumn 1996), p. 76.

⁹ Kucukalic, *Philip K. Dick*, p. 49.

¹⁰ Dick, *Martian Time-Slip*, p. 111.

as an alienated being with “dark, enormous, luminous eyes,” who looks like “a despairing creature from some other world [. . .] divine and yet dreadful place.”¹¹ This description puts him in opposition to the “normal” colonists. However, as the novel develops, Manfred’s visions are far from being marginal or insignificant; they serve as an important focal point and become central to the world of other characters, as he is able to exert his visions on other people and alter their perception of reality.

Making use of the characters suffering from autism and schizophrenia, both of which are characterised by a certain level of cognitive estrangement, the author seems to tackle the philosophical and cognitive problem of the way in which an individual is connected to or disconnected from a “normally” perceived reality. Thus, the novel can be treated as a psychological or psycho-social text examining the relationship between the inner and outer worlds of an individual.

At the same time, the representation of the condition of the two protagonists and the incorporation of their perception of reality into the narrative serve the purpose of metaphorical transformation of the alien into the human. Such understanding is aided by the use of Mars as the setting, which is being steadily transformed into an Earth-like planet. Placing the condition of mental otherness in the microcosmic society of the colonists serves also as a means of discussion about the place that individuals with a mental condition have in society.

Another interesting aspect of the novel is the multiplicity of the viewpoints from which the mental disturbances are observed. On the one hand, they are shown as religious phenomena; Manfred is presented several times as having divine attributes and exerting demiurgical power in his own isolated universe. On the other hand, we may understand this as a purely science fictional concept of Manfred and Jack inhabiting alternative time continua. It is also possible to view the narrative from a purely emotional perspective, as both characters not only suffer from their “ailments,” but also experience, in most cases, total lack of compassion and empathy from other members of their society. Dick voices his view upon this issue in an interview with Paul Williams, in which he uses strong words, e.g., “a bunch of bullshit,” to describe his attitude to the notion that it is impossible to empathise with a schizophrenic. He opposes the idea that schizophrenia “is a concrete entity that stands in opposition to us,”¹² and, consequently,

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹² Gregg Rickman, *Philip K. Dick: In His Own Words* (Long Beach: Fragments West/Valentine Press, 1998), pp. 206–207.

rejects the arbitrariness of people's judgements of behaviour and motives of others.

The view of the ordinary man as a mere toy in the play of external forces is emphasised by another element that drives the ruthless economy of the colony, i.e. real estate. Huge condominiums are to be erected on Mars in order to encourage even more colonists to arrive. Consequently, a race to get hold of the most valuable plots of land follows. This competition influences the fates of the central characters of the novel. Jack's father, Leo, who is a rich businessman on Earth, speculates on the plots on Mars where the AM-WEB estates are to be built. At the same time, Arnie Kott becomes obsessed with the plan to wreck Leo's schemes and acquire the land beforehand in order to secure the profits for himself. Manfred has continually occurring visions of giant buildings as ruins, and of a home for senior citizens, in which he is bedridden, helpless and voiceless. Jack, who apparently suffered from a severe mental breakdown in a similar condominium on Earth, is transferred to Kott's service in order to help Kott reach Manfred's time-altering skills, and, in this way, provide the union leader with the information he requires. Dick is highly ironical when introducing the populist slogan for the AM-WEB: *Alle Menschen werden Bruder*.¹³ The novel makes it absolutely clear that all people are no brothers whatsoever.

The characters with mental conditions are constantly exploited and marginalised. This applies not only to Manfred and Jack, but also to local Martians – the telepathic Bleekmen. Brian Aldiss, an outstanding British science fiction writer and critic, offers an interesting interpretation of the name AM-WEB in the light of the mental mind-sets of the characters. He understands the word “web” as a metaphor for three important subjects:

[W]eb of civilization stretched thin over utter desolation. There is no guaranteeing that it can be maintained. [...] [B]ehind this web exists another, even more tenuous: the web of human relationships. Men, women, children, old men, Bleekmen [...] all depend, however reluctantly, on one another. [...] Behind these webs lies a third, revealed only indirectly. This is the web connecting all the good and bad things in the universe. [...] These three webs integrate at various coordinate points [...].¹⁴

Aldiss goes on to identify mental illness as the ultimate enemy in the novel; the power that creates the “maledictory web” that captures everyone

¹³ Dick, *Martian Time-Slip*, p. 144.

¹⁴ Brian Aldiss, “Dick's Maledictory Web: About and Around *Martian Time-Slip*,” in: *On Philip K. Dick*, p. 37.

