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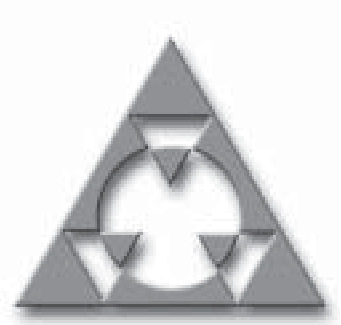

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PREFACE • **Dr. James Brummer, Editor**

Were it not for the generosity of the faculty, staff, and students in the department and the availability of Differential Tuition funds on campus, the publication of *Prism* might never have been started. It has been seven years since the journal was first published. The funds from Differential Tuition have paid for the preparation and publishing of *Prism* over many of these years, although recently the amount available for *Prism* has been supplemented by donations from former colleagues and students. Of particular mention in this regard is the generosity of Dick and Judy Behling whose donations continue to account for approximately half of the budget for *Prism*.

Once again there are very strong articles in this volume of *Prism*. The reader will notice that the articles contained in this volume come from both the disciplines of religious studies and of philosophy, and they range from expository to analytic to comparative to biographical studies of their topics. Most of the articles were written by seniors taking classes in the department. One of the articles comes from the discipline of English. All began as papers written for specific classes. It is fitting, then, to thank those faculty and staff members who were instrumental in providing the initial inspiration for these works.

More particularly, I would like to thank Robert Greene who taught the Writing and Research Class in the department in the fall of 2003. Three articles emerged from this class. I would also like to thank Charlene Burns and Lori Rowlett whose mentorship through their classes gave inspiration and support to two students whose work is contained herein.

I have already noted the importance of the financial contribution of Dick Behling. But he also provided significant assistance in further editing all of the essays contained in this issue. He has been a very strong supporter of this project from the beginning. Finally, the department owes a great debt of gratitude to Joanne Erickson, our Program Assistant, who helped to edit every essay in this volume and who formatted and transcribed them to the software program Pagemaker so that they would be prepared for publication and they would then also be available on-line.

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The Shadow of Machiavelli: The Prince and the Use of Cruelty •

Chad Anderson

Chad Anderson graduated in May of 2004. He is currently pursuing a Masters Degree in history from UW-Eau Claire. His essay on Machiavelli began with a course in "Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy" that he had with Dr. Brummer in the fall of 2001. The paper went through successive drafts in the summer of 2002 and in the fall of 2003 with the editor of *Prism.*

****

I

Had you walked the streets of Florence some five hundred years ago, you might have bumped into one of the city's most interesting residents: Mr. Niccolò Machiavelli. To day, Machiavelli casts a shadow that is longer than almost any of his Florentine contemporaries. At the time, however, his shadow would have been more modest, and it would not bear any of the unnaturally dark characteristics bestowed upon it by history. Machiavelli's name has often been associated with evil, with treachery, and even with the devil. He has gained this reputation through understandings of his most famous work, *The Prince*. Some of Machiavelli's ideas have been thought of as cruel, even inhuman. And what could be his cruelest idea was something he wrote in *The Prince*: "Any man who becomes master of a city accustomed to freedom, and does not destroy it, may expect to be destroyed by it."[1] Machiavelli advocated both dispersing the conquered city's population and physically rebuilding that city, as was done a number of times by the Romans.[2] In *The Discourses*, he advises his student, the prince, about newly conquered territories:

> [T]o build new cities, to take down those built, to exchange the inhabitants from one place to another; and, in sum, not to leave anything untouched in that province, so that there is no rank, no order, no state, no wealth there that he who holds it does not know it as from you; and to take as one's model Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander, who from a small king became

> prince of Greece with these modes. He who writes of him says that he transferred men from province to province as herdsmen transfer their herds.[3]

These passages raise important questions about Machiavelli's writing. Are we to interpret the passages as his literal advice to a prince? Under what conditions would a prince need to destroy a city? Then, too, what does it mean to *destroy a city*?

Considering just how bold these statements are and the inevitable questions they pose for students of Machiavelli's writings, his ideas about destroying cities and moving people have received surprisingly little scholarly attention. However, two interpretations have been advanced as to the meaning of these passages. Both views question Machiavelli's sincerity. The first view, held by Leo Strauss, argues that the passage is not to be taken literally, that it is an example of Machiavelli's tendency towards exaggeration and the dramatic.[4] The second view, briefly mentioned by Robert Adams in his translation of *The Prince,* is that Machiavelli is probably not serious because the idea of dispersing a population was unheard of in Renaissance Italy. Adams also believes that Machiavelli was writing about Florence; certainly, he would not seriously recommend to a member of the Medici family—the most famous family in Florence, to whom *The Prince* was dedicated[5]—the destruction of their city!

In any event, the matter of how these passages are interpreted largely determines how we are to properly understand Machiavelli's other ideas. If he is not writing in earnest in such a serious matter, then anything he writes could properly be called into question. If, in fact, he is unwilling to destroy a city, one wonders: How far would he be willing to go? What means might he endorse? These are essential, core questions regarding Machiavelli's political thought; hence, we must look carefully at his conception of *the destruction of a city*.

I believe that by examining Machiavelli's writings—specifically, *The Prince* and *The Discourses on Livy*—and by considering his actions while he was in a position of power in the government of Florence, we can develop a better understanding of his position. What might he have done in the kind of circumstance just mentioned? It is important to attempt to capture the *Zeitgeist* of Florence in Machiavelli's time, to understand power and destruction as he would have understood them. It is also necessary to view Italy as he saw it, based on his experiences as a diplomat and as an observer of the tides of fortune. Using these guidelines in interpreting the passages on destroying cities, I believe that Machiavelli was serious in his recommendation of destruction. But it must have been a recommendation of last resort. It was but one of several methods used to conquer and to hold a city. The Machiavelli who emerges from this study is thus seen as an innovator who seriously promulgated bold ideas, well thought out strategies based upon both his knowledge of history and his willingness to make clear what he believed.

II

As already indicated, Leo Strauss is a scholar who does not put much faith in the sincerity of Machiavelli's claims of devastation. Strauss, referring directly to the passage in question, writes:

> Not only some of the most comforting, but precisely some of the most outrageous statements of *The Prince* are not meant seriously but serve a merely pedagogic function: as soon as one understands them, one sees that they are amusing and meant to amuse.[6]

Strauss then goes on to cite Machiavelli's "bias in favor of the impetuous, the quick, the partisan, the spectacular…." This is done, he says, to win over the young, by appealing to their tastes. Strauss points out a contradiction in Machiavelli's work: In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli believes a prince would spare a city if he were not a barbarian. [7] Considering these two observations, one can see that Machiavelli is not serious, believes Strauss.

With the image of Machiavelli prevalent in popular culture, this is an especially interesting argument. We can imagine Machiavelli's sinister smile as he comes up with new ideas so as to shock the innocent reader. Unfortunately, Strauss's argument is incomplete at best. Machiavelli does, indeed, have a tendency to concoct amusingly sinister tales, but they serve more than a pedagogic function. In *The Prince*, he is deliberate in what he writes, especially since he addresses a Medici, and not for purposes of entertainment. Even the most dramatic and extraordinary passages in *The Prince* contain serious lessons.

The best example of Machiavelli's tendency towards being overtly dramatic, yet serious, is his case study of Cesare Borgia (*aka*.: Duke Valentino). Remirro de Orco was appointed by the Duke to commit cruel acts in order to bring about law and order in Romagna, an area conquered by the Duke. When the task was complete and the people grew weary of a man as cruel as de Orco, the Duke displayed a touch of the dramatic in disposing of de Orco. Machiavelli narrates: "…taking proper occasion, therefore, he had him placed on the public square of Cesena one morning, in two pieces, with a piece of wood beside him and a bloody knife. The ferocity of this scene left the people at once stunned and satisfied."[8]

This act, while bloody and dramatic, at once freed the Duke of any hatred of him by the populace, while at the same time it inspired fear, demonstrating his power. Machiavelli notes that this behavior is worthy of imitation by others: it serves a teaching function, but it is not meant to amuse. It is a serious illustration of well-used cruelty. Well-used cruelties are important to Machiavelli because, as a prince, one wants to inspire fear but not hatred. If the populace is angry at you, as was becoming the case with the people whom the Duke had conquered, then the prince must "fear everything and everybody."[9] But this problem is solved with the death of one man, preventing civil strife that could have had the province return to the corruption that existed prior to the Duke's reordering.

Nor is the contradiction that Strauss notes an obvious one; it does not seem to call into question the previously given statements in *The Prince*. In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli simply observes that a prince would tend to let a conquered city flourish, unlike a republic whose nature tends to weaken all surrounding cities.[10] His "contradiction" is a clarification of the nature of a prince versus the nature of a republic rather than advice that a prince is to follow. In another passage regarding the nature of a man, in Chapter 26 of *The Discourses,* Machiavelli states that any man who is human would never want to promote such evil as is required in destruction. But, if he does not wish to abandon politics, he must take decisive action.

In Chapter 26 of *The Discourses,* Machiavelli expands on these suggestions so as to include such activities as making the government new in name and personnel, switching the places of poor and rich, rebuilding cities, and moving populations.[11] Machiavelli makes some of the same statements given in *The Prince,* but he is more detailed in *The Discourses*. I conclude, then, that the interpretation of Strauss does not in itself constitute a solid objection to treating the passage in *The Prince* seriously.

III

A more telling interpretation to the passage about destruction comes from Robert Adams, who notes that, in *The Prince*, Machiavelli is not precise in his definition of *destruction.* He also notes that, despite Machiavelli's citing of examples of the dispersion of populations, no such examples are to be found in Renaissance Italy. Believing that Machiavelli was thinking of the city of Florence, Adams concludes: "Writing to a Medici, he would recommend the demolition of Florence only as a way of asserting, '*unless* you go to live there, you may actually have to destroy the city.'"[12]

This interpretation works better because Machiavelli wished to talk about how things are, not about how they ought to be. He preferred to suggest a policy that is grounded in the basic military operations of his day. Nevertheless, since he did make the suggestion about destruction, he must at least have considered it. But, I believe, the thought is not completely expressed within this portion of *The Prince.*

Sebastian De Grazia, however, provides a more suggestive account of what Machiavelli might have meant by the phrase, "destroying a city." Starting with the idea of civil war—an idea that Machiavelli wrote about in a letter to Pope Julius II—De Grazia writes:

> In these cases [civil wars], the collapse of the state comes about through the collapse of imperium. A state may also be destroyed by depriving it of dominion or by depriving the state of its third element—men or population—or by separating men from their native territory.[13]

This view seems to fit better the thinking of Machiavelli. He was born in a time of political chaos and great treachery. He saw the rise and execution of Savonarola, the rise and fall of the Florentine Republic, the conquests and fall of Duke Valentino, the fall of Pisa, and the fall of numerous smaller states to the Duke and others. J. R. Hale has noted that many passages in *The Prince* bear resemblance to letters Machiavelli had been writing to his friend Vettori. These letters were based upon, and pertained to, his post in the office of the Chancery of Florence.[14] In his Introduction to *The Prince,* Machiavelli tells us that the work is a result of his studies and his experience—the fifteen years he spent at the Chancery. With such experience in worldly affairs, including his post as the head of Florence's militia, he was not likely to limit his military options to a single strategy, not even if it were the only one practiced in Renaissance Italy. Machiavelli was far too astute to suggest otherwise. Therefore, the best approach is to examine each method of destroying a city that De Grazia has presented, then to determine if and when Machiavelli would have approved of such actions.

IV

The loss of imperium is the first method to consider. It might seem trivial to assert that "to destroy a city" involves removing all of its political power. After all, Machiavelli was discussing the dispersion of the population as a means to gaining power. But it is an option that becomes more attractive upon closer inspection. Imperium in most cities lies with the ruling power; when those in power are gone, the imperium is gone. Machiavelli's favorite example in *The Prince* applies here: Caesar Borgia. The imperium of his government—his power that was, for a time, nearly able to conquer much of Italy—died with him.

This also holds true for most principalities. Machiavelli wrote that removal of political power is an effective way to keep a city. He tells us: “To keep a secure hold, it suffices to have extinguished the line of the previous prince.” He continues by suggesting that if men are left alone, they will go about their business as they always had—provided their property or women are not tampered with.[15] The point is emphasized throughout his writings when he notes that it would have been much easier for an outsider to hold on to the Ottoman Empire than it would have been to hold on to France, given their differing political organizations.[16] France had many sources of political authority, but, in the case of the Ottoman Empire, power was so centralized that one only need remove the source of the power, and the imperium would be transferred.[17]

V

The loss of Dominion, or territory, is also a way to bring about a city’s ruin. Obviously, territory is conquered in battle, but Machiavelli’s favorite method of maintaining dominion is to establish colonies. Colonies do not cost much, and they permit the prince who conquers them to rule effectively with a relatively small military force. One may need to do some dispersal to set up a colony because land may be needed. But the people who are moved are usually small farmers, and, typically, they will not harm the prince. This dispersal also inspires fear in others; they will be less likely to attempt an uprising against the prince. Finally, and most appealing, relatively few people will be despoiled and much of the rest of the territory will remain intact. By limiting the number of those injured, the prince avoids hatred. Machiavelli writes: “I conclude that these colonies are cheaper, do better service, and commit less damage than any other method.”[18]

Another important part of establishing colonies and keeping dominion over them involves the prince’s taking up residence with the people whom he now rules. This is an important suggestion for our purposes because it shows that Machiavelli gave the prince the option of living in a conquered, but perserved, city as opposed to destroying or dismantling it. Living there qualifies as being amongst the “safest” proposals that he made.[19] This allows the prince to see everything. This tactic is opposed to the one used by the King of France when he sought to take Italy, but chose not to live there. He was thus unable to keep an eye on what transpired. Combining the tactics of living close to the action, as well as establishing colonies, gives the prince an effective method of holding on to large areas of land with relatively little destruction and little harm inflicted upon the citizenry.[20]

Machiavelli’s position is interesting because it indicates that there are *degrees of ruining* a conquered state. He uses the word “despoil” here so as to indicate what happens to the people who are moved to make way for the colonies. But the methods involved here are quite similar to those recommended in his use of the term “destroy” in the ‘dispersal statement’ in *The Prince*. Some of the results are similar, although the city proper is not dismantled, and its inhabitants are not moved because, in the case of colonies, the action takes place with fewer people who live in the countryside. The Romans did this very well, and Machiavelli approved of their methods. The great historian Gibbon tells us:

> In their manners and internal policy, the colonies formed a perfect representation of their great parent; and they were soon endeared to the natives by the ties of friendship and alliance; they effectually diffused a reverence for the Roman name, and a desire, which was seldom disappointed, of sharing, in due time, its honours and advantages.[21]

The Romans settled twenty-five colonies in Spain and nine in England. Gibbon points out that six of the colonies in England—amongst them London and Bath— remained flourishing cities in his time (as, indeed, they remain to this day). A prince, Machiavelli maintains, can hold on to many states for an extended time by establishing colonies and by moving there. The Romans, however, did not always use colonies effectively. The Romans had to destroy some cities in Greece in order to hold Greece.[22]

VI

This brings us to the final and cruelest way to destroy a city: to kill its people. It should now be clear that this was the option of last resort for Machiavelli. There are two other ways to maintain one's hold over a conquered land: the destruction of *imperium* and of dominion. It should also be noted that Machiavelli would not recommend genocide. Killing an entire population is not only inhumane, it would not further the common good.[23] The example of Agathocles, who was very cruel, proves for Machiavelli that there are judicious limits to cruelty and inhumane acts of violence. He explains: "A man may get power by means like these, but not glory."[24]

There are situations, however, when removing imperium or eliminating dominion will not work. These seem to arise in free republics that are the most difficult to keep. Machiavelli specifically states—indeed, in more than just one passage—that the physical dismantling of a city is a viable option. From his writings to friends and through his actions, one can discern that Machiavelli was a good and decent man, and he believed himself to be good. Nevertheless, when all else fails, and a prince cannot live in a conquered city, he recommends that he *must* enter the way of evil if he wishes to maintain his hold.[25] There is no question, no alternative. Machiavelli's thus presents one of his famous dichotomies: Either you will remove the population, or the population will remove you.

Of course, there are limits to dismantling cities and moving populations, and the logistics of the operation impose these limitations. At the time of Machiavelli, Florence had over 100,000 inhabitants; certainly, it would have been no easy task to move all of those citizens. Yet, overcoming logistical nightmares is something Machiavelli had previously tried to do in order to conquer Pisa. Leonardo da Vinci and he devised an extremely bold scheme to divert the Arno River away from Pisa, thereby depriving the city of its water source. It was also done to make Florence into a seaport. And the diversion would have provided new irrigation control for Tuscany that would have enhanced farming. The project was unprecedented, and da Vinci estimated that one million tons of earth would have to be moved and thousands of workers would be needed. Ultimately, the project failed owing to a lack of proper funding and poor engineering choices on the part of the field engineer.[26] Nevertheless, despite the failure, this plan is a clear illustration of Machiavelli's willingness to throw his weight behind bold projects that even his contemporaries viewed as foolish and wasteful of time. Machiavelli was willing to blaze new paths in order to achieve his goals.

However, it is possible that all the talk of destruction of cities was inconsequential since Italy was the prime target for Machiavelli's expansionist goals as is evident by the final chapter of *The Prince,* "An Exhortation to Restore Italy to Liberty and Free Her from the Barbarians". Duke Valentino did not dismantle cities. He was the exemplar that Machiavelli held in highest regard in *The Prince*; Machiavelli thought a Borgia-like leader would be best able to unify Italy with force. Yet, as Adams points out, he seemed to suggest to the Medici that if they did not move to Florence, they might have been forced to destroy it. However, Machiavelli knew that they would never do such a thing. Whether the tactic of dismantling could have been used in Italy is debatable; Italy was divided into five powers: Naples, The Papal States, Venice, Milan, and Florence. None of these states was capable of conquering any other and, since Italy was so disorganized, these states were also incapable of uniting politically to gain the requisite strength.[27] It is also apparent that, should Florence have reduced Venice to ruins and dispersed its population, this action would have been counter-productive. It would have created an opening for a foreign power to seize control of part or all of Italy because of the creation of a power vacuum in the Italian states.

Machiavelli was not an idealist, but there is the possibility that reforming the corruption that plagued the cities of Italy would have worked much better than ripping them to pieces. After all, Duke Valentino eliminated corruption without the destruction of cities. It is clear, then, that the people were not the problem; rather, it was the incompetent and corrupt leadership in the cities. There was thus no real need to disperse the populace. In *The Art of War*, Machiavelli clearly blames the leadership of Italy, rather than the people, for the then-current state of Italian affairs. He states, “Indeed the people are not to be blamed for this, but rather their princes, who have been justly punished for it and lost their dominions without being able to strike a stroke in their defense.”[28] The policy of dismantlement or dispersal seems more appropriate for use in places outside of Italy.

VII

It can be said, then, that Machiavelli was indeed proposing seriously the dismantling of cities. Yet, executing the local ruling family or establishing colonies in the conquered dominion are proven methods that Machiavelli would have employed before he would consider the dismantling of a city and moving its inhabitants. What remains unclear, however, are the circumstances under which Machiavelli would use dismantlement. If it were a significant part of his grand scheme for the strong prince to unify Italy, one would think that he would have mentioned it more often. And it should be noted that he does not clearly spell out why one would engage in activities to hold a free city. Machiavelli had witnessed enough problems caused by leaders who went down the wrong path by choosing tactics less reckless than dismantling a city. The last thing Machiavelli would have wanted is a prince physically tearing down all of Italy in order to fix it. One must remember that if ends justify means, the means chosen should be at least the right ones appropriate to attain those ends. And perhaps that is a very important lesson taught us in *The Prince.*

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[1] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince,* 2nd ed. trans. and ed. Robert Adams (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992) 14.

