

THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE AND PHILOSOPHY

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The Saturn Award-nominated Amazon Production entitled *The Man in the High Castle* is based on the Philip K. Dick novel of the same name. The series explores a counter-factual history for a post-World War II USA, an answer to the question: What if the United States had lost WWII and been divided between Germany's National Socialists and the Japanese? This takeover of the United States in connection to fascist power seems unfortunately relevant to the present, in which the United States, like parts of Europe, finds itself struggling with a rise in white supremacist groups, fears of colonization, and with capitalism in desperation, which is a working definition for fascism.

As Amazon's most-streamed original series, *The Man in the High Castle* has been booked for a second season, and is poised to become a cultural phenomenon. *The Man in the High Castle and Philosophy* will be a book in Open Court Publishing Company's Popular Culture and Philosophy series:

<http://www.opencourtbooks.com/categories/pcp.htm>.

- Submit abstracts of no more than 300 words to: TMITHCandPhilosophy@gmail.com
- Abstracts due: September 1st, 2016, but you can send them in sooner
- Notification of accepted abstracts: September 15, 2016
- First draft of papers due: November 1st, 2016
- 3,000 to 3,500-word philosophy papers are written in a conversational style for a lay audience. Papers must frequently refer to ideas, arguments, characters, events, and circumstances in the Amazon series "The Man in the High Castle" or to the series' source material.

Any relevant topic considered, but here are some possibilities to prompt your thinking:

- ❖ What is the role of divination in the series (*I Ching*)?
- ❖ Race in the series – does it matter that Lem Washington is black?
- ❖ In what sense is TMITHC a possible world as it relates to our own? Do Joe and Juliana have real life counterparts?
- ❖ Can torture ever be justified?
- ❖ Does the smuggling of film canisters lead viewers into considerations of the reel/real pairing?
- ❖ Are Joe and his superiors just morally unlucky to be born into the world they are? What would their lives look like, if they had been born in the real world?
- ❖ Significance of intertextuality, e.g., *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*?
- ❖ What sort of challenges do thought experiments such as TMITHC present to cultural relativism or similar ethical viewpoints?
- ❖ How do projected narratives impact thinking about the present? Is there a linkage of prophecy to causality (à la Althusser)?
- ❖ Is the resistance at war with the Greater Reich and the Pacific States, or are they merely something more like a terrorist organization? Does this distinction matter?
- ❖ If and when is self-sacrifice a virtue? Are the characters in TMITHC just acting in their own self-interest?
- ❖ Deep backgrounds – Ward Moore's novel *Bring the Jubilee* (a book about the South

winning the Civil War) served as inspiration for Dick's novel. How might current political developments, e.g., the Confederate flag controversy, tie in with a theme of a divided, occupied United States?

- ❖ Are biblical parallels in play, e.g., Obergruppenführer John Smith's dilemma about killing his son in connection to Abraham and Isaac?
- ❖ Is that a swastika in your pocket, or are you just happy to see me? Does almost every thing/character display ambiguity (double agency) in TMITHC?
- ❖ Is there more to the urban juxtaposition of San Francisco (Asian) versus New York City (Aryan)?
- ❖ What role does Frank Fink's Jewishness play in the narrative?
- ❖ What are viewers to make of the film noir techniques in the series?
- ❖ Wouldn't Putin be upset that Russia seems to have been left out of Dick's thought-experiment about WWII?
- ❖ What is the function of the neutral zone? Parallels to "Star Trek's" neutral zone?
- ❖ Is Tagomi's necklace more than a fetish?
- ❖ Does TMITHC present a philosophy of assassination?
- ❖ Are the American suburbs the ideal location for Nietzschean *Übermenschen* and their families?

- ❖ What would an ethical defense of vigilantism look like?
- ❖ What moral obligations do we have (if any) to follow the governmental law (in particular to authorities whose laws seem especially oppressive)?
- ❖ Does the series offer an implicit philosophy of technology (Heidegger), since the Imperial Japanese expect to be eventually defeated by the more technologically advanced National Socialists?
- ❖ Does TMITHC give us a philosophy of esotericism, a confirmation that there are always already secrets, and things/people in hiding?
- ❖ Dick claimed that TMITHC presents the world order as a single interacting field. Are there linkages between TMITHC and quantum mechanics?
- ❖ What might TMITHC teach us about chaos theory, and about the multitude of ways in which the history of our world could turn out?
- ❖ What does or can Juliana *know* about Joe, the Greater Reich, or the Resistance? In her context, should she be skeptical?
- ❖ What impact does colonization have on the populace of the former U.S.A.? In what ways are the colonizers impacted by the occupied culture?