– “the maledictory circle within which Dick’s beings move and from which they have to escape.”¹⁵

However, it seems that calling mental problems “maledictory” does not correlate with the overall message of the novel. Both Jack and Manfred are vulnerable in their disorders. The reader sympathises with Jack’s condition, as he exhibits basic human decency and goodness. Manfred, by the same token, is but an innocent victim of the sinister plot devised by Arnie Kott. Additionally, the experience of his visions of himself as an old man strapped to a hospital bed and unable to communicate evokes pity and sympathy. Madness cannot be perceived as a state of wrongness or otherness, and the book insists upon the idea that “non-standard or dysfunctional human psychology has more complexity and portent, and in some cases more meaning, than society customarily allows.”¹⁶

Throughout *Martian Time-Slip*, an individual is placed against a collectively perceived objective reality, and the interconnections between sensory perception, individual consciousness and nature are continually investigated. The boy is represented through the stream-of-consciousness narration, which uncovers the hostile, nightmarish inner world inhabited by carnivorous birds and worms, in which everything is subject to entropy and decay. Manfred perceives the nature of the outside world in the same categories, he sees the entropic force of the universe in the people and events around him. Via Manfred’s mind we can see the environment going apart to the point at which he sees only “a cavity, dark, cold, full of wood so rotten that it lay in damp powder, destroyed by gubbish-rot.”¹⁷

Manfred’s inability to communicate evokes tension in other characters’ relationships with him. Combined with the colonists’ failure to establish a functioning community, the situation leads to the questioning of the interaction between the individual and the collective. Manfred is placed in an institution for anomalous children, i.e. a place for “any child who differed from the norm either physically and psychologically.”¹⁸ Manfred’s condition evokes various reactions. In many cases, these reactions result from incomprehension of the boy’s condition. His father is mostly embarrassed to visit him, and, unable to see what the real problem is, mistakes it for apathy, believing that “the boy does not give a damn.”¹⁹ Kott calls him “a little

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁶ Kucukalic, *Philip K. Dick*, p. 76. Punctuation original.

¹⁷ Dick, *Martian Time-Slip*, p. 129.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 44.

schizo fellow,”²⁰ and is interested only in the boy’s ability to predict the future. Jack is different in his approach to Manfred – maybe thanks to his own condition – and becomes a surrogate father after Manfred’s father commits suicide. Jack makes an effort to understand the boy and his visions. When surveying the land his father purchased, Jack looks at a drawing Manfred has just completed – it foresees the sad end to the AM-WEB complex of condominiums, as decay and rubble dominate the huge ruins. While Leo is absolutely appalled by this, Jack meditates about the burden Manfred carries: “How can he live from one day to the next, having to face reality as he does?”²¹ This sentence illustrates a simple but humane understanding of Manfred’s state. Empathy, again, comes to the forefront of human relationships and interactions.

The novel explores yet another subject to which Dick returned very often: the relationship between subjective and objective worlds. Dick shapes his view on the Heraclitean formulation of the universe as consisting of the private *idios kosmos* and the collective *koinos kosmos*, the spheres determining our existential place in the world:

no person can tell which parts of his total worldview is *idios kosmos* and which is *koinos kosmos*, except by the achievement of strong empathic rapport with other people. [...] In [...] my books, [...] the protagonist is suffering from a breakdown of his *idios kosmos* – at least we *hope* that’s what’s breaking down, not the *koinos kosmos* [...].²²

In the case of a schizophrenic, it is always the private world that breaks down, and, in the novel, these are pressures of civilisation and materialism that provoke the unbearable tension of the internal and external experience. Jack suffers from a mental breakdown inside a huge condominium, an impersonal housing estate squeezed into one humungous building, where people live without any social interaction; obviously, his attack is procured by the vastness of the building itself and the sense of isolation it evokes. Later, Jack experiences yet another nervous breakdown, already on Mars, when he confronts simulacra school teachers. Even though Manfred’s visions of ruin and despair are far more intense, they are representations of his reality. As Dick himself states:

²⁰ Ibid., p. 136.

²¹ Ibid., p. 145.