[2] *Ibid*., 15. This was a practice also done by the Assyrians and the Babylonians, as we learn from the Hebrew Bible. And it was likely practiced by the Hebrews themselves.

[3] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. and ed. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 61.

[4] Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 82.

[5] Robert Adams, ed. *The Prince,* 14 (footnote). Maurizio Viroli adds that Machiavelli’s mood while writing *The Prince* was dark, even vengeful, given that he wrote it shortly after losing his post in government in Florence and

after nearly losing his life. He was mistakenly thought to have been involved in a plot to overthrow the new government in Florence. Viroli tells us that a more informed reading of *The Prince* must take this fact into account. (See Maurizio Viroli, *Niccolo's Smile: A Biography of Machiavelli* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000) 153ff.)

[6] Strauss, *Op. cit.*, 82.

[7] *Ibid*.

[8] *The Prince, Op. cit.*, 21.

[9] *Ibid.*, 51.

[10] *Discourses on Livy, Op. cit.*, 133. Machiavelli states: "And of all servitudes, that is hardest that submits you to a republic. First, because it is more lasting and there can be less hope to escape from it; second, because the end of the republic is to enervate and to weaken all other bodies so as to increase its own body. A prince who makes you submit does not do this, if that prince is not some barbarian prince, a destroyer of countries and waster of all the civilizations of men, such as are the oriental princes."

[11] *Ibid.*, 61. In *The Discourses* it states: "to make the rich poor, the poor rich, as did David when he became King" as well as taking down cities, exchanging inhabitants, and leaving "nothing untouched".

[12] *Ibid.*, 14. This insight is from Adams's footnote regarding the passage.

[13] Sebastian De Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) 163. The word *imperium* is what De Grazia keeps when he translates the first sentence of *The Prince*. It is the Latin term that refers to the power a state has over men. George Bull's translation uses the word *authority*, and Robert Adams uses *power*. For De Grazia, the Latin word is essential because it was often used and understood by the Italians of the time. It is part of the three components understood to constitute a state: dominion, imperium, and men. See: *Machiavelli in Hell*, 158.

[14] J. R. Hale, *Machiavelli and Renaissance Italy* (New York: Collier Books, 1963) 129.

[15] *The Prince, Op. cit.*, 6.

[16] *Ibid.*, 12.

[17] A good, modern example in this style, that worked quite effectively, is the Russian Revolution.

[18] *The Prince, Op. cit.*, 7.

[19] *Ibid.*, 15.

[20] *Ibid.*, 7.

[21] Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1, with an introduction by Hugh Trevor-Roper (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993) 42-43.

[22] *Ibid.*, 15. It is quite possible that the colonies did not work here because Greece was accustomed to living freely, having invented the Western concept of the free city-state (Athens).

[23] *Machiavelli in Hell*, 311. De Grazia and Viroli agree that the common good is very important to Machiavelli. Strauss would demur, but, then again, he would disagree with many interpretations of Machiavelli's writings.

[24] *The Prince, Op. cit.*, 25.

[25] *Discourses, Op. cit.*, 62.

[26] For a discussion of the whole diversion project as well as speculation on how Machiavelli met da Vinci see: Roger Masters, *Fortune is a River* (New York: Free Press, 1998).

[27] The assertion that no single state can conquer another is from: Dorothy Erskine Muir, *Machiavelli and His Times* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976) 12. The idea of political disunity can be found throughout Machiavelli's writings, and it also appears in the bad foreign alliances and conspiring made by the leaders of the day.

[28] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, 2nd ed., with an introduction by Neal Wood. Trans. Ellis Farneworth (Cambridge, MA: De Capo Press, 2001) 209.

Christ, Anti-Christ, or Super-Hero: Green Lantern *Through the Looking Glass* •

Bobby Kuechenmeister

Bobby James Kuechenmeister is currently an undergraduate senior, 2004 National Dean's List Scholar, and McNair Scholar. His future plans include pursuing a Ph.D. in Cultural Studies upon graduation in May 2005. His research interests include tragic theory, comic scholarship, and new media theory. The article is made possible from a collaborative research project with Dr. Joel Pace and funding provided by the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

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Introduction

Comic books represent a simple form of entertainment that uses panels—image and text combined in a space—so as to tell a story. These stories are told and distributed on a regular basis, and they feature characters who possess special abilities that are referred to as "super-powers." Super-heroes (who choose to use their powers for good) co-exist in comic books with super-villains. One example of a comic book super-hero is *DC Comics*' Green Lantern.

Green Lantern comics tell stories of an Earthling, usually male, who inherits a power ring that allows its wearer to create external constructs limited only by will power. Since the 1940s, three men inherited the ring: Alan Scott, Hal Jordan, and Kyle Rayner. Each inheritance gave the ring a different weakness, but these weaknesses did not accumulate. These weaknesses became possible because they were designed by characters known as "the Guardians of the Universe" (omnipotent blue gnomes who are the green lanterns' superiors). For instance, when Alan Scott was Green Lantern, the ring was ineffective on *wooden* objects; Hal Jordan's inheritance gave the ring a resistance to *yellow* objects; and Kyle Rayner's inheritance forced him to recharge his ring periodically. The comic book focuses on one green lantern,[1] but he is not alone. Instead, he is one member of an intergalactic corps of green lanterns.

Most of the stories told in the series focus on Jordan, presenting a conflict within either his super-hero or his personal life, or a conflict between them, that is presented over a number of issues forming "story arcs". For example, issues 48-50 of *Green Lantern* form the story arc, "Emerald Twilight," telling about how Jordan deals with the loss of his city and its seven million inhabitants. On an annual basis, publishing companies like *DC Comics* have created story arcs that are not contained within just one title; they involve other titles. This is called a "crossover." Two examples of crossovers are "Zero Hour," which tells the story of a time-traveling super-villain who attempts to re-create the universe in his own image, and "Final Night," which tells the story of the Earth's being threatened by an alien who tries to extinguish the sun. These story arcs and crossovers are intended both to maintain a readership and to attract new readers. Most readers, however, begin reading comic books at a young age, and they outgrow them around adolescence.

Even though many readers seem to outgrow comic books, it nevertheless becomes possible to view this medium as a worthwhile subject for academic study. Significant and meaningful interpretations of their plots, artwork and characters are possible. One may even consider the philosophical or religious themes of their story lines. In this essay, by examining these elements in "Emerald Twilight," "Zero Hour," and "Final Night", I will propose that, in this arc, the character of Hal Jordan can be seen in religious terms in so far as it has elements of both a Christ and an Anti-Christ. I shall suggest other underlying religious themes found in these works.

"Emerald Twilight"

Issues 48-50 of *Green Lantern* form the three parts of "Emerald Twilight," a story arc written by Ron Marz, that appeared from January-March of 1994.[2] Issue 48 presents Hal Jordan dealing with the aftermath of the annihilation of his hometown, Coast City. This destruction occurred as part of a plot hatched by Mongul and the Cyborg Superman (two villains from Superman comics). Being unable to cope with his loss, Jordan attempts to resurrect Coast City and restore the lives of its seven million inhabitants by using the power of his ring. But his goal of restoration is foiled because the ring loses its charge upon reaching its 24-hour time limit of effectiveness. A Guardian then appears as a construct, not unlike those the ring creates, which seeks to bring Jordan to the planet Oa for disciplinary action. (Green lanterns are forbidden to use their rings to promote personal projects or gains). Still focused on his goal of restoration, Jordan absorbs the projection,[3] and proceeds to Oa because he realizes that, if he could gain control of the Main Power Battery there, his goal of restoration could be realized.

Issue 49 shows Jordan encountering resistance to his goal in the form of the green lantern corps. Because Jordan is the greatest green lantern of all time, the other lanterns are no match for him, so one-by-one he slays them and takes their rings as a means of overcoming the 24-hour time limit of his own ring.

Issue 50 brings "Emerald Twilight" to a close. This occurs as Jordan reaches the planet Oa, having to face Kilowog (his green lantern trainer) and Sinestro (Jordan's arch-nemesis). After killing them, Jordan successfully gains control of the Main Power Battery, and he is re-born into an all-powerful self. No longer needing the power rings he acquired, he destroys them, and he seemingly kills all the Guardians. But one survives. Ganthet, the last Guardian, reconstructs a power ring from the remains of a destroyed one and passes it on to Kyle Rayner, another Earthling. Ganthet then disappears.

“Zero Hour”

About nine months thereafter, in September of 1994, “Zero Hour” was published. Written by Dan Jurgens and Jerry Ordway, this crossover work consisted of five core issues (numbered backwards from four to zero): one issue from every title in the *DC Universe*.[4] The core issues presented what a collapse of continuities might be like in the *DC Universe*, resulting in strange anomalies, like Batman encountering himself from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s at a time when a certain Alpha Centurion, not Superman, was the hero of Metropolis.

Anomalies such as these slowly lead to a “reverse Big Bang,” which is something only a time-traveling super-villain is capable of begetting. But that villain turns out to be the all-powerful Jordan. Maintaining his goal of restoration, Jordan no longer seeks only to resurrect Coast City, but he also desires to destroy the universe and re-create it in his own image. Renaming himself “Parallax,” Jordan’s plans are dashed by the super-heroes when they combine their powers to create their own Big Bang, canceling out the one that Parallax envisioned. In the aftermath, Parallax vanishes, and he does not play a significant role again. Until, that is, the issues of 1996.

“Final Night”

During the two-year span between “Zero Hour” and “Final Night,” Kyle Rayner learns how to perform in his new role as Green Lantern, but his education came from befriending former green lanterns (Alan Scott, John Stewart, and Guy Gardner). When “Emerald Twilight” happened in 1994,[5] Alan Scott was the only lantern unaffected by Jordan’s conquest because his ring’s energy drew from a source given exclusively to him. But, during “Zero Hour,” he proved to be no match for Parallax.

“Final Night,” written by Karl Kesel, is another crossover from November of 1996. Written by Ron Marz, it had a core of four issues and a special “stand-alone”: an issue that contributes to the story, but is not part of its numbering.[6] The *DC Universe* super-heroes find themselves facing another crisis called “a Sun-Eater” (an alien entity), and they work to find a way in which to stop the Sun-Eater from devouring the Earth’s sun. Should they fail to prevent such a cataclysmic event, the earth would be turned into a sphere of ice. But, upon Kyle Rayner’s request, Parallax returns and stops the Sun-Eater, while thereby sacrificing himself.

Hal Jordan’s Restoration Goal

Throughout the plots of the story arcs “Emerald Twilight,” “Zero Hour,” and “Final Night,” we notice how Jordan’s actions are strongly motivated by his recurring goal of restoration. There are three major instances in these story arcs wherein restoration occurs: the first results from the annihilation of Coast City and its seven million lives. Ron Marz writes:

> You see, this hole used to be Coast City, home to a great deal Hal Jordan held dear. This was the place Hal Jordan grew up, where he worshipped at

> the shrine he called father, where he first knew love. This was the place he started to become the man he is. But that's all gone now—expunged by a madman's dreams of conquest. And all that's left is…well…a hole.[7]

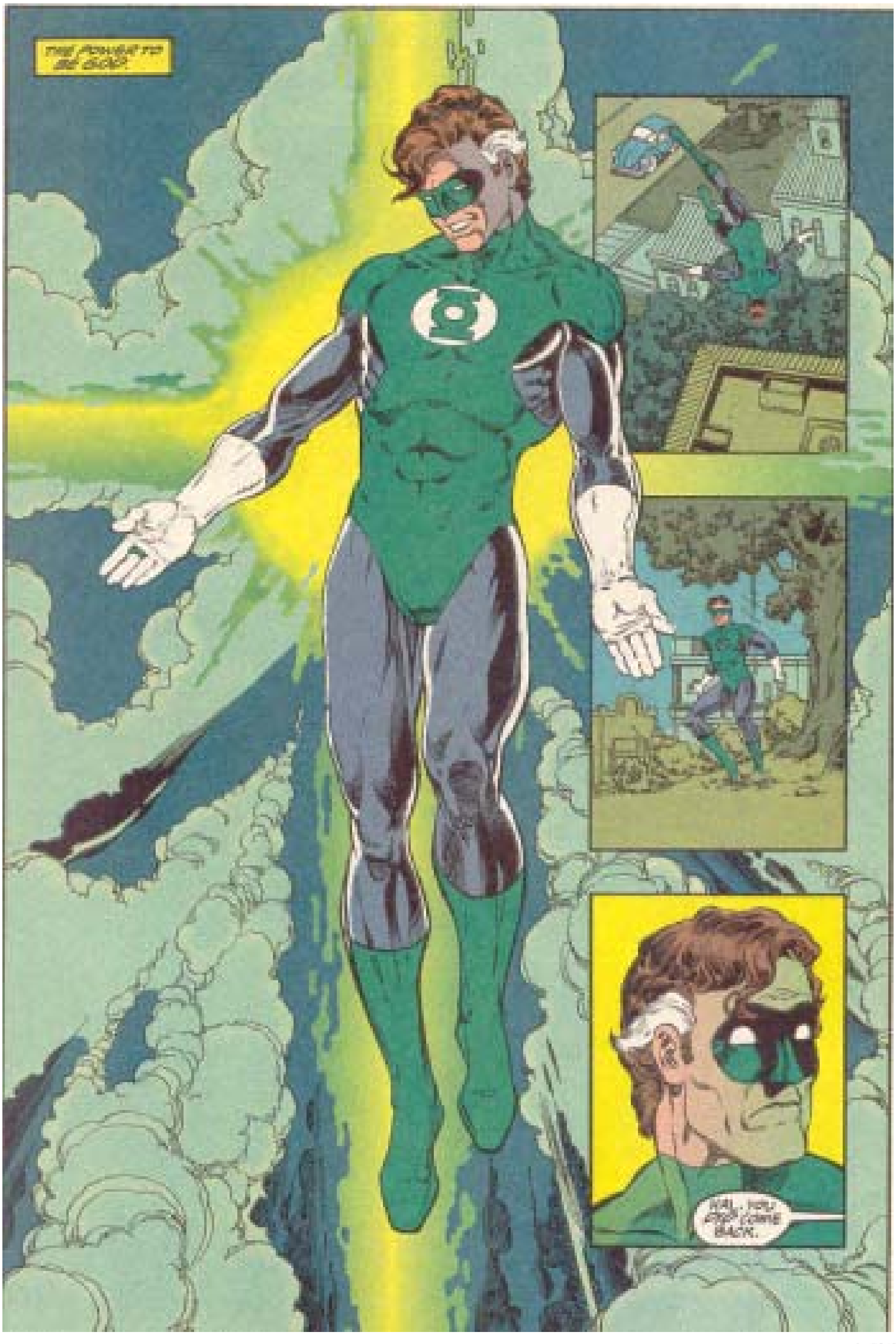
Marz comments on Jordan's loss. He describes it as a "failure [that] was too much for the hero, and he became unhinged because of it."[8] In the end, it caused his transformation into Parallax. Jordan temporarily achieves his goal by resurrecting Coast City and its citizens by using the power of his ring, but the constructs are mimetic (representations of reality), and the reality is Jordan's representation of it. His mimetic construct of Coast City is an image of perfection (like New Jerusalem in *The Book of Revelation*), and Jordan is controlling it all by using the power of his ring. The transformation from being Green Lantern to being Parallax allows Jordan to continue pursuing his goal of restoration, but, once he gains power on a universal scale, his goal becomes a vision of grandeur, as a universal scale, as clearly shown in the "Zero Hour" story arc.

Jordan changes the focus of his restoration goal from resurrecting Coast City and its inhabitants to recreating the universe itself. Jordan's plan this time involves creating life from nothing (*ex nihilo*) by virtue of another Big Bang. Unfortunately, his plan involves the possible death of some people against their will, despite Jordan's assurances that "…in my universe, everything will be as it should…everybody wins!"[9] Acknowledging such a dilemma, Superman opposes Jordan's plan, telling him that it is "Because you've set yourself up as a god, Hal!" and the Spectre (a spirit of vengeance working for God) reminds him that "It is not up to you to decide who lives and [who] dies!"[10] Thus, Jordan finds himself removed from the ranks of super-hero, just as Satan found himself removed from heaven by Michael (as told in *The Book of Revelation*). Although Jordan's restoration goal in its first two incarnations failed to become reality, he returns once more in the "Final Night" story arc to offer a form of salvation.

In "Final Night," Jordan's goal finally reaches fruition, but it is scaled down from his vision in "Zero Hour," and it costs Jordan his life. Instead of trying to re-create the universe in his own image, he offers to defeat the Sun-Eater, who is threatening the Earth. He also promises to replenish the lost resources and restore the lives lost in the disaster. Considering Jordan's previous attempt at universal restoration, his promises are doubted by others (like Batman, who functions like a Doubting Thomas). Batman maintains his skepticism, warning the other super-heroes that "No matter how noble he acts, we all know what Parallax's true agenda is. He hasn't changed."[11] Batman replies to Jordan's offer saying, "You'd like that, wouldn't you? A chance to re-create the world to suit you. That's not how it works, Parallax. You're not God."[12] And after Jordan's sacrifice in defeating the Sun-Eater, Batman remains ever skeptical as he tells Superman, "Don't make a martyr out of a murderer, Superman. One shining moment doesn't redeem Parallax for what he did and tried to do."[13]

Religious Imagery in "Emerald Twilight"

There are two main images from "Emerald Twilight" that resonate with religious themes. One of them is seen here, in issue 48 of *Green Lantern*:

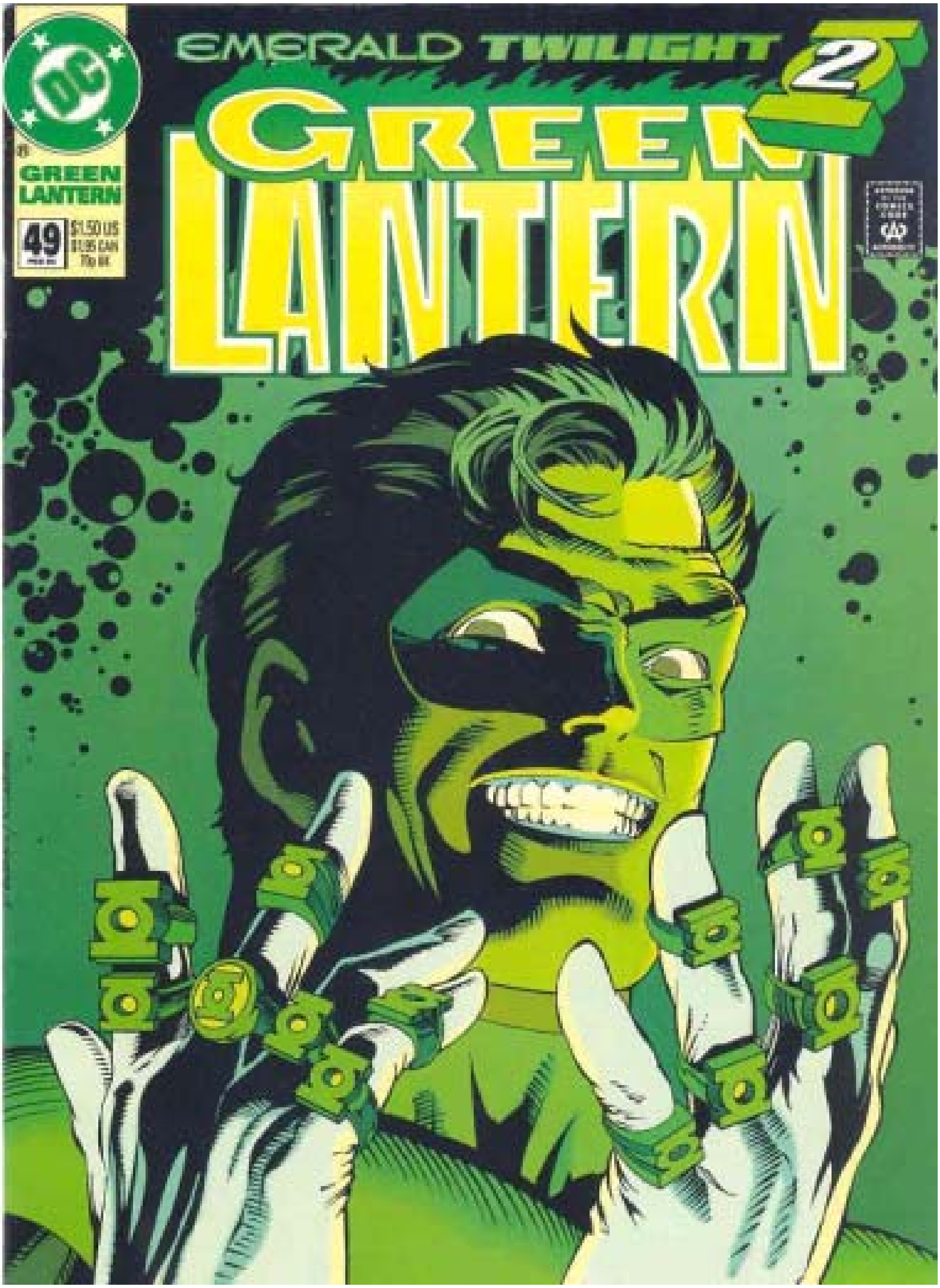

THE POWER TO BE GOD.
HAL, YOU DIDN'T COME BACK.

