

moral obligations. Finally, it should be noted that the volume reviewed here has an import that extends beyond the world of philosophy, as is evidenced by the enthusiastic review of it published in a theological journal, written by Christof Müller from Würzburg.<sup>4</sup>

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4. Christof Müller, review of *Vernunftreligion und Offenbarungsglaube: Zur Erörterung einer seit Kant verschärften Problematik*, ed. Norbert Fischer and Jakub Sirovátka, *Theologische Revue* 112, no. 2 (2016): col. 135–137.

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Marcin Dolecki. *Philosopher's Crystal: The Treacherous Terrain of Tassatarius*. Translated by Paulina Trudzik. Oakland: Montag Press, 2016.

This review concerns a fantasy novel written by Marcin Dolecki, entitled *Philosopher's Crystal: The Treacherous Terrain of Tassatarius*. The book tells about the vicissitudes experienced by two young people living in a totalitarian state who, by coincidence, find a time machine and travel backwards to the past. The text is written in a light prose style with science-fiction elements (e.g., the time machine), somewhat reminiscent of authors such as Jacek Dukaj or (in a more academic vein) Roger Penrose.

The structure of the book consists of seven chapters and an epilogue. However, the form of the book allows for various interpretative approaches in respect of its content. In my opinion, the main reason for its being written is that the author wishes to acquaint readers—by default, young ones—with the philosophical figures selected by him. The unsophisticated language, uncomplicated action, and dynamic plot of the novel all help to make the book accessible. In the content of the text we are introduced to the main character, Philip. From the perspective of today's students, the protagonist is a man to whom fortune has given, in a very extraordinary way, the chance of fulfilling his wildest dreams:

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the novice finds himself in a position to ask questions of, and even enter into discussion directly with, the old masters themselves. Thanks to the time machine Philip travels to Hippo and talks to St. Augustine. Next, he comes back to 17<sup>th</sup> the seventeenth century Amsterdam, where he meets Descartes, before then traveling to the medieval Indian jungle, where he meets Shankara. The last interlocutor is professor Alset, who without a doubt is meant to remind us all of professor Richard Dawkins.

Mr. Dolecki, by elaborating Philip's conversations with the philosophers, is trying to present their principal doctrines in a most astute way. At this stage, the novel could be said to resemble a highly enjoyable textbook in the history of philosophy, focusing on selected ideas, or a lightweight "philosophical novel." It is worth adding that the author is not afraid to enter into criticism of his characters' views. After a conversation with St. Augustine, the main character truly appreciates the Bishop's powers of argument, but even so, not all of his doubts are dispelled.

On the other hand, the text can be read as a reflection on the issue which, from the very beginning, niggles at the back of Philip's mind: "Why does only this world exist, not any other? In other words, why has only one possible sequence of events actually unfolded?" The protagonist tries to find a satisfactory answer to these questions in the plot line. At this stage, the novel might still be regarded as resembling a concealed essay, in which the author tries to pit his questions against the philosophers in question. Yet what broadens the perspective of the text is the plot which appears both at the beginning and in the epilogue of the novel: this is the idea of reality being a dream, in which the subject dreams the reality he functions in. Thanks to this, the reader has the impression that content-wise the book is complete.

This topic is currently very often touched on, especially in the area of issues connected with the idea of "philosophy 2.0." The conception of existing reality as a phantasm can be found in Gnostic texts (e.g., the Gospel of Truth) and, among others, in the Indian Upanishads. (It is worth mentioning that this matter is widely covered by Shankara—one of the interlocutors of the main character). Nowadays, this same topic has been explored by Nick Bostrom in terms of the "simulation argument," exchanging the assumption that reality is not an illusion for the notion that we are living in a simulation of reality created by some post-human civilization.

It may be regretted that the author did not try to offer a somewhat more complex and refined treatment of the theme—linking it, for instance, with that of Humean skepticism. David Hume is, unfortunately, absent from Dolecki's book. As a result, it is not clear whether the author

is trying to propose—or, at least, to submit to readers' judgment—a set of philosophical ideas. Indeed, the sketchy manner in which issues such as that of skepticism and dreams are approached makes it quite difficult to figure out whether Dolecki's book is a novel whose characters happen to be (amongst other things) modeled on major historical philosophers, or a piece of philosophical narration, in which important issues about reality are raised.

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