²² Gillespie, Bruce ed. *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd* (Melbourne: Norstrilia Press, 1975), p. 263. Emphasis original.

it is entropy at work, decay of the meaningful (form) into the meaningless (entropic formlessness). This force, intruding itself is objectively real; *this* is not the hallucination – and much of what in my books is regarded as hallucinations are actually aspects of the entropy-laden *koinos* world breaking through.²³

An interesting reading of the ways of communication with Manfred is suggested by Kucukalic, who sees the following three channels of communication: through a ritual, telepathy, and the text of the novel.²⁴ Indeed, the first channel is best illustrated by Kott allowing his mind to be taken over by Manfred through a Bleekmen ritual that is supposed to enable the communication. This leads to Kott's utter disorientation – both ontological and epistemological – as he begins to see the world as a rotting and malicious place. The fusion with the boy's mind leaves a strong and lasting impression on Kott's mind so that he is unable to tell whether he is still in the "fusion" or back in reality. This, eventually, causes his death, as he believes he is still within the illusory world, caught within Manfred's subjective reality long after the "ritual" took place. The second channel enables Manfred to communicate with the Bleekmen. He is able to connect himself telepathically to the Bleekmen and, in this way, he finds peace through the communication with the exploited autochthonic people.

The third way enables the reader to "communicate" with Manfred's consciousness, and, in this way, perceive him as a "tangible human being" as well as understand and accept his otherness.²⁵ Dick utilises an experimental technique in which he uses the text as a means of communication with the reader. Jack's and Manfred's characters are strongly intertwined, and Jack's view of reality is influenced by Manfred's in a number of "time-slips," which constitute depictions of reality affected by a character's subjective point of view. It is achieved via bringing together two lines of narration: one conventional and representational with the omniscient narrator describing the event, and the other one which is the repetitive decay-laden version of the same events filtered through Manfred's mind.

In the second time-slip, which is the turning point in the plot, Manfred is taken to the sacred Bleekmen rock, where Kott resorts to the already mentioned ritual in order to access Manfred's mind and go back in time, which will enable him to purchase the valuable land. The process enables Manfred to take sovereignty over Kott's mind. Kott wakes up in his bath

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 270. Emphasis original.

²⁴ Kucukalic, *Philip K. Dick*, p. 55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

and experiences a steady decay of the life he used to have three weeks before. Everything is devolving, even newspapers contain nothing but the word “gubble” repeated endlessly. Manfred’s “gift” leaves Kott perplexed and horrified with the dark aspect of reality he has never experienced. However, his moral stance does not change: he is still vengeful and cruel, and still seeks material profit by whatever means.

Kott dies absolutely incognisant of which world is actually real, but his death is not brought about by Manfred’s action or the gradual decay and entropy of his world. He is killed by a black market trader, Otto Zitte, who takes revenge after Kott deprived him of his meagre business. Kott pays for his disregard of other people, lack of empathy and complete arrogance.

Manfred is finally released from the nightmarish visions when he finds comfort with the Bleekmen, the only individuals with which he can communicate. The sympathetic portrayal of the autistic boy, as well as the marginalised Martian autochthonous community, conveys the message that the collective reality is able to endorse an isolated individual; and imposing exclusion on others inevitably brings about a false, unreal, and illusory reality, just as in the case of Arnie Kott.

The textual representation of mental otherness transpires to be one of the main subjects of the novel. The time-slips allow us to see beyond the commonly accepted reality. Employing, on his own terms, the philosophy of Heraclitus, the author explores the possibilities of the objective reality being warped by the subjective and vice versa. Manfred’s ability to influence Jack’s and Kott’s realities during the time-slips is an illustration of mental otherness, thanks to which people might assume a different angle when reflecting on mental illness.

A Scanner Darkly

A Scanner Darkly is one of the most important works in Dick’s entire oeuvre, and beside *Confessions of a Crap Artist* and the *VALIS* series, it is his most autobiographical novel. It was published in 1977 and is set in 1994, thus it might be called a novel of the near future. Its yet another idiosyncrasy is that it is deprived of the incredible reality distortions of Dick’s far-future science fiction.

The main character, Bob Arctor, plays a double role in the novel – he is a member of a small group of junkies, as well as an undercover antinarcotics agent, known as Fred. His task is to infiltrate the world of drug addicts and dealers in order to reach out to the producers of a deadly drug. The interesting detail is that Arctor/Fred needs to hide his identity from both

his housemates and the police, as full anonymity of the agents is a *sine qua non* of the antinarcotics division. This far-fetched conspiracy is to prevent any form of corruption, which turns out to be one of the pivotal elements of the plot. Arctor, as a result of his actions, becomes gradually addicted to the drug called Substance D (for Death), which is an extremely powerful psycho-active substance, and is produced from an innocent-looking, small, fragile blue flower, called *Mors Ontologica*.