Considering this full-page image of Jordan, there are clearly some strong Christian associations which deserve inspection. There is noticeably a green aura (*Aureole*) that surrounds Jordan, which Marz says he asked for in the script because he viewed Hal as a "quasi-religious figure, in that he was to be the protector of the people of Coast City, a 'god-like' character the people looked to for salvation."[14] [An "aureole" is used in Christian imagery to distinguish Christ and his disciples from other characters in any visual portrayal, and the same imagery is used with Jordan.] But what is interesting about Jordan's "aureole" is its *shape*. The shape is that of a basic cross, a symbol that is recognized and associated with Christ, and with most Christian churches.

Moving away from the background leads us to consider Jordan himself in this panel, and doing so focuses our attention as to how "stigmata" are being presented. Used in the Christian sense, "stigmata" refers to a situation wherein a person is said to have the wounds Christ suffered on the cross; it is an indication that such a person is holy. This point is made apparent with the imagery of the panel because Jordan's position resembles that of one who is being crucified. His legs and feet are placed side-by-side, pointing downward, while his arms and hands are outstretched, calling attention to the locations of wounds—wounds like those suffered by Christ.

Jordan's image here also calls to mind the concept of "apotheosis," another Christian term describing a hero who is being transformed into a god, an obvious observation and portrayal of Jordan. The imagery may be linked with the term "rapture," which is described in the Bible as the ascension of a chosen few before the Second Coming of Christ, so, because Jordan is portrayed amongst the clouds and elevated to a heaven-like status, it might be interpreted that Jordan was chosen to ascend into heaven. Although the dominant theme of this full-page image is Christian, there is also an indication of anti-Christianity, shown in the upper-right panel, wherein Jordan flies down from the clouds. His "crucifix" positioning does not change, and we see him inverted, suggesting an upside-down crucifixion, which serves as our first indication of something anti-Christian about Jordan's character, a suggestion that becomes more apparent after "Emerald Twilight."

Another example is the cover of issue 49 in *Green Lantern*:


EMERALD TWILIGHT 2
GREEN LANTERN
DC
GREEN LANTERN
49
$1.50 US
$1.95 CAN

Here we have an image of an all-powerful Jordan, bathing in the glow of his followers' rings, visually showing his beginning as an Anti-Christ. But the conquest implied by this image is not what most interests us. Instead, it is the twelve rings and his own, symbolic of the twelve apostles (or twelve tribes of Israel); it illustrates a fictitious scenario of Jesus's taking back his divine abilities from the twelve apostles, then killing them. Jordan's Anti-Christ tendencies become solidified in the aftermath of "Emerald Twilight," wherein he successfully secures the main power battery and becomes Parallax. However, a distinction must be made about what type of Anti-Christ we here discuss. Is it Satan, the Anti-Christ, from *The Book of Revelation* or is it Nietzsche's Antichrist, who is merely an anti-Christian person, not Satan himself?

Hal Jordan, the Guardians, and the Antichrist

Determining whether or not Jordan is a Biblical Satan or a Nietzschean anti-Christ depends largely upon the perspective readers adopt in understanding Jordan's conflict with the Guardians. If we believe that Jordan is a Biblical Satan, then Ron Marz's comments about such a parallel are apt:

> There's an interesting parallel in that Hal can be seen as 'fallen from the Heavens,' as was Satan. The parallel is also potent in that Hal refused to 'serve in Heaven'—i.e., he destroyed the Guardians when they attempted to stop him. So Parallax can in some way be seen as an Anti-Christ figure, even to the point of Parallax offering the temptation of 'things the way they used to be' in the Zero Hour mini-series.[15]

Marz's comments draw upon Biblical evidence, some from *The Book of Revelation*, wherein the "beast that comes up from the abyss will wage war against them and conquer them and kill them."[16] But it also derives from the account of Satan's tempting of Jesus in the desert, a story told in all of the Gospels except John's.

Marz also suggests that the view that Jordan is an example of a Biblical Anti-Christ example is correct except for his sacrifice in the "Final Night" story arc. He states that Jordan is "much more a Christ figure in that he trades his life in order to preserve humanity, and in doing so, is redeemed for the sins he committed as Parallax."[17]

The Book of Revelation tells us that "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing"[18]—gifts that Jordan receives when he becomes the Spectre, a spirit of vengeance or redemption that acts in God's Name. Jordan inherits new abilities as the Spectre, such as entering the kingdom of heaven and leaving as he wishes, punishing people or giving them hope, and being a Christ-like figure.[19] Alternatively, however, if we consider Jordan's position without considering his final outcome as the Spectre and choose to classify him as a type of Anti-Christ, we must examine that interpretation from another perspective, one that only Nietzsche can proffer.

Nietzsche's writings in *The Antichrist* apply to Jordan's conflict with the Guardians only if we accept the Guardians as representing a religion such as Christianity (or Judaism) as an established organization. Nietzsche writes that Christianity "made an ideal of whatever *contradicts* the instinct of the strong life to preserve itself…."[20] This is reminiscent of how the Guardians denied Jordan's request to resurrect Coast City and its seven million inhabitants. The Guardians could easily have given Jordan enough power either to save those lives or to resurrect them by using their own power. But they chose not to do so. This decision permitted them to uphold their own moral code of non-interference, but it is an ideal that contradicts the instinct to preserve life. In rebelling against this anti-instinctual authority, Jordan can be viewed as a rebel who acts like a Nietzschean champion—whom Nietzsche calls "an idealist."

The idealist, according to Nietzsche, rejects "'understanding,' the 'senses,' 'honors,' 'good living,' and 'science,'"[21] just as Jordan rejects them by defying the Guardians. His rebellious acts are viewed as irrational behaviors by the Guardians that Nietzsche may explain as being an example of a group still believing in itself and retaining its sense of values—its god. He writes that such a community "projects its pleasure in itself, its feeling of power, into a being to whom one may offer thanks,"[22] which is the simple relationship that the lanterns maintain with the Guardians. Each lantern swears loyalty and obedience to the Guardians by accepting a power ring, so every success they have is somehow pleasing to the Guardians. But, as Nietzsche sees it, such an orientation is flawed because these *followers* view their masters as being incapable of error.

Nietzsche states that a doctrine like Christianity "does not even comprehend that there are, or that there *can* be, other doctrines; it cannot even imagine a contradictory judgment."[23] And, until the events of "Emerald Twilight," the Guardians are just as doctrinaire because acknowledgment about the possibility of their oversight or error does not occur until the end, when it is too late.

Nietzsche's view also offers reasons for Jordan's heinous actions during the "Emerald Twilight" story arc by describing a skeptic, one who is a "spirit who wants great things, who also wants the means to them."[24] It indicates how great passion combined with intellect "makes him unhesitating; it gives him courage even for unholy means; under certain circumstances it does not begrudge him convictions."[25] This view helps to account for Jordan's acts.

According to Nietzsche's hierarchy, the Guardians are the ones who are the most spiritual and who believe that *"The world is perfect,"*[26] finding joy in self-conquest and pursuits of knowledge so they might perform intellectual tasks that normal people cannot undertake. But, similar to the Guardians, there are those who are the most spiritual followers who do not interfere directly with the Guardians. Instead, they rely on what Nietzsche calls "the second." He describes these people as ones who are "guardians of the law, those who see to order and security, the noble warriors."[27] And they have a king who is the best among them. These are the lanterns and perhaps the other super-heroes in this series of stories. They are the:

> ...executive arm of the most spiritual, that which is closest to them and belongs to them, that which does everything gross in the work of ruling for them—their retinue, their right hand, their best pupils. [28]

Finally, Nietzsche refers to another group that he calls "the fewest." Its members are the highest caste in Nietzsche's hierarchy, representing perfection. Considering the "Emerald Twilight" story arc, however, it is unclear as to which character or characters exemplify "the fewest." Although it appears that Jordan, as Parallax, aspires to be one of "the fewest," in the end he abandons this pursuit when he sacrifices himself so as to help preserve humankind and the initial order of the Guardians—paradoxically, of course—by an act of intervention into the usual course of events.[29]

After analyzing the plots, artwork, and characters of *DC Comics'* story arcs "Emerald Twilight," "Zero Hour," and "Final Night" by using a religious studies approach, comic books prove to be more than light entertainments aimed at an adolescent audience. They are not intended to be outgrown.[30]

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[1] The capitalization of "green lantern" follows the format of the comic book. "Green Lantern" refers both to the character of Hal Jordan and to the comic book title.

[2] [Marz, Ron. (w), Bill Willingham (p), and Romeo Tanghal/Robert Campanella (i).] "Emerald Twilight Part One: The Past." *Green Lantern* #48 (Dec. 1993-Jan. 1994), National Comics Publications [DC Comics].
[Marz, Ron. (w), Fred Haynes (p), and Romeo Tanghal/Dennis Cramer (i).] "Emerald Twilight Part 2: The Present" *Green Lantern* #49 (Jan.-Feb. 1994), National Comics Publications [DC Comics].
[Marz, Ron. (w), Fred Haynes (p), and Romeo Tanghal/Dennis Cramer (i).] "Emerald Twilight Part 3: The Future" *Green Lantern* #50 (Feb.-Mar. 1994), National Comics Publications [DC Comics].

[3] The phrase "absorbing the projection" deserves a brief explanation. When Jordan encounters an image of a Guardian, he enters an interactive construct, like the ones his ring makes. These are sent to him from the planet Oa. Because Jordan's ring acts as a battery and conduit, he is able to take on and use its energy, and absorb its projection, like a small charge. This is similar to what happens when he takes the other lanterns' rings.

[4] [Jurgens, Dan (w, p), Jerry Ordway (i).] *Zero Hour: Crisis in Time!* #4 (Sept. 1994), National Comics Publications [DC Comics].
[Jurgens, Dan (w, p), Jerry Ordway (i).] *Zero Hour: Crisis in Time!* #3 (Sept. 1994), National Comics Publications [DC Comics].
[Jurgens, Dan (w, p), Jerry Ordway (i).] *Zero Hour: Crisis in Time!* #2 (Sept. 1994), National Comics Publications [DC Comics].
[Jurgens, Dan (w, p), Jerry Ordway (i).] *Zero Hour: Crisis in Time!* #1 (Sept. 1994), National Comics Publications [DC Comics].
[Jurgens, Dan (w, p), Jerry Ordway (i).] *Zero Hour: Crisis in Time!* #0 (Sept. 1994), National Comics Publications [DC Comics].

[5] *Green Lantern*, #48-50.

[6] [Marz, Ron. (w), Mike McKone (p), and Mark McKenna (i).] "Emerald Night." *Final Night: Parallax* #1 (Nov. 1996), National Comics Publications [DC Comics].

[7] *Green Lantern*, #48.

[8] Marz, Ron. "Re: Attn: Ron Marz." E-mail to Bobby James Kuechenmeister. 15 August 2003.

[9] *Zero Hour: Crisis in Time!* #0.

[10] *Ibid*.

[11] *Final Night* #4.

[12] *Ibid*.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] Marz, "Re: Attn: Ron Marz."

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Rev* 11:7.

[17] Marz, "Re: Attn: Ron Marz." (It should be noted, of course, that in the Christian account Jesus does not sacrifice himself for his own sins but for the sins of humanity.)

[18] *Rev* 5:12.

[19] As the Spectre, Jordan has access to a number of different abilities. In the story, heaven is pictured in much the same way as it has been pictured in the Christian tradition. It is the abode of the good souls after they die. In this version, however, the kingdom of heaven is guarded by a figure called the Phantom Stranger. The Spectre, which

represents the wrath or redemption of God, has the power to enter heaven without needing the permission of the Phantom Stranger. Once in heaven, the Spectre (or Jordan) is free to interact with any spirit there, such as the original Flash or his own deceased relatives.

[20] Nietzsche. *The Portable Nietzsche*. Trans. Walter Kauffman. (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) 571.

[21] *Ibid*., 575.

[22] *Ibid*., 582.

[23] *Ibid*., 606.

[24] *Ibid*., 638.

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] *Ibid*., 645.

[27] *Ibid*., 646.

[28] *Ibid*.

[29] There is an added interesting parallel that exists between Nietzsche's account of the development of priestly class within Jewish history and the progression of Hal Jordan from a green lantern to Parallax and finally to a sacrificial savior of humanity.

Nietzsche tells us that the process in Jewish history took several stages to accomplish. In the first stage the Jews and Yahweh had a close relation with each other; Yahweh was a tribal deity of the Hebrews and was their nature god. Yahweh supported their efforts to exist individually and as a people, and they, in turn, were said to follow His rules. But in the second stage a break ensued. Since the Jews also continued to pay homage to other nature deities, this offended Yahweh, who punished them by a cataclysmic destruction of their kingdom. In the wake of this destruction, the priests (in the form of prophets and rabbis) arose in the third stage to warn to the Jews and to offer their own version of events. Their view of Judaism became for Nietzsche more anti-instinctual, other-oriented and other-worldly. They convinced the other Jews that continued disobedience to Yahweh and to His values would bring His wrath in the form of further cataclysms on earth or in the form of eternal punishment. They also warned them that they were being constantly tempted and sometimes led astray by a powerful, evil force—Satan. In seeking to avoid these cataclysms, the Jews were brought to a fourth stage, one that was closer to Yahweh and His values. It was a stage that permitted the priests to have a place of growing power in Jewish society and life. The Jews were thus said to be redeemed of their previous transgressions by recommitting themselves to Yahweh. But this was to be under the terms laid out by the priests.

Hal Jordan's relation to the Guardians also instances four stages. In the first stage, as a green lantern, he is seen as being in agreement with the Guardians and their values. But, in stage two, outside agents destroy Coast City. Because the Guardians are unwilling to intervene to resurrect Coast City and bring back its inhabitants, a break between Hal and the Guardians occurs. He turns against the Guardians and their values, and he tries to create his own universe as Parallax. In stage three, other superheroes stand as representatives of the Guardians and their values. They play the role that Nietzsche said was played by the priests in Jewish history. They indicate to Parallax the error of his ways, and they seek to have him change his plans. But, in the fourth stage, an outside agent, the Sun Eater, threatens to bring about a cataclysmic set of events upon the earth and destroy it. In response to this threat, Hal is brought back into relation with the Guardians' values once again when he sacrifices himself to save the world. In this sacrifice he redeems himself. But the effect, except in so far as it involves an intervention into the usual course of events, appears to reaffirm the initial values of the Guardians and the ways of the green lanterns and superheroes. The redemption took place under the terms of the Guardians' values and vision of reality. [Editor—*Prism*]

[30] Special thanks to Ron Marz for being available to comment, to Dr. Joel Pace for his mentoring, to the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for providing a grant to make this article possible, to Brian Kabat for suggesting the "Zero Hour" mini-series, and to Nick Stepaniak for enlightening me about Jordan's 12 rings on the cover of *Green Lantern* 49, and to DC Comics for granting permission to use the images from *Green Lantern*.

Augustine on Evil • Amy Chabot

Amy Chabot is a junior who is a religious studies major and the first student to be awarded the Richard deGrood Scholarship within the department. She first wrote this paper in the fall of 2003 for Professor Greene in the "Writing Essays in Philosophy or Religious Studies" course and for Professor Burns in her seminar in the "Problem of Evil". It went through editorial revisions during the spring term with the editor of *Prism.*

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I

Defending God in the face of evil is a problem that has fascinated philosophers and theologians for centuries. Christianity claims that God is both benevolent and omnipotent. But if this is the case, then why does evil occur? Is God the cause of evil, or do we bring suffering upon ourselves as a consequence of sin? These are questions with which Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) wrestled throughout his adult life. Augustine was the first great philosopher to develop a systematic theology and philosophy within the Christian Church. One of the main issues he addressed was that of advancing a theodicy. A theodicy is the philosophical attempt to defend the justice, love, knowledge or goodness of God given the presence of the natural and moral evils—tragedy, suffering, pain and sin—in the world. The problem is that, if God is all-knowing and all-powerful, God can control or limit suffering but chooses not to do so. Since God is said to be also all-good and all-loving, there must be a good reason why humans suffer. And there must be a compelling reason why some should suffer the eternal torments of hell within the Christian view. A theodicy attempts to articulate these reasons. Although he never came up with a completely original theodicy, Augustine was one of the first to develop a position on this issue in the Christian tradition. He found an initially suitable explanation both within the Manichaeism tradition and later within Neo-Platonism, eventually combining and applying aspects of both views so as to frame his own proposed solution.

Most scholars would agree that Augustine relied heavily upon the philosophy of Plotinus for the development of his theodicy. They would also agree that Augustine's nine-year investment with the Manichaean religion had an influence upon his way of thinking. However, it is generally seen as a negative impact, one that led Augustine to oppose the Manichaeans' claims. I propose that Manichaeism had a definite influence on Augustine's scholarship, an influence that came to affect the position on evil he advanced in his mature thinking.

In this essay, I wish both to draw out that Manichaean influence and to show that the basic idea of dualism remained as a central part of Augustine's theology, so much so that he could never really escape its influence. It is beneficial to appreciate this for several reasons. First, such a view gives a more balanced perspective on the real influences upon Augustine's thought. Second, as important as it is to consider the neo-Platonic influences on Augustine's thinking, it is equally important to see the effects of Manichaeism. These effects give us a better indication of the challenges he faced in developing and defending his theodicy. It seems that he may have moved merely from one form of dualism to another, never fully solving the problem of evil, as I will attempt to show here.

Let us begin with a summary of the doctrine of Manichaean dualism, which is rooted in the dichotomy between light and dark: one of the first influences upon Augustine's theodicy. We will see that light and dark evolve in this tradition to become associated with the parallel dichotomy of spirit and matter. But because Augustine was never fully satisfied with the Manichaeans' claims, he was led to embrace the theories of Plotinus. So we will begin with an examination of Plotinus and the neo-Platonists.

Plotinus posits the existence of varying levels of being versus just one level of non-being. He claims that all that has being is good, and non-being is evil. Augustine adapted Plotinus' theory of "levels of good" to Christianity, maintaining that an individual is free to choose from amongst these levels. However, in his later work, Augustine contended that, because of original sin, the individual's free choice, if left to itself, is always inclined to choose the lesser levels of good, being predisposed to choose evil. In his doctrine on the nature of the good, Augustine allows for the individual to pursue higher goods, but only when he or she is guided by the Grace of God. It is here, then, we find two new dualisms: one involving the pre-Fall state of humans and their post-Fall state, the other involving free will and grace. In this essay, I shall focus more on the latter dualism. But a brief word about the first dualism is in order here.

The pre-Fall state of humans within Christianity was the condition of Adam and Eve before they sinned. They are portrayed as being close to God and living without struggle, worry or suffering. The post-Fall state, after they sinned, was marked by distance from God and the presence of struggle, toil, pain, ignorance and death. Within the Christian view, it was also marked by the presence of original sin. It is this latter concept that plays a significant role in Augustine's theodicy and with the second dualism mentioned above.

The problem with the way that he addresses this latter dualism, however, lies in the fact that Augustine is unclear about the precise relation of God's grace to humans' free choice. Apparently, his view is that one is simply *given* grace; God sets up the occasion for it. And this suggests that some individuals are on the "fast track" to Heaven, while others never really have a chance. Indeed, this idea of Predestination is seen also in aspects of Manichaean dualism.

II

When one considers the guilt that Augustine felt for his unsuitable choices in life, especially those involving his body, it makes sense that a religion freeing humans from the responsibility for their actions would appeal to him.[1] Augustine encountered such a religion while studying in Carthage between 371 and 374 C.E. He was intrigued by the way the Manichaeans stood in the street crying, "Truth! Truth!"[2] And he studied extensively their ideas. As a branch of Gnosticism, Manichaeism claimed a belief in the existence of two ruling principles that were constantly at odds with one another: light and dark. In the beginning of time, these two principles were the only things operating in the world. Goodness dwelt in the realm of light, evil in the realm of darkness. The dark soon became jealous of the realm of light, and it entered into it. As a defense, the light "evoked the Mother of Life, who evoked the Primal Human."[3] The Principle of Dark then retaliated against the primal human with its own versions: Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve had some of the light in them, but this light had been invaded by the dark, causing evil to exist in their natures. Out of this battle developed an association of spirit with the light and an association of matter with the dark. Spiritual realities were the source of good, whereas material realities were the source of evil. The offspring of Adam and Eve contained dark particles, with each new progeny containing less and less of the light. Manichaeans thus avoided procreation because salvation would be achieved only when all of the light was freed from matter. The more children they had, the longer it would take to liberate the light.[4]

Manichaeans separated their faithful into two levels: *The Elect* and *The Hearers*. The Elect were so called because they possessed the most light; thus, they had a better chance for salvation. They refrained from sexual acts, they did not eat meat, and they even avoided food preparation so as to escape bodily entanglements that might otherwise contaminate their being. Thus, they were said to have freed themselves from bondage to the body, releasing light from the clutches of matter, achieving salvation for their souls.

The Hearers, however, were not expected to follow the rigorous guidelines of the ascetic life. They were allowed to marry, to have children, to eat meat and to conduct secular work. Nevertheless, they were required to support the Elect in their pursuit of a more disciplined lifestyle. Manichaeans had two views on the status of non-Manichaeans. On one view, non-Manichaeans had no hope of salvation; they were predestined to eternal participation with matter and evil. On the second view, they might hope to be reborn as Hearers and to begin a process of purification.

Within these teachings, we see how evil was taken to be the responsibility of the divine rather than the fault of the individual. The particles of light and dark were intermingled and imprisoned in physical bodies because of a *cosmic* battle, not because of anything that humans did or did not do. And, as the title "Elect" implied, human choice played little or no role in determining who would be saved in this lifetime or beyond. Thus, the dualism Augustine accepted at this time in his life can be seen as a way allowing him the peace of mind of avoiding responsibility for his faults, while it placed responsibility in the divine sphere.[5]

This cosmic dualism satisfied Augustine for a while, but after nine years of studying Manichaeism, he became disillusioned. He came to seek the truth in a different way, from a different perspective.

III

Upon encountering the teachings of Plotinus,[6] Augustine's theories of good and evil evolved from a cosmic dualism between light and dark to an ontological dualism between being and non-being. Plotinus had maintained a view that evil was brought about by the divine. He writes that the One (Perfect Being) produces the soul by emanation, and the soul produces matter. Every derivation away from The One leads to more imperfection. Therefore matter is that which is least perfect, that, in fact, it is without being.[7] Because this chain from greatest good to non-being (that is, total lack of good) begins with The One—Perfect Being. Thus, it is The One whom Plotinus is led to believe is responsible for the existence of evil.

In his treatise on evil, Plotinus maintains that to have being is to have goodness. Thus, all that exists is good. If all that has being is good, then evil logically *cannot*, and thus *does not*, exist.[8] Since Plotinus teaches that all things derive from The One, the least perfect existent—the most evil thing—is matter. However, he posits a "formless matter," a type of matter that is more of a principle than an actual entity.[9] He defines it in his *Enneads* as something that "has unmeasure, excess, and short-coming." In the same place, Plotinus asserts that the soul becomes evil through its participation in evil, "[thus] bringing forth vice in the soul, namely licentiousness, cowardice, and all other flaws of the soul."[10]

Through this association with evil, the soul is disconnected from The One; and its ability to reason is darkened:

> By its falling-away—and to the extent of the fall—it is stripped of determination, becomes wholly indeterminate, sees darkness. Looking to what repels vision, as we look when we are said to see darkness, it has taken matter into itself.[11]

But this "falling away" is unavoidable since the soul is already one with a material body. So how does Plotinus explain his claim that the soul is inherently good, yet unavoidably associated with matter?

He believes that the less-developed souls are required to be embodied so as to allow them to perfect themselves. Being joined to matter is both a trial for the soul and an enhancement for matter. He also believes that, when embodied, one is able to use one's mind to liberate one's non-material self from the (host) body. Plotinus affirms that as one strives to attain virtue, he frees himself from the effects of matter. This is part of the process of the soul's perfecting itself. Therefore, he concludes that the individual is not the source of evil; the individual is merely slowed by the effects of evil in making progress toward virtue and perfection. He writes:

> The evil which holds men down binds them against their will; and for those that have the strength there is deliverance from the evils that have found lodgment within the soul…Not all men are vicious; some overcome vice, some, the better sort, are never attacked by it; and those who master it win by means of that in them which is not material.[12]

We see in Plotinus' philosophy that it is by one's own efforts that the soul's freedom from the body is obtained. But for those with a cluttered and irrational mind, their efforts only absorb and envelop them further into evil.

While the Manicheans taught that there were two cosmic forces—light and dark—active in this world, Plotinus believed that there is but one cosmic force. He said that The One produced the soul by emanation, and the soul then created matter, which in itself is evil. As with the Manichaeans, evil was ultimately the responsibility of the divine (although in this case it was only indirectly related to the divine), and the body was the evil prison in which goodness is trapped.[13]

IV

As Augustine sought to integrate Christianity into his theory of evil, we see the residues of a dualistic tendency like that between being and non-being that we have just discussed. Augustine was attracted to dualism, maintaining two variations of this view. Firstly, he contended there is the difference between the pre-Fall state of humans and their post-Fall condition. In the pre-Fall state (for which God is directly responsible), humans were created in nearness to God. Their bodies are immortal; they live without struggle and can communicate directly with God. In so far as they were created with the ability to choose either to stay in this condition or to exert their will and pursue their own vision of the good, there was always the possibility of error, irrationality and evil. Augustine insisted that this state, as created by God, was good. But when humans asserted their own will, both evil and distance from God was derived. This was a condition that divine justice mandated to be irreversible, and every succeeding generation inherited this taint, this distance. Only by God's grace could humans hope to be brought back into a close relationship with God.

V

In the post-Fall state, Augustine's dualism led him to distinguish between free will and grace. He believed we are not able to choose the higher good unless God's grace enables us to do so. However, when humans rely exclusively upon their own free will to choose, Augustine insists they will inevitably choose evil. In his treatise *On the Free Choice of the Will*, he describes the differences between three levels of good: virtue, the powers of the spirit, and physical beauty. He suggests that virtue is the greatest of these because it cannot be used for evil, and individuals cannot live righteously without it. The powers of the spirit are intermediate goods because they can be used either for good or for evil, and no one can be righteous without them. The lowest good is physical beauty since it is possible to be righteous without it, and it can be used for evil.[14] The things that are least good also have the least measure, form and order. "Therefore, sin is not a seeking of something evil by nature but an abandonment of what is better."[15]

Choosing a lesser good through an inordinate desire is the root of the evil will (and the lack or loss of grace). Acting upon evil desires clutters one's mind and disables him, thus preventing him from thinking clearly about truth.[16] Because of his participation in evil, the mind of the sinner is incapable of comprehending Godly things. And, indeed, this theory is a development of Plotinus' teaching about the way in which evil discolors one's thoughts.

Because of his sin, the unaided individual is unable to choose higher goods. In his *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Augustine expands this idea, analyzing in detail the consequences of our souls being derived from Adam's. Since the original soul had sinned, all other souls inevitably participate in this sin.[17] Just as the Manichaeans believed that it would take longer to liberate the light from darkness with every child born, Augustine taught that sin is passed on through procreation. As Scripture says, "All men have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"[18] Augustine took this to mean that all men are therefore in need of God's grace in order that they might choose higher goods.

Augustine is not consistent in stating how it is that the individual obtains God's grace. Alhough, in his insistence that it is a just punishment for God to remove grace once one has chosen a lesser good, Augustine implies that no one ever deserves grace. It appears that we are completely dependent upon God's election regarding just how much grace He will bestow upon whom and when, even if we pray for its attainment. Throughout his treatise, "On Nature and Grace," Augustine argues against Pelagius' view that one can choose not to sin. Even after sinning. Pelagius contends that the act of sinning does not result in God's removal of grace from the individual. Since only the will is necessary for sin, only the will must be necessary to do right. This leads to the question, "How is it just that a sinner be 'so punished [by God] that through his punishment, he should commit even more sins?'"[19] On this matter, Augustine wonders:

> [Pelagius] does not consider how justly the light of truth forsakes the man who transgresses the law. When thus deserted, he of course becomes blinded and necessarily offends more; and so falling is embarrassed, and being embarrassed fails to rise, so as to hear the voice of the law, which admonishes him to beg for the Savior's grace.[20]

Augustine is afraid that Pelagius' view will nullify the need for God's grace. Furthermore, one may become proud of the fact that he achieved the higher good through an act of his will alone.[21] So, for these reasons, Augustine maintains that it is necessary that we are absolutely dependent upon the grace of God. He suggests that one may obtain this grace through prayer, begging for it and asking for forgiveness.[22] But in making an act of the will through prayer, one is doing something that appears to merit God's grace.

In his "Predestination of the Saints," Augustine retracts what he stated in this regard. Instead, he now argues that it "assuredly is not grace if any merits precede it."[23] Yet he maintains that it is ours first to have faith. Then God will endow our spirits with all other necessary gifts for doing good deeds. He seems unsure regarding the exact role our free will plays in this matter. Augustine continues, "It is plain, therefore, that it is not of him who willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy, that we do good works."[24] He cannot make up his mind; he settles on the view that God elects those whom he will raise to a high state of virtue by means of grace. Here we see the Manichaeans' claims resurfacing: the Elect have a better (or the only) chance at attaining salvation. According to Augustine, in the post-Fall state, humans alone are responsible for evil when they exercise their free will without the aid of grace. But it must be admitted that, since grace is an unmerited and predetermined gift of God, His choice of the Elect does not absolve Him from being significantly accountable for those who become eternally saved and for those who are eternally damned. By withholding grace, God in essence withholds the possibility of salvation. There is nothing an individual can do about it if God, through His grace, does not select him. Thus, the idea of God's "choosing" his Elect again places a good deal of the responsibility for evil upon God: if God had only given someone the necessary grace, she would not have chosen on her own to transgress.

VI

In this essay, I have discussed what the Manicheans taught about darkness and about participation in darkness, which leads to further depravity of the soul. Further, I have made mention of the fact that they taught that procreation is an evil act because it leads to the light's remaining in bondage for a longer time. Thirdly, I noted that they drew a distinction from amongst their faithful: the Elect were believed to have a better chance for salvation and, thus, they were favored by the Hearers of the community. Augustine never fully let go of any of these ideas, in spite of some nagging opposition to these claims. He taught that choosing the lesser good (and thus participating in the darkness) led to a loss, or total deprivation, of grace, and the individual would fall deeper into sin, furthering the depravity of the soul. In addition, he was convinced that we all share in the same soul of Adam to such a degree that we inherit his concupiscence—his lust—in the sexual act of reproduction. Thus, every soul has sinned (and is in bondage to the darkness) because of Adam's original sin. Finally, the only way out of this cycle of sin is dependence upon God's grace. But just as the Manicheans divide their faithful into the "Elect" and the "Hearers," so Augustine argues that God chooses to whom, and when, He will give grace, quite independently of the matter of whether this grace is deserved. Thus, Augustine is carried dangerously close to championing the idea that God "plays favorites".

As we follow Augustine in the development of his theodicy, we are able to see clearly how it was that he was influenced by both Neo-Platonism and Manichaeism. These views provided both the language and the concepts that he would use to explain sin as an inordinate desire for lesser goods. Augustine maintained that our sinful actions fog our minds. Therefore, we are not able to see the good, and we are more likely to continue to sin. Unless, that is, we turn to the grace of God for enlightenment. However, this grace is given to us by God's choice alone; we cannot do anything to merit it. By choosing to sin, we show either that we have lost grace or that we were never meant to receive it. We are left, then, with a dualism that is not unlike that of the Manichaeans: grace (the Elect, the light, the soul or spirit) and free will (the damned or those destined for eternal loss, the dark, the body). Augustine, therefore, never really solves the problem of evil, but roots himself squarely in traditions of dualism.

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[1] Augustine was especially concerned about his own strong tendencies to be ruled by the appetites of the body, particularly those involving sexual pleasure.

[2] Augustine, *Confessions, Books I-VIII*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, 1947), III, vi.

[3] Alan D. Fitzgerald, O.S.A., ed. "Mani, Manichaeism" in *Augustine Through the Ages, An Encyclopedia*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company,) 99), 522.

[4] This idea will show up again in Augustine's teachings on sin.

[5] G. R. Evans, *Augustine On Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 13. We will have reason to see how Augustine tries to avoid this conclusion later in the essay.

[6] Plotinus (204-270 C.E.) was the founder of neo-Platonism; he developed his own spiritual cosmology by building upon the theories of Plato.

[7] Dominic J. O'Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 79.

[8] Plotinus, *The Enneads*. Trans. Stephen MacKenna. (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1956) I, viii, 3.

[9] O'Meara, *Op. cit.,* 81.

[10] Plotinus, *Op. cit.,* I, viii, 4.

[11] *Ibid*., I, viii, 4.

[12] *Ibid.,* I, viii, 5.

[13] Evans, *Op. cit.,* 14. Plotinus also advances a competing theory of the relation of soul to matter. He suggests that the function of soul is to help rescue matter from the grip of formlessness and irrationality. So, the embodiment of soul serves a good purpose.

[14] Augustine, *On The Free Choice of The Will*, Trans. Anna S. Benjamin, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1964) II, xix, 191-2.

[15] Augustine, "The Nature of the Good Against the Manichees," in *Augustine: Earlier Writings***,** edited by John H. S. Burleigh (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953) iii; xxxvi. In this treatise, Augustine said that anything, if it exists, is good by the very nature of its existence. And to have existence is to have measure, form and order.

[16] Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will*, I, xi, 77-8.

[17] *Ibid*., III, xx, 188.

[18] Augustine, "On Nature and Grace," in *Augustine: Earlier Writings***,** I

[19] Augustine, *Ibid*., XXIV.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] *Ibid.*, XXV. In another treatise, Augustine takes issue with Pelagius' view of how grace works in the life of an individual. Pelagius tells us there are three possible aspects of human nature to which grace might apply: human ability, human volition or human action. Of these, he holds that grace most directly applies only to the first: God's grace gives one the *ability* to choose and act virtuously. Free will applies to the others (although grace is of assistance in providing one with the law and the example of Jesus' life as guides). Otherwise, human choice and action comes primarily from the individual. Augustine claims, however, that, after the fall, God's grace applies to all three of these aspects of human nature. Virtuous capacities, choices and actions come only from God. When humans choose or act on their own, he contends that, as we have seen, they inevitably fall into confusion, error and vice. See "On the Grace of Christ" in *Augustine: Earlier Writings***,** 585-593.

[22] *Ibid.,* XVI; XX.

[23] Augustine, "Predestination of the Saints," in *Augustine: Earlier Writings***,** VIII.

[24] *Ibid.*

Heidegger's Pessimism • Casey Anderson

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I

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is arguably the most significant Existentialist thinker in the 20th Century. His seminal work, *Being and Time*,[1] is an exceptionally complicated and structured work that appears at first glance to be replete with pessimism. Indeed, it is not uncommon for all existentialists and their writings to be so regarded. Certainly, this suggestion has been made regarding Heidegger's early works. For example, in a discussion of Heidegger, Allan Megill emphasizes both Heidegger's themes of crisis and his reaction to modern culture.[2] In so far as humans have fallen from Being (an expression I shall soon explain), Heidegger believes that humans do not respond to their ownmost potentialities. This state, suggests Megill, has resulted in the present as being derelict for Heidegger. What's more, Heidegger believes both that this aspect of the human condition is nothing new and that it is not likely to improve. Thus, Megill sees Heidegger's work as being couched in pessimism.

But I shall argue that one must distinguish between Heidegger's observations about the general condition of humanity and those that apply to the level of the individual because, in reality, Heidegger's thinking presents a unique challenge which implies a certain possibility for optimism that is not emphasized by a number of commentators. The challenge Heidegger presents to each of us is that we must overcome the easy, average everyday life of the common person so as to achieve a kind of personal salvation (albeit not a "religious salvation"). While it is understandable that Heidegger is understood as implying that it is unlikely that the common person will overcome this average everydayness, I believe that he is merely suggesting that such a defeatist mentality is actually an easy way out—one that itself bears the marks of fallenness. And if one were to pursue a more authentic lifestyle, one would be highly rewarded.