Arctor, whose schizophrenic double role and overpowering addiction to Substance D result in a gradual but imminent recalibration of his perception of the world, is set to reach to the source of the drug in question, through Donna, his direct supplier. His regular contact with the substance results in a brain disorder, as the two hemispheres of his brain start to function independently from each other. His superiors decide he is no longer able to fulfil his duties and send him for a therapy at a New-Path rehab centre. As it turns out, the rehab centre is just a cover for a plant producing Substance D, and, despite the absolute dysfunction of his brain, Arctor's role is to infiltrate the centre and its staff, and find sufficient evidence the drug is produced there. As a part of the therapy, Bob/Fred takes on yet another name – Bruce. The novel finishes with Bruce finding a small blue flower and hiding it in his shoe, with the aim to pass the flower on to his colleague detectives.²⁶ In this way, sacrificing his sanity Arctor succeeds in his role as a double agent.

One of the most difficult challenges the author faced was to translate the realistic events he experienced many times into the language of the conventions of science fiction because, as Dick claims, publishing a mainstream novel would be difficult. He introduced a number of typically SF elements into the otherwise realistic world of the novel.

An interesting solution is the already mentioned need for the absolute anonymity of the agent. The writer comes up with the so called “scramble suit,” a costume that prevents identification of the agent, but, at the same time, symbolically cuts the agent off from the outside world, and, in a sense, stigmatises him. Making him anonymous, the suit deprives Bob/Fred of his identity, which dissolves, and is ultimately lost. The blur of the different faces it projects corresponds to the growing blur and murk of his mind:

The scramble suit was an invention of the Bell Laboratories, conjured up by accident [...]. [Its] design consisted of a multifaced quartz lens hooked to a miniaturized computer whose memory banks held up to a million and a half physiognomic fraction-representations of various people [...] with

²⁶ Dick, *A Scanner Darkly*, p. 182.

every variant encoded and then projected outward in all directions equally onto a superthin shroudlike membrane large enough to fit around an average human.²⁷

The suit strengthens the gradually growing schizophrenia of Bob/Fred, which is clearly visible through his words and actions. He appears increasingly to have lost track of his real identity; his sense of identity is blurred, and finally totally disintegrated:

*How many Bob Arctors are there? A weird and fucked-up thought. Two that I can think of, he thought. The one called Fred, who will be watching the other one, called Bob. The same person. Or is it? Is Fred actually the same as Bob? Does anybody know? I would know, if anyone did, because I'm the only person in the world that knows that Fred is Bob Arctor. But, he thought, who am I? Which one is me?*²⁸

Another element exacerbating the mental disintegration of the main character is the utilisation of surveillance cameras (the Scanner from the title) to invigilate the communities suspected of drug trafficking. In the house Arctor shares with his junkie friends, a system of cameras is installed. SA Fred, as part of his duties, has to watch the recordings at a police station, which creates a surreal, grotesque, and obviously schizophrenic situation, in which Fred invigilates himself, and, in order to avoid identification, reports on himself. This becomes the source of a continuous clash between the two identities within one person. "Man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. [...] I learned to recognize the thorough and primitive duality of man,"²⁹ says Dr Jekyll in his suicide note, which aptly encapsulates the Arctor-Fred relationship. The composite nature of the main character is closely connected with the notion of *Doppelgänger* or double; a literary motif deeply rooted in the Scandinavian and German mythologies, which was formalised by German Romantics. Jean Paul Richter used the term *Doppelgänger* for the first time in his novel *Sibenkäs*,³⁰ and, since that time, the motif of *Doppelgänger* has been used in both literature and visual arts.

Dick relates to this notion by using different digressions and allusions to works exploring the problem. In the final chapter of the novel, he includes the first stanza of Heinrich Heine's "Heart in my body breaking":

²⁷ Dick, *A Scanner Darkly*, p. 23.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90. Emphasis original.

²⁹ Robert Lewis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (New York: Bantam, 1982), p. 87.

³⁰ Jean Paul Richter, "Sibenkäs," *Spiegel Online*, accessed August 12, 2017, <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/siebenkas-3215/1>.