In this essay, then, I shall examine some of the main ideas in *Being and Time*, paying close attention to those aspects of Heidegger's work that challenge us both to find our own paths and to pursue them. I believe that such an approach can act as an antidote to the more pessimistic understandings of his thinking that might, themselves, encourage a type of fallenness about which he warns.[3]

II

Before discussing more specific concepts in Heidegger's position, I should first comment upon something of the general crisis he attributes to modernity, for it is this crisis to which commentators have appealed in grounding their claims that Heidegger's thought is pessimistic. Heidegger claims that most people do not adequately or consistently analyze their existence, their Being. They do not ask the fundamental questions of themselves that Heidegger would require in order that one might attain a more authentic form of Being. He tells us that the basic ontological question is "What is Being?" Alternately: "What are the grounds of Being?"[4] But most people have instead asked another question, one that concerns whether a particular type of thing or entity exists. They have then confused Being with the entities in Being.[5] He goes on to assert that even those who believe that they are actively involved in questioning being or existence in a philosophical sense have focused only on the question of whether a particular type of entity exists. But he informs us that asking whether a certain entity exists already presupposes that we understand what it is to exist. But in asking the question in this way, since we are not actively examining our Being as such, we cannot be said to understand what it is to exist.[6]

III

When Heidegger began his writings, he believed that humans have been spiraling into a crisis, and, if individuals did not recognize this, they would be doomed never to become what is possible of them: they would never achieve authenticity, only mediocrity.

To describe this crisis, Heidegger advanced his doctrine of *Dasein* as a way of distinguishing Being (or existence) from the things in being. The literal translation of the German word, *Dasein*, is *being there* or *being here*. *Dasein* is not a type of entity or thing. It is a way of being or existing for which Being is a question, for which being is *in* question.[7] It is in question because *Dasein*'s way of Being is threatened—it will end. And each person individually must work out his or her way of Being. *Dasein*'s way of Being is thus threatened, both by life and by death. One knows that he or she will die, but equally important is the question of how one will live. Will one face the question of one's Being with courage, seeking to pursue his or her innermost or ownmost possibilities? Or will one take the easy way out and fall into the crowd—"the They"—into *das Man* and forsake the opportunity for authenticity?[8]

Dasein, then, is that way of Being that raises up (one's) Being as an issue that needs to be addressed and resolved. And the proper answer is meant to be integrated into one's life. This is Heidegger's challenge to the "leveling down" tendencies of the average person.[9]

As can be seen by the meaning of one of his central concepts—Being—Heidegger is concerned with one's way of existence. For him, existence is the fulfilling of the context of experience and of one's life as a whole. His position stresses the idea that Being is a process, not a specific thing or entity. This explains in part why he believes that most people approach the concept of Being incorrectly; they consider it to be a thing or an entity, a completion rather than as a process, an ongoing, soon-to-be-finished and uncertain venture.[10]

IV

Heidegger informs us that *Dasein* has many structures, three of which are important for our purposes. *Dasein* relates to the world through the framework of *Existenz*, facticity and fallenness.[11] When we consider these together, they function as a structural unity that Heidegger calls *Concern* (or *Sorge*); they represent *Dasein*'s basic orientation toward the world. *Existenz*, which relates primarily to one's future, is defined in terms of possibility—possibility that is directed by understanding. It includes the nearly infinite projection of possibilities attainable by *Dasein*.[12] *Dasein* cannot give up its possibilities; it can choose these, choose to neglect them, or neglect to choose them. But each option involves relating to one's possibilities. The utmost possibility of *Dasein* is death. For Heidegger, death is a natural part of one's Being and is unavoidable; Heidegger insists that an authentic existence must come to grips with the fact of death and involve the structuring of one's life around the meaning of death for one's possibilities. One can thus face one's possibilities authentically or inauthentically. The role of death in living authentically will be examined in more detail in the context of *angst*, which will follow the present section.

The second structure of Being-in-the-world for Heidegger is that of facticity. Facticity corresponds primarily to one's past; it can be defined as a set of facts about which a person has no choice or control. Facticity involves such things as one's birth, one's parents, the era in which one lives, and so on. Heidegger tells us that a person is thrown into a particular world, one in which *das Man* runs rampant and people live inauthentically. But being thrown into this world does not offer one an excuse for failing to choose one's innermost possibilities; at a minimum, existence requires that one choose his or her attitudes concerning the givens which are presented in the extensive possibilities of one's *Existenz*. The projection of possibility thus involves both understanding and appreciating one's facticity and taking this into account in exercising one's choices.

The last of the three structures of Being-in-the-World for Heidegger is fallenness. It is this structure that holds the greatest challenge and obstacle to attaining authenticity. Fallenness relates primarily to one's present; it refers in general to the tendency to neglect one's existence and to "fall in" with "the They." It can take the form of experiencing life and its possibilities as a weight that has been forced upon us—one from which we would like to disburden (or unburden) ourselves. A good example of this phenomenon can be seen in the "Monday morning blues" that many people experience; they view life as a struggle that takes effort.[14] It is the mood that one has upon getting up on a Monday, a mood of being disappointed with the awareness that one must join a weekly routine and go along with the flow of average, everyday people. In fallenness, we take our lead from "the They"—*das Man*. *Das Man* can best be described as the group of anonymous people that influences us to fall into its ranks—to do what its members—"They"—do. To think as "They" think, complain as "They" complain, and become mediocre as "They" become mediocre. The "They" would have us succumb to their possibilities (such as they are) rather than to our own. *Das Man* acts anonymously with little interest in doing anything that goes beyond the norm, the average. *Das Man* simply goes with the flow of the group. Its distinctive quality is to be average, and it achieves this goal with little effort.

Heidegger notes that, by choosing to follow *das Man*, one is disburdened (or unburdened) from the choice of being oneself; one prefers to take the easy way out. Every day a person has the decision of succumbing to fallenness or overcoming these easy tendencies so as to actively pursuing one's own Being in an attempt to reach one's innermost and ownmost potentialities. It is in recognizing the ubiquity of fallenness and the tendency of *das Man* to push people to inauthenticity that the charge of pessimism is brought against Heidegger. To examine the merits of this accusation, we must look more closely into these structures, addressing the relation between fallenness and authenticity. This will take us to a discussion of *angst*.

V

When a critic claims that, like many other existentialists, Heidegger is overly pessimistic, pointing to his belief that most people will succumb to fallenness, he has missed what seems to be the central point of Heidegger's work. Rather than being excessively pessimistic, Heidegger is, firstly, making an observation. He is informing us that most people will succumb to fallenness and to an inauthentic lifestyle because it is for the most part easier to follow the lead of others than it is carve out one's own existence. But, secondly, he is offering an interesting challenge to any individual who is willing to accept it. He implies that, while succumbing to fallenness is easy, it will be much more rewarding to actively pursue an authentic lifestyle and to "live one's life like a work of art."[15] It is almost as if he is daring a person to break from the flock, to travel along his or her own path. Heidegger claims that one is presented with this challenge every day, and every day one can either succumb to fallenness or pursue authenticity.

One moves toward making authentic decisions about one's life when he or she is both conscious of all these structures of Being-in-the-world—*Existenz*, fallenness, and facticity—and successful in unifying them. In doing this, a person comes to recognize that part of the facticity of this world is that he or she is thrown into a world in which most people (*das Man*) have fallen out of Being (especially with their *Existenz*). One sees that, every day, there are choices to be made either to join the rest of the "herd" or to strike out on one's own so as to pursue a more authentic lifestyle. One sees the indefinite range of possibilities that lie ahead when he or she actively approaches Being through the *Existenz* of one's *Dasein*. One can also see what would happen were one to neglect one's Being, choosing instead to reside in an inauthentic group. What is seen as Heidegger's pessimism is actually a call to conscience—"a challenging forth"—a reminder to individuals that the path of authenticity, while not easy, will prove to be infinitely more satisfying.

VI

There is one more significant structural concept to be discussed: the idea of Mood.[16] Mood, for Heidegger, is one's state-of-mind; it is an attitudinal component that accompanies awareness of the one's life and of the world that he believes reveals aspects of one's Being. He tells us that one's Mood is a product of being tuned both to one's Being and to one's everyday routine. The three most predominant types of Mood for Heidegger are dreariness, uncanniness, and *angst* (or dread). Dreariness, discussed earlier, is a mood that reveals the burden of being true to one's innermost possibilities; it relates to one's fallenness, and it is experienced for the most part in the form of the "Monday morning blues." Uncanniness corresponds to the feeling, as Heidegger puts it, of "not-at-homeness," or feeling uncomfortable in the world in which we have been thrown.[17] Thus, it relates closely to one's facticity. The uncanniness reveals to us the difficulty of finding and of making our own way when there are no universal or absolute values to guide our choices in how we are to live. The final type of Mood is that of *angst* or dread.[18] One experiences *angst* when one realizes that one's existence, one's Being, will end with death. This knowledge can bring persons to examine their lives. It can also reveal the things that one has not yet done. With this knowledge, one can either resolve to live a more genuine life (by being aware that one is a Being-toward-death) or simply ignore the unavoidable conclusion of one's Being. As with the other Moods, *angst* has loose ties to one of the existential structures of care. More specifically, it seems to complement the idea of *Existenz* in so far as it reveals to one that the call to authenticity, firstly, has a definite time limit and, secondly, that it does not adhere to any ordained values.

VII

It is clear, then, that Heidegger believes that most men and women live average, everyday lives: lives of fallenness. When this tendency becomes excessive, so that one fails to bring forth his or her ownmost or innermost possibilities, he warns us that the person is then inauthentic (a form of disownness of one's Being). But we should not confuse Heidegger's description of this condition as an expression of pessimism. A pessimist describes an intractable problem, one for which there is no remedy. But Heidegger relies on this account of fallenness and inauthenticity to challenge persons to pursue a way out: the way out of authenticity. He encourages persons to question, both actively and frequently, their own Being, to have a better ontological recognition and appreciation of the nature and structural relations that exist among their *Existenz*, Facticity, and Fallenness. In the end, we can see clearly that what others understand to be pessimism in Heidegger is actually a challenge—the challenge of being an authentic individual.

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[1] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper Row Publishers, 1962).

[2] Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 118ff.

[3] I should point out that I shall here focus on the early work of Heidegger, primarily that of *Being and Time*, and leave it an open question whether his thinking became even more "pessimistic" in his later thinking. Also, the reader should keep in mind when considering Heidegger's work that all parts of his position are highly structured. For most of his concepts, he introduces at least several other concepts which are either directly incorporated within the definition or inner workings of the original idea or that are interrelated with other concepts—concepts which themselves require further definitions so as to try to understand what he means to express.

[4] Heidegger, *Op. cit.*, 25ff.

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] Furthermore, it should be pointed out that Heidegger was influenced by his teacher, Edmund Husserl. Husserl believed that philosophy should not contain any presuppositions, that it should be completely free of assumptions. Heidegger did not accept Husserl's view, taken literally, but it did encourage him to find a primordial approach toward the fundamental question of Being. He said he wished to find an approach that made Being transparent to the inquirer. (Heidegger, *Op. cit.*, 26). I shall say more about this approach later. But, in the present context, we can see

that confusing Being with beings is not this primordial starting point. And because people have been confused on this matter, more serious consequences have followed for Heidegger.

[7] Heidegger, *Op. cit*., 34; 67.

[8] *Ibid*., 164.

[9] Heidegger believes that we must be careful in the language we use to discuss Being. Our style of talk stems from a bias in our everyday language to focus on subject-predicate relations. Since our language is biased in this way, Heidegger believes that we are not able to use it to discourse effectively about Being. And when attempting to use our common, everyday language to describe Being, we will not be able to get past this bias; we will be blinded by the limitations our language imposes. This is why in his later work he stresses poetry as the only accurate way to approach Being. In poetry, the artist makes up his or her own verbal conventions and is free to ignore matters of correct grammar and structure common to language. The poet can reflect on Being and write about it however he or she chooses. Heidegger ends, then, by thinking that poetry is the only intelligible way to discuss Being because it is more creative and responsive to Being without being saddled with structural requirements that are found in language but not in Being.

[10] It is for this reason that Heidegger believes that by starting with the concept of *Dasein* he had begun at a primordial point of departure for his investigation of Being. He thinks that *Dasein* gives one the most primitive and basic vantage point from which to ask the question of Being, because *Dasein* just is that way of Being for whom Being is in question, that asks the question of Being. By understanding better what applies to *Dasein*, he believes that he could better understand what applies to Being. We should mention, however, that shortly after writing Being and Time, he seems to have rejected this idea.

[11] Heidegger, *Op. cit*., 173ff.

[12] *Ibid*., 185 ff.

[13] *Ibid*., 164ff; 220.

[14] This aspect of, or mood connected with, fallenness is translated by Robert Solomon as *dreariness*. See Robert Solomon, *From Rationalism to Existentialism: The Existentialists and Their Nineteenth Century Backgrounds* (New York: Harper Row, 1972) 214.

[15] This phrase derives from the German existential philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

[16] Heidegger, *Op. cit*., 172 ff.

[17] *Ibid*., 233.

[18] *Ibid*., 228.

Alan Kardec and the Spiritist Doctrine: Incarnation, Spirits, and Morality • Maria Julia De Araujo

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Introduction

In the fall of 2004, thousands of students, scientists, educators, and others will gather in Paris for *The Fourth World Spiritist Congress* so as to celebrate the bicentennial of Alan Kardec's Spiritist doctrine.[1] Spiritism is a movement that originated in the late 1800s when it was claimed that a wave of supernatural phenomena arose throughout Europe and North America. These phenomena were said to be manifestations of spirits. Many scientists became intrigued with the subject to the point that commissions of scientists were established in order to evaluate these claims. Kardec, a French educator and intellectual, was one of the many scientists who took a deep interest in the subject.

As Kardec began to study the phenomena more fully, he became convinced of their authenticity. He even engaged in (what he understood to be) communications with spirits through various mediums, using a variety of methods and codes. What came from these contacts were ideas that filled several volumes.

To talk about spirits is risky, of course. Whenever one finds himself trying to explain that which is not observable, he is often accused of being superstitious or mystical. And when such a theory has a religious base, its advocates are often discredited even more. Thus, spiritists themselves have fought others' practice of applying various labels to their position. They consider their position to be a quasi-religious one; and they contend that their doctrine is as philosophical as it is religious. In this essay, I shall review some of the main tenets of Spiritism. As we shall see, Spiritism is a complex position that has both philosophical and religious elements. And we shall explore some of that “overlap” . Perhaps, by so doing, the reader will better be able to appreciate some of the complexities inherent in trying to distinguish between these important areas of human endeavor.

Spirits and the World

It has been argued that the Spiritist doctrine is supported by three pillars: belief in the existence of spirits, belief in reincarnation, and belief in the possibility of spirit mediumship. From the belief in spirit manifestations, Kardec derives a philosophy of reality, from which a system of morality is established.[2] Spiritists believe in the existence of God.[3] And one of the main arguments used by Kardec to prove God’s existence is the “First Cause” argument.[4] He posits that we have good reason to believe that God exists because everything must have such a cause. All things are caused by something, thus, if we go back far enough in time, there must have been something that caused the first thing to be—something that in itself was not caused by anything, something that is sufficient unto itself. For example, even if one set of parents is the cause of six children, no couple can create the entire human race; there *must* be something greater than man to cause humans to be. Or, as Kardec puts it, “the workman is known by his work.” [5] God is the workman who has created everything else: humans, spirits, and the world.

According to Spiritism, there are two principles in the universe: the material principle and the intelligent principle. Physical bodies are the individualization of the material principle, and spirits are the individualization of the intelligent principle. Thus, finite spirits are the “intelligent beings of creation” . Spirits are not emanations from God; they are different from Him.[6] Spirits are not eternal, for they have been created, but they are immortal. God participates in constant creation, spirits are being created at all times. They exist in a hierarchy of levels of development. Higher spirits are viewed as being remote from us only because we have a limited understanding, owing to our connections with matter. The higher spirits are said to be constituted of an ethereal type of matter. Spirits are developed from, or evolve out of, a quasi-material substance when they are incarnated; this is called their “perispirit” . The perispirit varies according to the degree of perfection of the spirit: the less developed the spirit, the more material the perispirit. Spirits inhabit a world parallel to ours, one that has preceded our world. Our world and the spiritual world—what Spiritists call “the primitive world”—are largely independent of each other, but they can, and they do, interact. Spirits move themselves by thought alone: “Wherever the thought is, there the soul is.”[7] Thought, then, is an attribute of the soul, not of body. As a higher spirit “moves,” it can choose to be aware of its surroundings, or it can choose to simply think and go.

Ubiquity is thus another attribute of higher spirits. To be ubiquitous is to be in, or to be immediately aware of, different places at the same time. Kardec compares a spirit’s ubiquity with the sun that emits its rays in all directions but does not divide itself in doing so. The extent to which the spirit is able to emit or move itself depends on its degree of purity, thus the capacity for ubiquity varies from spirit to spirit.

Because spirits are constantly being created, each spirit has opportunities to achieve various degrees of development, various degrees of purity. The more time that passes, the more opportunities it has to advance. Every spirit is ignorant upon creation, but it has an equal opportunity for development. And the more “ignorant” (or less developed) a spirit is, the more challenged it is to advance. Spirits may remain stationary, but they will never regress in their development. Spirits that choose a wrongful path in life do have the chance to progress, but it is believed that they will undergo a form of “eternal suffering,” not in the sense that they will last forever but because spirits are capable of experiencing intense suffering. They view their failings from an eternal perspective, so to speak. Unlike in some Western religions, Spiritism does not endorse the idea of a hell with physical torments. It does believe that spirits have torments, but they are of a more psychological or spiritual nature. And, as we have indicated, they do not last forever. The spirit goes through various phases of spiritual, intellectual and moral development, just as biological humans do. Before a spirit develops self-awareness and is capable of acting with free will, it will act only vis a vis its initial dispositions. It will act instinctively.

Spiritism rejects the idea that there are naturally evil beings. If there were such beings, God would have been responsible either for creating them or for allowing them to exist. But God, being beneficent, could not have created beings who deserve to be permanently condemned. These beings, whom we think of as being “evil”, are simply underdeveloped spirits. Furthermore, according to Spiritism, the word “angel” is simply a name used to identify the more, or best-, perfected spirits. Their basic nature is the same as that of all other finite spirits; what differs is only their respective degrees of perfection.

One might wonder as to why some spirits are more advanced than others. As we already noted, spirits are constantly created, and the process of creation of spirits precedes their earthly existence. Thus, some spirits have had more time than others to develop. Another factor is that each spirit has a particular attitude towards its development; some accept their trials quietly and resolve to improve; others go through stages of rebellion before they advance and others choose to remain spiritually stationary for long periods.

Incarnation

Incarnation, as understood by Spiritism, is a tool given by God to aid the spirit in its struggle for perfection. By struggling with the body (or with matter in general), the spirit gains valuable experience that serves it as it moves toward excellence. Incarnation also serves to bring balance to the universe. Given that matter already exists, a form of equilibrium is achieved through the interaction between the spiritual and the material worlds. There are three reasons why spirits are incarnated: they become embodied as an expiation, as a trial, or for a mission. And a spirit might incarnate to accomplish all of the three goals simultaneously.

A spirit is expiated in order to repair some of its wrongdoings and in order to allow it to learn from them. A spirit can also be incarnated so as to fulfill a mission. For example, it might be sent to aid another incarnated spirit. A spirit can be incarnated to undertake a trial, that is, in order to improve itself. Taking on a body provides obstacles for a spirit with respect to such things as knowledge, memory, awareness and compassion. The body allows for frustrations that can challenge one’s will. And it offers a mask to cover one’s real thoughts and intentions to others; this situation can challenge the character of the spirit. Spirits who are embodied have an otherwise strong tendency toward egoism, lack of compassion and weakness of will that can only be overcome as their character develops through trials. Thus, reincarnation offers them repeated opportunities for more rapid or more extensive spiritual growth.

Once incarnated, there is, of course, no guarantee that the spirit will pass a trial. Success depends in part on its degree of development. Because a spirit can request specific trials, it must be careful not to request a task that it cannot handle. On the other hand, the more challenging the trial, the better will be the development if it is successful. Each incarnation is serial, as spirits cannot incarnate in two bodies simultaneously.

Incarnation is necessary for all intelligent beings. Even the pure spirits or "angels", as they are commonly called, underwent this process. Because the spirit does not regress in its movement toward perfection, the soul of a good spirit cannot be incarnated in a thoroughly wicked person. But the soul of one who has done serious wrong in a past lifetime can be reincarnated as a person with a strong tendency toward good. This will occur, however, under the condition that the spirit is willing to perfect itself and that it regrets the evil it has done in the past. One will then have another chance.

There is no relation between the purity of a spirit and its social ranking in a particular lifetime. As Kardec notes, Herod was a king and Jesus a carpenter.[8] There is also no relationship between one's age at death and the purity of the spirit incarnated. A child might die, but that does not mean that it is a less purified spirit. If a child dies, its spirit is not exempted from going through added trials, for although the child has not done anything evil in its life, neither has it done anything good. In many cases, the death of a child is an expiation or trial for the parents.

Kardec argues for reincarnation on the basis that the idea that a spirit has only one existence is in conflict with God's just nature. There would be no fair standard for one to be judged by, given that many die before they can make decisions. Incarnation, or *progressive transmigration*, as Kardec calls it, is *necessary* for all spirits, even for "pure spirits," as we saw. The more that a spirit develops morally while embodied, the easier it will be for it to handle the next stages of its development.

The union between the body and the spirit consists in what Spiritists call *soul*. The soul is not fully enclosed in the body (as if it were a match in a matchbox). Spiritists believe that the soul radiates itself everywhere, and when the body dies, the soul again assumes the form of spirit, and it returns to the spiritual world. What's more, they maintain that the universal intelligent principle, that which is individualized and formed into spirits, can be said to be the spirit of the world. In the spiritual world, the spirit has knowledge of all its past lives and experiences. The issue of identity and incarnation in the Spiritist doctrine thus becomes very complex. Because the spirit has a conscience of its own, its behavior is carried out or conducted in a way that is very different from that of humans. Furthermore, spirits are considered to be genderless. They might incarnate in either a male or a female body. Affection between spirits is founded upon a "similarity of sentiments."[9]

The human, as a mere biological being, becomes then primarily a tool for spiritual development within the Spiritist doctrine. Human life is seen as a type of exile. Although the spirit and the human being are different in nature—for one is spirit and the other is a biological being with an incarnated spirit—they become a functional unity for that lifetime. They are a temporary unity. That which makes one human and intelligent is the soul; the soul is the spirit incarnated. On the other hand, the spirit as it exists outside the body behaves very differently, for it is conscious of all of its past lives. Ignorance is a key aspect of (limited) intelligence, and it thus helps to ground free will in human life. Humans do not know if they are on a mission, involved in a trial, or working out an expiation. They must act without knowing key aspects of their lives. But this also gives them the opportunity to show their true character and their capacity to develop.

Spiritists believe that, after death, the soul leaves the body and returns to the spirit world. The only things left from life in the spirit are its memories. The spirit's consciousness of its past life is more or less clear, depending on its degree of perfection. The claim that the spirit returns after death to the "universal whole"[10] is true only if, by *universal whole*, one means "the totality of spirits, or the spirit world." Otherwise, one would think that spirits lose their individuality, which is a doctrine that is advocated in certain forms of Hinduism, for example. The view that spirits retain their individuality enables Kardec to maintain a theory of morality that addresses the individuality of spirits. Kardec's concepts of incarnation, spirit, and human nature form the ground of a moral code to which Spiritists believe they must adhere. Morality is considered to be the most significant aspect of the Spiritist doctrine. It is a mix of Christian morality and Spiritist beliefs.

Spiritist Morality

According to Spiritism, the law of nature is the Law of God. Natural law is eternal and immutable. And natural laws are divided into moral and physical laws. Moral laws deal with relationships both within and among humans, and between humans and God as well. Physical laws regulate matter. Kardec defines "moral law" as "the rule for distinguishing practically between good and evil."[11] Good is that which comports with the law of God (natural law), and evil is that which does not comport with it. Generally, humans are able to distinguish good from evil, but individually this ability (and the capacity to observe the moral law) depends on the degree of development of the spirit. One reason for the existence of evil is to help humans comprehend what is good. The spirit must, when incarnated, experience this difference in order to develop. This is the reason why spirits become incarnated. Although Spiritist ethics holds that there is absolute good and evil, it also argues that "a man is more or less guilty according to his light." That is, although circumstances may play a significant role in the committing of evil acts, one's responsibility for evil varies with her ability to discern right from wrong. Like Socrates, Spiritists believe that a root cause of evil is ignorance.[12] Kardec puts the matter thus:

> … the enlightened man who commits a mere injustice is more culpable in the sight of God than the ignorant savage who abandons himself to his instincts of cannibalism….[13]

Furthermore, to lead another into evil is more reprehensible than to be led into evil (unless the latter occurs voluntarily or with full awareness of what one is doing). Spiritism argues that it is not enough for one to avoid doing evil in order to guarantee spiritual development. One is also *required* to do good. Humans share in responsibility for each other's development. This idea of mutual responsibility for each other's development leads Spiritism to given primacy to the law of charity in the hierarchy of moral laws. These are divided into ten categories: laws of adoration, progress, love and charity, destruction, liberty, equality, preservation, reproduction, labor, and social law. In what follows, I will discuss the nature of the five most significant natural and moral laws, including their relation to the Spiritist concept of incarnation. For the sake of brevity, I can touch upon these laws only in outline.

The Law of Adoration

Spiritists consider adoration to be an "innate sentiment" in man, not as a consequence of indoctrination. It is a natural law because it is innate. As in Christianity, Spiritists believe that true adoration of

God comes from the heart. Those acts of adoration that come “from within” set the best example for others. Spiritism does not consider it to be wrong for one to participate in religious rituals in which he does not believe, provided that such participation is done by way of paying respect to those who sincerely practice the ritual. However, one should not worship simply for the sake of worshipping. Collective worship, such as occurs during a church service, is more powerful than private worship in that there is more spiritual power to attract good spirits. But it is not necessary for one to use collective or public worship in order to pay proper homage to God. In addition, those who devote much of their lives to worship while doing little else accomplish little on behalf of the spiritual growth of either of themselves or of others. The Spiritist view is that an individual is responsible for the spiritual development of humankind as a whole. Kardec informs us:

> He who consumes his life in meditation and contemplation does nothing meritorious in the sight of God, because such a life is entirely personal and useless to mankind; and God will call him to account for the good he has failed to do.[14]

Prayer is an important tool to aid the spirit in its development, but it must be combined with good acts. When prayer comes from the heart, it brings the spirit closer to God and to good spirits. The offerings of prayers, however, do not excuse one from his wrongdoings. The only way one can be forgiven is through good action. Or, as Kardec writes, “…good deeds are the best prayers, for deeds are of more worth than words.”[15]

As we have noted, the soul is not fully enveloped by, or enclosed within, the body; it emits itself everywhere, even beyond itself. Its main vehicle for so doing is thought. Thus, if one prays and thinks only good thoughts, it can also help other spirits (although good acts will help them even more). One cannot, however, change the course of her life through prayer alone. Spirits can pray to ask for help in order to lessen their burdens, but the nature of the trials and expiation cannot be changed, because these are determined by God before incarnation. Spiritism is committed to a weaker version of predestination; it holds that, although one can change her actions while incarnated, one cannot change the nature of her life; nor can one change the types of trials or challenges one will need to face so as to grow spiritually.

The Law of Liberty

The Spiritist view of this law is very close to the political view of liberty. Spiritism argues that humans lose any state of absolute freedom that they might have had at birth whenever they enter into any relationship with another person. Humans have no right to possess other humans as property, because one’s freedom ultimately depends on the freedom of others. Mutuality exists here. One cannot be free if others are in chains. Spiritism considers slavery contrary to natural law precisely because it puts humans in a position of unbalanced freedom. It tries to treat the freedom of one person as if it did not depend on the freedom of others. Thus, because it is contrary to natural law, it is wrong. However, if it is deeply rooted in a culture (as it had been in various cultures historically), the widespread nature of the practice of slavery can cause unthinking people to be committed to it; thus, they could be ignorant that they are committing a moral offense. Within Spiritism, the degree of culpability would depend on one’s degree of ignorance of the fact that slavery is immoral.

With regard to free will, Spiritism says that humans have full freedom of will. They are not naturally evil, for each has the choice to be good or not. Predestination or fatalism applies only with respect to the kinds of trials the spirit needs to undergo; it is then up to the spirit to show how it will comport itself during these trials.

The Laws of Justice, Love, and Charity

As we have seen, Spiritism grants that there are certain natural rights inherent to humans. Because one has the right to life, it is *prima facie* contrary to natural law to take human life. The rights to acquire and to own property are also natural human rights in so far as they are the result of one's honest and non-exploitative labor; only on this assumption can these rights be defended. The law of love establishes that man is not to do unto others what he does not want done to himself. This law combines with other laws so as to regulate what is, and what is not, a consequence of honest and non-exploitative labor. Whenever someone acquires something by hurting another person, there is established a *prima facie* reason for questioning the legitimacy of the acquired property. In general, only if this acquisition is supported by one of the other laws might the acquisition be seen as acceptable. The law of charity is derived from the law of love. It is the most important law of Spiritist moral doctrine. It establishes a law of positive conduct. So, not only should one avoid doing to another what she does not want done to herself, but she should do to others what she positively wishes for herself. One reason in support of this law is this: just as we have spirits of higher degree guiding us, giving us their positive help, so also should we be willing to help guide those who are at the same level or are below us in the degree of their spiritual development.

The Law of Equality

This law reaffirms that all spirits are equal in the sight of God, for they are all ultimately inclined toward the same end. All spirits are born equally ignorant, and all are subject to the same laws of nature. As we have seen, they differ only with respect to the length of their existence and the degree of their spiritual development. Thus, differences in human life are only superficial; they exist as a necessary condition for spirits to develop. Spiritists believe that social inequalities on earth will fade away when the spirits inhabiting this world become more developed. Social inequality, thus, is not natural; it is a human construct. Although social equality is possible, Spiritist doctrine contends that economic inequality will disappear only when humans stop being selfish. Both poverty and wealth are trials that are imposed upon spirits. If a spirit chooses to be rich in order to show his character to resist the temptations of wealth, he might fail. If she chooses to be poor in order to resist the temptations involved in poverty, she too might fail. With respect to spiritual growth, it can be challenging to be either poor or wealthy. As one aspect of the law of equality, and since spirits are themselves genderless, men and women are to be considered equal. Their physical differences are not sufficient to ground a law of unequal consideration. Human laws should mirror the natural law of equality. There should not be differences in consideration among races, genders or social classes from a legal perspective. The improvement of human laws in relation to the natural laws shows the progress of humankind.

The Law of Progress

This law begins by noting a difference between the state of nature and natural law. The state of nature is a concept meant to apply to a condition wheerein mankind is not sufficiently developed so as to support a culture or civilization. It is said to be the “infancy of the human race.”[16] Spiritists believe that, just as a spirit cannot regress in its spiritual development, so too the human race as a whole will not regress in its spiritual development. That is, humans will not return to a state of nature. Thus, as Kardec posits, just as moral development does not always follow intellectual development in individual cases, so also with nation states. Nations are an aggregate of spirits that share, in their incarnations, common features. The existence of nations is a temporary stage in human development; it is not a final event. Nation states have not always been, nor will they always continue to be. Progress is a natural law. Nobody can stop it, although humans can retard its growth. It is a law that needs to be considered in relation to the other spiritual and moral laws, for all laws are guided by the concept of progress.

Spiritism considers pride and selfishness to be the two greatest barriers to development. These two characteristics often impede humans from abiding by the other laws. Human laws are subject to the development attained by spirits in general. As such, these laws go through constant changes. Spiritists understand the main problem with human laws to be that they have been relatively unsuccessful in preventing evil; they have aimed primarily at punishing crime and evil. Spiritism considers itself to be a main contributor to human development. It maintains that Spiritism contributes to this development by weakening the hold of materialism over humans and by seeking to make people understand who and what they are. It thus takes on a very prophetic view of its role with regard to progress.

Conclusion

Should Spiritism be looked upon as a religion? Or should it be considered to be a philosophy? It is difficult to answer these questions with confidence.

It is characteristic of a religion that it believes in a higher power and espouses the view that one’s next life (or afterlife) is profoundly affected by what one does, and does not do, in this life. It believes in the power of prayer and the ability to be in contact with non-physical beings, some of whom have a willingness and capacity to help us grow spiritually. Spiritism has a profoundly Christian moral basis, and it advocates an elaborate ethical code—one that relies upon its specific theory of spirits. It discusses the penalties that attach to the failure to abide by this code—penalties that can apply in both this life and the next. Finally, it proposes a unique eschatology. Even as it cautions us about the difficulty and slowness of the process, it proclaims the inevitability of spiritual progress for all spirits.

On the other hand, Spiritism has the distinct marks of a philosophy. It offers us a metaphysics and an ethical position in which defense and argument play a prominent role. In asserting God’s existence, it does not see itself as relying primarily or solely upon faith. It de-emphasizes the role of collective ritual, warning us about the dangers of excessive involvement in prayer and meditation. It is more “act-oriented” than faith- or ritual-oriented. Furthermore, the concept of incarnation, common to many traditional religions, is taken up by Spiritism and turned into a basis for a moral doctrine. This moral doctrine is grounded in a view of natural law that requires both a rational defense and holistic perspective. It informs us that the only way to introduce otherwise unclassifiable values is to view them holistically, to analyze them without prejudice.

Finally, it is engaged in a traditional philosophical question, namely, theodicy. It seeks to explain the presence of evil and suffering in a universe created by a good, all-knowing, and all-powerful God. Evil and suffering are seen to be the results of the freedom and finiteness of spirits that are at various levels of spiritual development—spirits that need limitation, expiation, suffering, penalties and challenges to arrive eventually at a destination that all will inevitably reach.

From the Spiritist perspective, then, it is this issue that should overshadow the narrower question of whether its belief system should be classified as a religion or a philosophy. Realizing this, perhaps we would do well to try to understand the position on its own terms rather than try to fit it into one of our Procrustian beds.

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[1] Electronic flyer and information available at: http://www.spiritisme.org.

[2] David J. Hess, *Spirits and Scientists* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, PA, 1991) 16.

[3] Spiritists have a somewhat complicated view of God and the status of Jesus. It is not quite correct to assert that they believe that God (as creator) is the main Spirit because this would imply that God has been “individualized” from the “intelligent whole.” Consistent with its origins within Christian countries, Kardec does at times maintain that Jesus is the main spirit. But this is one of the reasons that Spiritists have been attacked by some Christian writers, especially by Catholics. Sometimes Kardec has it that Jesus is the “spirit of light” (meaning that he is the most developed spirit) and at other times He is said to be God. This dual view of Jesus is not accepted by traditional Christian thinkers.

[4] There are several versions of the First Cause argument. This version relies on the notion of cause as efficient cause. Aristotle discusses four types of causes. A *material* cause answers the question what is something made of. A *formal* cause answers the question of what something is—its essence. A *final* cause answers the question for what was a thing made or for what end was it brought about. And an *efficient* cause answers the question of by what agency something was made or brought about. The present argument focuses on this last type of cause.

[5] Allan Kardec, *The Spirit’s Book* (Brotherhood of Life Publishing: Las Vegas, Nevada, 2001) 65.

[6] Emanation theory was first advanced by Plotinus in the third century C.E. He contended that humans and other finite spirits emerged from the One (or God) by a natural necessity brought about by the overflowing magnificence of being of the One. Spiritists, however, believe that God created finite spirits through free choice.

[7] Kardec, *Op. cit.*, 95.

[8] *Ibid.*,128.

[9] *Ibid.*,101, 239.

[10] *Ibid.*, 114.

[11] *Ibid.*, 274.

[12] Although this position is similar to Socrates’ idea that evil arises from ignorance, in Spiritist morality this view also applies to responsibility for one is not guilty or to be blamed if she is not at a level to discern right from wrong. There is right and wrong ideally, but responsibility is based upon one’s capacity to know what is right.

[13] *Ibid.*, 276.

[14] *Ibid.*, 282.

[15] *Ibid.*, 283.

[16] *Ibid.*, 317.

Islamic Family Structures: A Comparison of Turkey and Afghanistan • Laura Stoutenburgh

Laura Stoutenburgh graduated from UW-Eau Claire in May of 2003, with a major in Mathematics and a minor in Religious Studies. Laura first wrote her paper for Dr. Rowlett's "Islam" class in the spring of 2003. It went through further editorial revisions with the editor of *Prism* during the spring term of 2004.

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I

Much focus is now being given to the religion of Islam. The faith has spread throughout the world, and in their turn the culture and customs of Islam are under greater political and media scrutiny. It has become clear, however, that the role Islam plays in different cultures varies with the regions that one studies. In some places, it is the official state religion, where Islamic law applies to all; in others, it is one of many faiths under a secular government. The unfortunate thing is that horrifying tragedies have been, and continue to be, committed in the name of Islam. These violent acts are staining the faith's reputation in much the same way that the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition blotted the history of Christianity. Those who twist the beliefs of a faith for the purpose of committing atrocities present the world with a skewed view of the religion in question. Islam is no exception.[1]

Islam is more than a set of beliefs; rather, it is a way of life. Understanding some basic aspects of Islam is important when one investigates the interpersonal relationships amongst, or between, Muslims as set in the Qur'an and as practiced in various cultures. In this essay, I will examine some of the main tenets of Islam, with special emphasis on those beliefs and regulations that apply to relations within the family. To highlight the point about the ways in which Islam has been adapted to different cultures, I will both discuss and contrast family relationships in Turkey with those in Afghanistan, especially under the rule of the Taliban.

II

Islam literally means *submission or surrender to Allah* (*or God*). Monotheism is very important in Islam; its creed states: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.” Also, all people—regardless of race, gender, wealth or social status—are equal before Allah. The faith follows a long tradition of prophets, including those of the Jewish and Christian traditions, but ultimately they follow the teachings of Muhammad. He lived from 570 to 632 CE, and he is said to have received revelations from Allah. These are collected and recorded in the Qur’an and are considered by Muslims to be the Allah’s words. A less important, yet sacred text, is the Hadith, or recollections and remembrances about Muhammad and his teachings by his close followers. Not only are the teachings of Muhammad very important, but also his life is an example for all Muslims to follow. Praying five times daily, being charitable to the poor, and fasting are all compulsory components of the religion. Muslims are to dress modestly, fast during the month of Ramadan, and, if possible, make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lives. Muhammad established the most important tenets of the life that Muslims are to follow and, by examining these precepts, one can see why Islam is called “the religion of peace.”

Family is the foundation of Islamic culture. It is the place for all Muslims to demonstrate their submission to Allah by being obedient within the family. The family unit is an integral part of Islamic society. It is expected that Muslims will marry and have children. Parents often introduce young people to each other, but they must never be forced to wed.[2] Although it may seem unusual to people outside of this culture to allow parents to arrange marriage for their children, there are reasons for the practice. Parents—particularly those of the woman—are expected to provide the best of their children. In helping to arrange a marriage, parents have considerable influence regarding the kind of person who will likely become their son- or daughter-in-law. Also, the problem of having strained relationships with the in-laws would be minimized since parents would have approved of the match before the wedding. Thus, the importance of family unity and loyalty is demonstrated in practice. If the couple agrees to marry, the terms of the union are then negotiated.