Ich unglücksel'ger Atlas! Eine Welt,
 Die ganze Welt der Schmerzen muss ich tragen,
 Ich trage Unerträgliches, und brechen
 Will mir das Herz im Liebe.³¹

This poem is a part of “Die Heimkehr” (1823–1824), a section of Heine’s poetry collection called *Buch der Lieder* (1872), which presents what seems to be one of the central elements in Heine’s poetry, namely the image of *doppelgänger*. One of the earlier poems in this section appears to be the key poem in the whole collection. The final stanza reads (in translation):

You double of mine, you pallid other!
 Why do you mimic my love’s wild woe
 Which tortured me, your wretched brother,
 So many a night here long ago?³²

The *doppelgänger* figure in Heine’s poem is a pervasive and foreboding symbol of the second self, mocking the pretence of the first. Similarly, in *A Scanner Darkly*, the *doppelgänger* bears what “can’t be borne,” as suggested in the four lines cited by Dick. Bob/Fred’s drug induced schizophrenia makes him infinitely wretched. He has also become a pervasive and foreboding symbol of the schizophrenic reality, the reality which is virtually impossible to bear. The final, utter split of personality is indicated by the narrator saying: “They, inside the scramble suit, the nebulous blur, shut their eyes to wait.”³³

Together with other novels dealing with the issue of mental problems (e.g., schizophrenia in *We Can Build You*), *Martian Time-Slip* and *A Scanner Darkly* help to approach the definition of the human from a different angle than the man/android game shown in Dick’s typical science fiction. In both cases, the focus of the narrative is not on widespread institutional policies, it is rather on the individual dramas of characters. In whatever condition

³¹ Dick, *A Scanner Darkly*, p. 239. Frank Bertrand, “Digressions and Allusions in Philip K Dick’s *A Scanner Darkly*,” *Philip K. Dick Fan Site*, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.philipkdickfans.com/literary-criticism/frank-views-archive/digressions-on-allusions-in-p-k-dicks-a-scanner-darkly/>:

I most unfortunate Atlas! For a world,
 The entire world of suffering I must carry,
 I bear what can’t be borne, and feel the
 Heart in my body breaking.

³² Bertrand, “Digressions and Allusions.”

³³ Dick, *A Scanner Darkly*, p. 211.

they find themselves (turned into androids, mentally ill, mutated), their destinies are rendered with a powerful load of “pathos and compassion.”³⁴

Further features that are easily noticed in the novels in question, but also in several other of Dick’s novels and in numerous short stories, are the prevalence of decay and the inevitability of entropy. In this way, Dick expresses his concern, but also irony, about the condition of modern society, which, as it is illustrated, drives itself to inescapable annihilation. Both novels focus on psychologically unstable characters, analysing their relations and conflicts with the surrounding reality. In *Martian Time-Slip*, Dick seems to be exploring the implication of the human-alien relationship and interdependence, and considers both the scientific and emotional aspects of this situation. Although he might not always delve deep into his characters’ minds, or explore the character profiles exhaustively, he reflects carefully on the predicament of how humans are related to their environment, be it natural or mechanical. *A Scanner Darkly* is a novel about death. *Mors Ontologica* – the death of being – seems to be the clue to the meaning of the novel. For Dick, to exist means to think,³⁵ the novel, then, might be read as one about the death of the human mind. Reality exists thanks to the fact that it is the human mind that constructs it, and, when the mind is annihilated, it ceases to exist. Substance D is significantly the drug of death, as it possesses the power to destroy the brain.

³⁴ Kucukalic, *Philip K. Dick*, p. 77.

³⁵ Patricia Warrick, *Mind in Motion: The Fiction of Philip K. Dick* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1987), p. 161.

Damian Podleśny

Representation of mental oddity in two novels by Philip K. Dick

The paper focuses on two novels featuring several examples of Dick's characters who experience mental incapacities, breakdowns or suffer from serious mental states. In one of his novels, *Martian Time-Slip* (1964), the writer makes use of the possibilities of the "space-opera" setting to create a dramatic narrative featuring two people whose comprehension of the surrounding reality differs from that of the "normal" characters. The novel discusses the social incongruity of those who are considered mentally ill, and their struggle to overcome society's conformity and ignorance, when it comes to accepting such people in society. The two focal characters are Manfred Steiner and Jack Bohlen; the former is an autistic child and the latter suffers from a latent form of schizophrenia. Both of them struggle to survive in the grim and oppressive environment of human colonies on Mars. In a much later novel, *A Scanner Darkly* (1977), Dick explores the process of gradual disintegration of human mind, resulting from excessive use of drugs. Bob Arctor, a local junkie, who is, in fact, an under-cover government agent, infiltrates the community of drug users. However, his cover forces him to take drugs, which leads him to serious brain damage resulting in schizophrenic fits and imminent mental disintegration.

Key words: Philip K. Dick, *A Scanner Darkly*, *Martian Time-Slip*, schizophrenia, drug abuse