It is essential to realize that marriage is a legal contract, not a sacrament, in the Islamic faith.[3] Marriage, as a sacrament, would be a sacred or spiritual covenant and, consequently, could not be broken. When the couple is to be married, the bride is to receive a dower (or dowry)—called a “Mahr”—from her husband in the amount stipulated in the contract. This sum is paid to the bride, not to her family, which gives her some economic freedom and security.[4] Although men are obligated to provide for the family, and women are responsible for running the household, a woman can also earn a living or gain financial status through inheritance.[5] These traditional gender roles greatly influence inheritance laws and the household hierarchy.

Traditionally, it has been mandatory for the husband to provide both for his wife (or wives) and for his children through providing them inheritance upon his death as well as to assist them by providing food, clothing, and shelter during his lifetime. But the amount that survivors receive depends on their number and gender.[6] Typically, a woman receives about half as much as a man; the explanation for this practice is that a man will most likely have a family to provide for, whereas a woman is not bound to spend her wealth on anyone but herself. Because a man is supposed to have more financial responsibility, he is considered to be the head of the family, and respect for his decisions is vital to a peaceful home life. Since men are intended to lead the family, women are supposed to marry only Muslim men, but men are allowed to marry women who are Muslim, Jewish, or Christian.[7] In this way, a woman is not forced to choose between obedience to her husband and teaching the Islamic faith to her children. In addition to these constraints on women, there are other restrictions placed upon them.

Polygamy in Muslim marriages is a particularly controversial issue. Women can have only one husband, but a husband can have up to four wives. It is important, however, to understand the context in which this system was created. During the time of Muhammad, there were many widows and orphans who were not cared for, and he was greatly concerned for their welfare. By marrying these widows or by taking orphans into one's family, it guaranteed them a share of inheritance and protection from those who would otherwise take advantage of them. This practice, then, was intended to be a form of charity that is especially important in Islam. Many men had wives for these reasons, but they did not have sexual relations with them (despite the fact that the law allowed for it). Having multiple wives was intended only for those women who would otherwise not be supported, and it was allowed only under the condition that the husband was able to provide for all of his family members equally.[8] The Qur'an states: "You will not be able to keep balance between women, no matter how much you want to do so. So do not turn totally toward one and leave the other suspended."[9] The idea is to prevent favoritism as much as possible, but a contemporary interpretation of this passage is that a man should have only one wife, since it is impossible to treat several wives equally. The debate on this issue continues, but polygamy is now less frequently practiced.

According to Islamic law, even though divorce is allowed and is not difficult to obtain, it is nevertheless discouraged. All it takes is for the husband to pronounce that he divorces his wife. In some schools of Islam, however, more details must be addressed. Usually, there is a waiting period before a divorce is executed; this is to make sure that his wife is not pregnant and to allow the couple to attempt to work out its differences. The husband usually begins the divorce process, but there are lawful ways for a woman to initiate divorce proceedings as well.[10]

III

It is the parents' responsibility to support their childrens' needs and to educate them in the ways of Islam. After a baby is born, the call to prayer is whispered in its ears, and a passage from the Qur'an is read.[11] This begins the child's religious instruction. A celebration of the birth is held seven days thereafter, and the child is officially named. In many cultures, male children are preferred to females because it is customary for boys to continue in the same family, whereas girls will marry into another household. Muhammad lived in a time and place where female infanticide—the killing of baby girls—was commonplace; in spite of the fact that the Qur'an explicitly prohibits this act. All people, after all, are of equal value in Allah's view.[12]

As children grow older, they are taught prayers, and all Muslims are encouraged to learn Arabic, the language of the Qur'an. Eventually, memorization of the entire Qur'an is expected. Circumcision is not mentioned in the Qur'an, but it is performed on Muslim boys.[13] The age at which circumcision occurs depends upon local custom. In some places, circumcision is performed at birth, while in other regions it is not performed until a boy is six or seven years old. But in some countries (Malaysia, for example) it is a rite of puberty; it is done when the boy can recite the entire Qur'an. This tradition is often associated with purity, and it is a common practice for many Jews and Christians alike. However, female circumcision—female genital mutilation (FGM)—is far more controversial, and it is not originally a Muslim practice. FGM occurs both in some Islamic cultures and in some non-Islamic cultures (such as Coptic Christians and certain indigenous African tribes). This is often performed when a girl is between six and eight years of age, but it can be performed as late as the onset of puberty, particularly after her first menstruation. Islam does not require this practice, which destroys all sexual sensation for women for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately, those who do practice it think it is necessary according to their religious beliefs. In fact, it is assumed that, without female circumcision, women would become unclean and would be unable to control their sexual desires. Because of this, any girl or woman who is not circumcised is ostracized from her community. Possibly even from her family. It should be noted, of course, that justifications for this practice are not understandable for many outside of those cultures that practice it. But, of course, FGM still is practiced.

Once male or female children have passed through puberty and are ready for marriage, their parents help them find them suitable partners. In the case of a bride, it is her father's and brothers' responsibility to make sure that she gets a good contract and dower from her intended. Parents must also provide for all of their children through inheritance. Males receive about twice as much as females, and the details of inheritance laws are very complicated. As noted above, these laws were set up in a culture wherein men were expected to provide for families, and women would depend on their husbands to take care of them.

In return for the care children receive throughout their lives, they are expected to be obedient, respectful, and grateful to their parents. This is not the case, however, if the parent is evil or tries to undermine Islamic teachings.[14] As the parents get older, their children—particularly their sons—are expected to help in supporting them. Even if a child dies before his or her parents do, the survivors will inherit from their children. For many women, having sons is typically more important for financial security than having a husband. Marriage runs the risk of divorce, but having a son guarantees that a woman will have someone to provide for her. With this in mind, then, one can see a rationale, however flawed, for female infanticide.

From its beginnings, Islam laid out rather clearly how a family ought to be structured and how it should function. Husbands and fathers are the heads of families and are financially responsible, while wives run households. These roles are gendered, but they are not universal throughout the Islamic world. It is important to realize that what can be said about Islam in the modern world may not be the case everywhere.

IV

For example, Turkey is a nation rooted in Islam, and it is becoming more and more influenced by the non-Islamic West. While the West may view Turkey in quite unfamiliar terms, it is important to understand that it is more modern than many people realize. In 1923, Turkey became a secular nation, removing Islam as the state religion and consequently replacing Shari'a—Islamic law—with secular law.[15] However, Islam still has an incredibly important and strong influence in this country; nearly 99% of its population is Muslim.[16] Of this number, approximately two-thirds are Sunni and about one-third are Shi'ite Muslims.[17] Beautiful mosques decorate the land, and five times daily the *muezzin* issues the call to prayer. Another important point about the population of Turkey is that 80% are Turks, 17% are Kurds, and the rest are minority groups such as Greeks, Armenians, and Sephardic Jews.[18] These groups—

particularly the Turks and the Kurds—have had many conflicts, including some that raise human rights concerns. Today, these groups manage to live together in relative peace. This has permitted a great deal of urbanization; now, 63% of the population live in urban areas.[19] With the population divided nearly equally between rural and city life, varying family structures can be seen. Traditional family values, wherein the father is acknowledged as head of the family, still hold in the rural regions of Turkey. And, although nuclear families are typical in cities, the father's unchallenged leadership is not so pronounced. Even though women already had many rights under Islamic law, the secular regulations have improved the status of Turkish women. Polygamy was banned in 1930; and women acquired both voting rights (in 1927) and divorce rights (in 1934). It is illegal for women to marry before the age of 15; and men cannot marry before the age of 17; the average marriage ages are 22 and 25, respectively. As in many Western nations, there are people who choose to get married while young, but many others wait to finish their educations or their military service before marriage. Rural families are still involved in arranging marriages, but, in urban areas, the choice of a spouse is mainly up to the individual. Also, in urban areas, many women work outside of the home. This does not necessarily mean that women in the countryside are prohibited from working outside the home, but farming and pastoral work is often a family business, and everyone is expected to help out rather than to find outside employment.

Other indications that Turkey is becoming a modern country are its educational and health care policies and programs. Primary and secondary education are free and coeducational, and there are attempts to make sure that all people have access to the same quality of education. Within its educational programs, Turkey is also trying to distribute information about childcare and family planning. The government hopes this and more widespread programs of child immunization and prenatal care will help reduce infant mortality rates. Overall, general health education is now being emphasized.

But even with the improvements in policies in these areas, education is not accessible to everyone. Accessibility sometimes depends on region or on gender. One way in which the disparities between the education of males and females are being removed is through twenty-three Multi-purpose Community Centers (called CATOMs).[20] The goal of these CATOMs is to teach women some basic skills such as reading, writing and computer literacy; women are also given training for employment that allows them to earn money. Beyond these, Arab, Kurdish and Turkish women are provided with education in such areas as child nutrition, women's health, and family planning. They discuss ways to overcome personal problems and societal impediments; together, along the way, members of these diverse groups build personal and lasting friendships. Having these programs solely for women bridges the gap between the differential educations of men and women, and it also allows women to gain independence without suffering a backlash within more traditional families. Once a woman reaches puberty, it is often considered inappropriate for her to co-mingle with men, particularly when she is unsupervised by her parents. Under Islamic law, punishments for so doing are very harsh, and some families still enforce them. The CATOMs allow women to be educated without having to worry about families hearing of excessive contact with men. Although there are still discontinuities in the health care and educational systems of Turkey, that Islamic nation is working to remove them.

Despite all the work done within Turkey, its international political standing has not changed much over the years. Turkey has been petitioning for entry into the European Union (EU) since shortly after the EU's creation, but for various reasons it has not yet been accepted.[21] Turkey has been a member of NATO since 1952; in fact, it is the most eastern country of the organization. But even with this alliance, NATO declared fundamentalist Islam a danger in 1996.[22] This has caused tension between Turkey and Western countries because Turkey is predominantly Muslim, and it is involved in economic trade with other Middle Eastern countries that are also mostly Muslim. Turkey's trade with these countries should not suggest that Turkey is supportive of terrorism, particularly against its NATO allies. The problem with Turkey's proximity to the Middle East may be part of what keeps it from being accepted into the EU. And another factor may be that Christian-dominated Europe is not yet ready to accept a Muslim country into its union, despite the fact that Turkey is a democratic state with a capitalist economy. Negotiations for Turkey's entry into the EU will continue and, perhaps, as time passes, tensions between Turkey and the rest of Europe will ease.

V

It is important to remember that Islam has had a great influence in the world. In contrast to the many positive developments that Islam has had upon the culture of Turkey, the Taliban in Afghanistan used a twisted understanding of the Islamic faith by emphasizing negative attitudes toward women. Although the Islam is very important to the people, many powerful people have used that religion so as to impose a rule that is inhospitable both towards women and towards families.

After twenty-four years of war, the demographics of Afghanistan are difficult to determine. However, it is known that Islam was a driving force there after the Soviet occupation, a civil war, and some other very difficult times. The Taliban took over in 1995, but it largely lost control of the country in November, 2001. Afghanistan suffered greatly under its rule. In the country today, there continues to be a constant danger of violent attacks upon its citizenry.[23] The Taliban repressed women in particular with a goodly number of restrictions, and it sought to make them all but invisible. Under the Taliban's rule, women were forbidden to go to school, to be employed, or even to leave their homes without being fully covered and escorted by a male member of their family.[24] The windows of a woman's home also had to be painted so that people passing by would not see inside.[25] For all practical purposes, women were placed under "house arrest," and venturing into the streets was, and sometimes still is, dangerous, even if one follows all other rules. Women were not to make any noise as they walked, an offence that was punishable. The required attire for women in public was a burqa, a full-length veil or body covering that masks everything but a slit to breathe and to see through.[26] Not only are these garments cumbersome, difficult to see out of, and difficult to move in, but they are also very expensive. It takes about five months of salary to purchase a burqa.[27] Most people could not afford this, and communities were forced to share one veil to conduct their day-to-day business. Also, women were not allowed to wear their hair short, pluck their eyebrows, or wear jewelry, makeup, nail polish, or high heels.[28] The Qur'an does call for men and women to be modestly dressed, but the Taliban's rules were excessive. In fact, when women make a pilgrimage—a *Hajj*—to Mecca, they are to do so with their faces revealed.[29] The Taliban's rules thus differed from Islamic law in more ways than simply those concerning women's appearance.

Women's educations and employment prospects were drastically reduced with the Taliban in control. Thousands of private schools that taught women were closed after the Taliban took control, and any that remained open could teach women only about the Qur'an until they were 8 years old.[30] The Taliban's rule caused Afghanistan to lose a significant resource: women in the workforce. As Jan Goodwin reminds us: "Before the Taliban ban on female employment, 70% of teachers in Kabul were women, as were 50% of civil servants and university students, and 40% of the doctors."[31] Women were also judges and professors at universities.[32] The rule of the Taliban has left many women without the education or skills to make a living. Being able to survive by doing some sort of work is the first priority of these women. Literacy may perhaps have to be sacrificed for a time, but some kind of program is necessary to give 10- to 20- year-old women some practical skills. Many women who have been unable to work outside their homes have found themselves as the only providers for their families. The drop in workforce strength alone is incredible, but women also lost the role models available that were formerly available to them. The loss of personal freedoms was staggering, but women had even lost the right to be healthy, both mentally and physically.

The Taliban instituted rules for everything, and health care practice was no exception. Once all female medical workers were eliminated, it became virtually impossible for women to be treated by physicians, since all practicing doctors were then male.[33] This is because it was illegal for a woman to have conversations with men unless they were close relatives.[34] This effectively cut off health care to women, and it devastated families. Also, owing to travel restrictions, women could not easily take their children to receive medical attention. Afghanistan has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world. And if the children were lucky enough to live, there was no guarantee that they would have a normal family life.[35]

The constant atmosphere of war has cost many families loved ones. The Taliban took many of the men prisoners. Some were tortured, others killed, and others simply disappeared.[36] These men were sons, fathers, and brothers, many of whom did nothing to deserve their fates; their disappearance left women alone to care for families. According to a United Nations Children's Fund Report, in four years of fighting, 72% of Afghan children lost a relative.[37] There was simply no way for any stable lifestyle or relationships to form in this kind of repressive atmosphere.

Islam is the faith of many people in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, many of the family roles prescribed in the Qur'an or by Muhammad have been left unfulfilled. Absentee parents cannot nurture their children, share their faith, or help find suitable husbands and wives for their children. Children without either opportunities or families may never be able to support a family of their own, let alone support their aging parents. Human rights violations and loss of life brought about broken homes and created single-parent families that must struggle simply to survive. The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) has been fighting for women's rights since 1977, when it was established in the capital city of Kabul as a response to the many atrocities committed in the name of Islam. However, this organization is most widely known for its activism against the Taliban.[38] Its goal is to obtain a social order and government based on democratic principles in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. In this way, women will be able to have the same benefits available to them as to men.

Looking at Turkish and Afganistani practices, it is easily seen that Islam has remained a strong influence in today's world. Islam fostered the Renaissance through study and by emphasizing education for all people, and it had a positive influence on many cultures in this way. Several modern countries have been able to take the best aspects of Islam, incorporating them into their thriving nations. Regrettably, Islam's practices have also been perverted in ways that oppress people and destroy one of the most central aspects of Islam in which one can show one's obedience to Allah: the family. One hopes that the future of Islam will bring positive changes both to Muslims and to non-Muslims alike.

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[1] For example, the word "Jihad" is often associated with terrorist extremists who have attacked innocent people in the name of Islam. However, these extremists have either misunderstood the true meaning of "Jihad" or have chosen to ignore it. The Greater Jihad is the inner struggle to overcome evil within oneself. The Lesser Jihad implies fighting against the enemies of Islam, meaning those who would seek to destroy the religion as a whole. Fighting to preserve the existence of Islam is the only type of war in which Muslims can participate. Many people do not realize this fact and, thus, they misunderstand what Jihad is really about.

[2] Tamara Sonn. "Islam: Conventional Expectation Versus This Religious Tradition," in *The Ethics of Family Life: What Do We Owe One Another?*, ed. by Jacob Neusner (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001) 67.

[3] *Ibid.*, 67.

[4] *Ibid.*, 65, 69.

[5] *Ibid.*, 70.

[6] *Ibid.*, 72.

[7] *Ibid*. Jews and Christians are considered to be "people of the book" because their faiths share so much of the same background and traditions, particularly the revelation that there is only one god.

[8] *Ibid.*, 74.

[9] *Qur'an*, 4:130

[10] Sonn, *op. cit.*, 81-82.

[11] *Ibid.*, 75

[12] *Ibid.*, 77.

[13] *Ibid.*, 76.

[14] *Ibid.*, 78-79.

[15] "Turkey," Student Exchange Program, Date of access: 27 April 2003. http://sepdata.virtualave.net/turkey1.html.

[16] "Turkish Delights" Travel: New York Times, Date of access: 27 April 2003. http://nytimes.com/fodors/fdrs_feat_77_1.html.

[17] "Turkey," *op. cit.*

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] The data in this and in the next paragraph is taken from "Turkey," *op. cit.*

[20] Gina Gagnon. "Bringing Prosperity Back to Women in the Cradle of Civilization: Turkey's CATOMs," in *Human Strategies for Human Right*s. Date of access: 27 April 2003. http://sepdata.virtualave.net/turkey1.html.

[21] John Lloyd. "Turkey's closeness to the Islamic bloc causes problems for the West, but it need not shatter our confidence in it," New Statesman 30 Aug. 1996. Date of access: 27 April 2003. http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m0FQP/n4299_v125/18655961/p1/article.jhtml

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] Hillary Mayell. "Change Slow for Afghan Women" National Geographic News, 12 March 2002. Date of access: 29 April 2003. http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/03/0312_020312_afghan women.html.

[24] "Women and Children in Afghanistan & Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)," Date of access: 28 April 2003. http://www.simplytaty.com/broadenpages/rawa.htlm.

[25] Mayell, *op. cit*.

[26] "Women and Children in Afghanistan & Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)," Date of access: 28 April 2003. http://www.simplytaty.com/broadenpages/rawa.htlm.

[27] Jan Goodwin. "Buried Alive: Afghan Women Under the Taliban," OTI Online. Date of access: 27 April 2003. http://mosaic.echonyc.com/~onissues/su98goodwin.html. (This assumes that a woman was able to make the money by having her own job.)

[28] *Ibid*.

[29] *Ibid.* It should be noted that when people in the West think of the oppression of women, the veiled image often comes to mind. It is important to realize that wearing a burqa is not the most important issue concerning women as they see it. In fact, some women choose to veil themselves because they feel more comfortable this way not just

because of their religious beliefs or cultural background. However, having the choice about how much to veil, if at all, should not be taken for granted. The fight for education, employment, proper health care, and the right to personal safety far outweigh any woman's desire to wear nail polish or let her hair down.

[30] Women and Children in Afghanistan & Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)," Date of access: 28 April 2003. http://www.simplytaty.com/broadenpages/rawa.htlm.

[31] Goodwin, *op. cit.*

[32] Mayell, *op. cit.*

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] Goodwin, *op. cit.*

[35] Mayell, *op. cit.* Almost 90% of children were born into this world without any sort of medical staff available and it is estimated that 85% of child deaths could have been prevented with minimal medical care.

[36] Women and Children in Afghanistan & Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)," Date of access: 28 April 2003. http://www.simplytaty.com/broadenpages/rawa.htlm.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Sahar Muradi. "Afghan Women Fight the Taliban," Sojourner Nov. 1999. Date of access: 30 April 2003. http://www.sojourner.org/Afghan%20Women/11.99_fight_Taliban.html.

The Decline of Religious Commitment: Redefining the Sacred in Tom Robbins •

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I

Contemporary American author Tom Robbins has been titillating audiences with his popular fiction for over thirty years. His novels can be described as adventures that explore the depths of human experience. The themes that run through his stories developed out of the counterculture movement of the 1960's—the struggle for civil rights, the sexual revolution, and the Vietnam War protests that took place in America—have influenced and shaped Robbins' writings.

Some critics argue that the themes in Robbins' texts are not important to contemporary society, that they are outdated or that they appeal to a limited audience. Literary critic Tracy Johnson, who wrote about Robbins in *Salon* magazine in 2000, suggested that he is "the official record-keeper of post-adolescents with an attitude problem."[1] In her article, she compares Robbins to gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson, noting that he, too, "…writes with a pen dipped in acid."[2]

Although some critics have not taken Robbins' work seriously, others have found immense depth in his novels, and many have used his work as a model for a new pattern of existence. In this essay, I shall reveal some of the depth of Robbins' writings and show the importance of his work to modern society. I will demonstrate how Robbins goes beyond ideological standards and expectations to bring readers to a new understanding and appreciation of life.

II

Robbins emphasizes the importance of personal spirituality and philosophical independence over organized religion. Although this displacement began in the 1960's, this thrust has continued into the twenty-first century. More people have been moving away from the strict dogma and narrowness of traditional religions toward greater spiritual independence. The increasing tendency toward a secular society—the movement away from the influences of organized religion—has been a theme that runs throughout Robbins' novels. In 1984, The *Saturday Review* commented, "[Robbins] lays before us the time-honored warts and hairs of the world's philosophers—problems with religion, war, politics, family, marriage, and sex—and leaves no twists or turns unstoned."[3] The profound depth with which Robbins writes proves that he is not merely entertaining. He is edifying.

Liberating the individual from restrictive ideological standards has become Robbins' mission in his texts. All experiences, according to Robbins, are sacred, and they should be held in the highest regard as one of God's performed miracles. These experiences are not limited to those that are considered appropriate in current religions. In fact, Robbins would argue that the ecstatic feelings derived in sexual encounters, either heterosexual or homosexual, and in illicit drug use, can bring us closer to the divine than can any church service or organized spiritual activity. Robbins does not necessarily endorse these activities in his texts; they are simply ones that his characters employ on their paths toward spiritual enlightenment.

Robbins tells us that merely talking about God is not experiencing divinity. Experiencing the divine is something personal. It should be done individually, apart from organized religion. In his novel, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, he writes:

> …spiritual devotion to a popular teacher with an ambiguous dogma is merely a method of making experience more tolerable, not a method of understanding experience or even of accurately describing it.[4]

He goes on to counsel: "Be your own master! Be your own Jesus! Be your own flying saucer! Rescue yourself. Be your own valentine! Free the heart!"[5] Here, Robbins attempts to redefine religion as a personalized form of spirituality that cannot be restricted by dogma. It should be left up to the individual to decide what is sacred, and Robbins sees this new life plan as the only true source of cultural change.

In his biography on Robbins, Mark Siegel clarifies the author's proposed method of change:

> He believes that real change and advancement leading to a new social order will not occur simply from the dramatic, violent destruction of the old, but must evolve from a growth in each individual's self-knowledge. Robbins thinks this can be accomplished by people putting the 'personal adventure' over the 'public mission.' He wants people to put the enjoyment of life and the pleasures it can offer (orgasm being one of those pleasures) over the organizations that serve to limit the individual.[6]

Robbins does not attack specific, organized religions in his texts, nor does he prescribe a new religion for his readers; he merely makes suggestions for a new way of living. In so doing, he challenges traditional ideological institutions that have limited individuals. Within this new framework, Robbins allows for certain experiences that have been deemed immoral or taboo in contemporary society. Sex is one of these experiences through which Robbins claims we can get close to the sacred nature of reality without being restricted by any organized belief system.

III

Robbins shows us how sex can play an important role in spiritual exploration. Sissy Hankshaw, the main character in *Cowgirls*, was born with enormous thumbs; she soon realizes that her destiny is to become a hitchhiker. Sissy hitchhikes across the U.S. for many years, in constant motion, performing sexual acts in return for rides from strange truck drivers and lonely commuters.

Around the age of 25, she lands in New York and meets a man named "The Countess", who runs a feminine hygiene company. He is determined to rid the world of the smell of the female vagina. He hires Sissy, who is very beautiful despite her monstrous thumbs, to pose in a magazine ad for his sweet-smelling douche. He sends Sissy to the Rubber Rose Ranch in South Dakota, where she encounters the other cowgirls.

Sissy soon realizes that the girls are more than close friends, and she partakes in several sexual acts with a few of the ranch-hands. Up to this point in the novel, Robbins has created a hedonistic paradise with little, if any, philosophical significance. Then he introduces the Chink.[7] The Chink is a very old Japanese man who lives on a cliff that overlooks the Rubber Rose Ranch. He has used his experience with a religious organization called "The Clock People" to form his own philosophy regarding time, space and relativity. He incorporates this knowledge into a personal philosophy of life in which truth and meaning are seen as being discovered through his sexual experiences. The Chink bases this view on the assumption that individuals express true, unaltered emotion when they are in sexual situations. In this state, he feels as if he is unaffected by society, by organized religion and by all social ideologies that bind individuals to prescribed norms. He does not see himself as a spiritual leader, yet he is labeled as a spiritual guide and guru by the novel's other characters.

Sissy becomes intimately involved with the Chink, as do many of the other cowgirls. They make frequent pilgrimages to his shack on the hill; they seek guidance, retreat and spiritual enlightenment. After a visit with the Chink, the girls describe feeling strangely more in tune with nature and the universe, and somehow they are brought back into balance with the world. Sissy describes sex with the Chink as being almost Tantric,[8] eliciting heightened spiritual awareness and sensitivity. On one occasion, Sissy has gone to see the Chink. She is engaged in sexual intercourse with him. She is described as feeling "…stunned, elated, moved almost to tears…her heart, like her thumbs, was aglow."[9] The lovemaking sessions between Sissy and the Chink are described by Robbins as lasting for days at a time, promoting a kind of personal, spiritual awareness within each of them thereafter.

IV

Robbins has also written on the topics of sex and religion in other works. In his essay, "Sex, Individuality, and Immortality in Tom Robbins' *Jitterbug Perfume*," Sean Anderson indicates how Robbins' personal philosophy regarding sex and religion comes through. He writes:

> He believes in the spirit of the individual overcoming the constricting nature of organization and government, and sex plays a large part in assisting the human spirit with this endeavor. Robbins' use of sex, however, is simply as a tool for pleasure, but that pleasure and the challenging and overcoming of its taboo is foremost in helping a participant reach that 'stuff of higher consciousness'.[10]

Sexuality is of central importance in the novel; it is the mode by which elevated states of consciousness are reached. In his essay, Anderson attempts both to reveal Robbins' opposition to organization and to show how sexual experience plays a part in his plea for personalized spirituality.

Historically, sex has been used in religious rituals for thousands of years. Mention has already been made of the Tantric approach to religion and spirituality. In Middle Eastern religions, *Hieros Gamos* is a sacred marriage ritual in which the high priestess of ancient Goddess religions, acting as an avatar of the Goddess, would have sex with the ruler of the country to show the Goddess' acceptance of the ruler. Records of this ceremony have dated as far back as early Sumerian times (around 3500 BCE). Representations of human sexuality within religious circles are therefore not limited to ancient Hindu cosmology. Here is part of the ceremony as translated from an ancient Sumerian poem:

> The High Priestess, acting for Inanna, is speaking to Dumuzi the new king.
>
> ”My vulva, the horn,
> The boat of Heaven,
> Is full of eagerness like the young moon.
> My untilled land lies fallow.
> As for me, Inanna,
> Who will plow my vulva?
> Who will plow my high field?
> Who will plow my wet ground?
> As for me, the young woman,
> Who will plow my vulva?
> Who will station the ox there?
> Who will plow my vulva?”

Many of the pre-Christian, earth-based religious rituals involved sexual acts and orgies. The word *orgy* comes from the Greek work *orgia*, meaning *secret worship*. Today, the word has been altered by Christian opposition to sexual expression, and a number of these celebrations have been taken over by Christians, who removed their sexual nature. The best known is undoubtedly Christmas, which was taken from the pagan festival of Saturnalia.[11]

V

Drug use has also played an historical role in some religions, particularly indigenous ones. In recent times, it has claimed to free individuals from various social and ideological beliefs and standards. Since the counterculture movement of the 1960's, it has been reintroduced as a mode of intellectual stimulation and spiritual exploration. The "mind altering" drugs of the sixties are explored in Robbins' texts as a way for individuals to experience the sacred. In his *Cowgirls*, several of the girls on the ranch use peyote buttons for spiritual guidance and mystical experiences. They even drug a flock of endangered whooping cranes with the hallucinogenic herb in order to keep them sedated and on the ranch, thus protected from government interference, from the ornithologists who wish to use the flock for scientific study. The ranch-hands believed that the birds should be able to live their lives without governmental or scientific interference, especially since humans themselves have caused them to be endangered!

Robbins portrays the virtues of recreational drug use while reclaiming the sacred, which, as many argue, has been lost in contemporary religion. Robbins himself experimented extensively with LSD; he began using the drug as a creative stimulant before writing his first novel, *Another Roadside Attraction*. Many critics have claimed that his work is merely the result of an acid trip, yet I believe that Robbins draws readers in with his insight and wisdom. Robbins' texts, although sometimes containing bizarre incidents, are otherwise coherent and relevant to life. They deal with issues that affect people, and they creatively explore answers to life's more difficult questions. Johnson tells us, "[Robbins' novels] appear to have been conceived on the underside of an acid tab but written in the harsh light of morning."[12] Although eccentric, and perhaps concocted in a mind-altered state, his ideas prove to be innovative and useful, even to sober readers. These experiences, although deemed immoral in many organized religious traditions, are ones that redefine the sacred for many individuals, including Robbins himself.

VI

Much like the scriptures of many organized religions, Robbins' work can, and should be, interpreted metaphorically. Literally speaking, he does not prescribe any specific behaviors in his texts; he merely makes the point that certain approaches portrayed in his works should not be overlooked as methods of either seeking or reaching the sacred. There are many metaphors within *Cowgirls* that can be helpful in suggesting how one might reach a fuller personal awareness. For example, Sissy was born with enormous thumbs, which many people would consider a physical defect. But instead of feeling misplaced and rejected for her "flaw," she turns her quirky attribute into something positive so as to make a place for herself. She becomes a hitchhiker—the quintessential metaphor for undertaking a journey in life. And, on this journey, she reaches many conclusions about what is personally sacred for her, without relying on organized religion. She finds great joy in traveling, in being close to nature on the ranch, and in forming relationships along the way. Her every encounter—physical, emotional, and intellectual—stimulates her, helping her to create the person she becomes by the end of the novel. The freedom she gains from her spontaneity helps to develop her personal experience of the sacred in a way that avoids social boundaries and restrictive ideologies that society has set before her. In the end, she has what she takes to be a fuller experience of the divine within herself.

The Chink's last word of advice to Sissy in Cowgirls is:

> Even the wisest gurus are blind in your section of the burrow. … All a person can do in this life is to gather about him his integrity, his imagination and his individuality—and with these ever with him, out front and in sharp focus, leap into the dance of experience.[13]

Here, he urges Sissy (and readers alike) to experience things individually, to create a personal sense of the sacred and to enjoy life to the fullest. In this way, Robbins would urge that individuals are not to rely on others' experiences and ideas for knowledge of the divine nature of being. Rather, they themselves should find the wisdom to know what is right and divine.

VII

It has been written about Robbins that he:

> …has long been grouped with counterculture-gone-bestsellers like Richard Brautigan and Kurt Vonnegut, who, like Robbins, were required reading in the '70s, and all of whom, critics say, preached the '60s worldview well past its sell-by date.[14]

However, I believe the importance of his work has continued into the twenty-first century, giving readers a different perspective on modern-day issues. He has focused on different practices and ideologies—ones that have traditionally been associated with indigenous and non-Western approaches to spirituality—that allow for previously illegitimated behaviors to enter into the realm of the sacred in Western cultures. On this view, anything in nature can be sanctified. He urges his readers not to be restricted by excessive regulations set forth by organized religion or by society. They are to view themselves as living in a new dimension, open to many possibilities and new understandings. This type of living can bring unlimited potential to those who strive to understand their lives as fitting into the integral network of the universe.

Robbins does not consider himself to be the father of a great spiritual movement. For that matter, neither does he try to minimize the importance of organized religion. Through his novels, he simply claims that social and religious organizations, in disallowing certain personal freedoms—sexual or otherwise—threaten to kill the individual spirit. Robbins therefore draws the connection between personal, sensory experience and a truly spiritual one in which people are not limited to one perspective. Rather, they are allowed to create their own sacred experience. In an interview with Robbins, Mark Siegel quoted him, thus:

> Movements are for Beethoven and the bowels. The stuff of higher consciousness is pretty much confined to the individual spirit, and the individual spirit is murdered by organization.[15]

VIII

The movement away from organized religion is not an organized movement. Instead, it is a personal journey, much like that of Sissy in *Cowgirls*. It is a journey into oneself. I believe that the decline of religious commitment in contemporary society is not a threat to humanity; rather it is evidence that individuals are redefining the sacred for themselves. There is no longer the need for old-time supernaturalism.[16] Salvation lies independently within each individual, and it is not determined or influenced by any outside forces, especially not by organized religion.

Tom Robbins writes books that are important to contemporary society because he deals with issues that matter most to people. In his writings, he does not attempt to answer all of life's important questions; instead, he directs us back to ourselves. Looking inward, readers of Robbins should realize that they have held the answers to those important questions all along. Personal salvation exists within oneself when the sacred is redefined individually.

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[1] Tracy Johnson, *Salon* (Salon Media Group, Inc: San Francisco, CA, 2000) 2, available at http://archive.salon.com/people/feature/2000/03/09/robbins/

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *The Saturday Review*, 1984 (taken from insert on *Jitterbug Perfume*)

[4] Tom Robbins, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1976) 226.

[5] *Ibid.*, 227.

[6] Mark Siegel, *Tom Robbins*: *Western Writers Series No. 42* (Boise, Idaho: Boise University Press, 1980) 10.

[7] The fact that Robbins has chosen the name "the Chink" for this important character has been problematic for some readers owing to the insinuation of negative cultural stereotyping. He simply offers a parody of the stereotype by poking fun of the Western notion of Orientalism.

[8] There are many parallels between the sexual acts described by Robbins in *Cowgirls* and the Hindu art of Tantric sex. *Tantra*, a Sanskrit word which means "*woven together*," is a term loosely applied to several divergent and even contradictory schools of Hindu yoga in which the sexual union of male and female is worshipped either in principle or in human practice. But it has also come to be applied to sex-based religious practices developed in other religions, including Bon, Tibetan Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Judaism, and Transcendentalism. Tantra incorporates what is called *God-energy* into lovemaking in which a balance occurs between male and female energies. It is these complementing energies upon which the Hindu cosmology, for example, is based. Tantric sex is sacred and is a form of worship for Hindus. It is believed to be through sexual experiences that participants reach the sacred realm of the divine or attain enlightenment. In using this model of spiritual awakening, Robbins challenges Western ideological standards regarding sex, while at the same time he is integrally exploring new methods for religious experience.

[9] Robbins, *Op. cit.*, 218.

[10] Sean Anderson, "Sex, Individuality, and Immortality in Tom Robbins' *Jitterbug Perfume*, 1, available at http://www.atpinternet.com/users/sta/501essay.asp

[11] Saturn, from whom we get the word for the last day of the week, Saturday, was the Roman name for the Greek God, Cronus and the Babylonian God Ninip. Sometimes called *The Lord of Death*, he was represented by the sun at its lowest aspect at the winter solstice. That is when the earth is cold and most plants are dead, and it was believed that the sun was approaching death. Today that is around December 21st, but because of calendar changes, it was originally December 25th. Saturnalia celebrated the sun's overcoming the power of winter, with the hope of spring when life would be renewed. In Roman times, Bacchus, the god of wine, became the lord of these festivals. During the Bacchanalian festivals the everyday rules were turned topsy turvy. The masters waited on the servants. All sexual prohibitions were lifted. Even some gender roles changed with men dressing as women. Erotic dances were performed with a large erect phallus being carried around in the dancing processionals. It was thought to be a time of good will towards all humans.

[12] Johnson, *Op. cit.*, 2.

[13] Robbins, *Op. cit.*, 236.

[14] Johnson, *Op. cit.*, 4.

[15] Siegel, *Op. cit.*, 10.

[16] According to Glock and Stark, there has been "not only a departure from old time supernaturalism, but from other forms of commitment which are under girded by supernaturalism" in certain modern religious movements. See Charles Glock and Rodney Stark, *American Piety: The Nature of Religious Commitment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968) 213.

C. S. Lewis: A Biographical Essay •Amanda Sponder

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I

He was an author, a Christian apologist, a husband, a brother and a friend. He was C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), and he expressed his faith in everything he did. Over the course of his lifetime, he accomplished much. This ranged from his impact left on the people he knew to his influence on the people who knew him through his radio broadcasts and prolific writings. It is because of these accomplishments that we remember him today. A look into his life and his works will show us who C. S. Lewis was.

II

Clive Staples Lewis was born in Belfast, Ireland, on November 29, 1898; he was the younger brother of Warren and a son of Albert and Florence Lewis. Their family of four soon became a family of three. Florence's death from cancer left Clive, Warnie, and their father alone. Clive, who often called himself "Jack," was sent to boarding school after his mother's death. He attended Wynyard School in Watford, Hertfordshire, then Campbell College, and finally Cherbourg House in Malvern, England. It was while Jack was in Malvern that he left the Christian faith in which he had been raised. He expressed his feelings about religion in a letter to Arthur Greeves in October of 1916:

> You know, I think, that I believe in no religion. There is absolutely no proof for any of them, and from a philosophical standpoint Christianity is not even the best. All religions, that is, all mythologies to give them their proper name are merely man's own invention—Christ as much as Loki. Primitive man

> found himself surrounded by all sorts of terrible things he didn't understand.…Thus religion, that is to say mythology grew up. Often, too, great men were regarded as gods after their death—such as Heracles or Odin: thus after the death of a Hebrew philosopher Yeshua (whose name we have corrupted into Jesus) he became regarded as a god, a cult sprang up, which was afterwards connected with the ancient Hebrew Jahwah—worship, and so Christianity came into being—one mythology among many.…Of course, mind you, I am not laying down as a certainty that there is nothing outside the material world…this would be foolish.[1]

Greeves, a friend of Lewis from the time that they discovered a shared love for Norse mythology, was to become one of Jack's oldest and dearest friends. The two maintained a lifelong friendship. They shared intimate thoughts, often ones that they told to no one else.[2]

After six years in Malvern, although they were Irish citizens and not duty-bound to do so, Lewis enlisted to fight in World War I. While commissioned as an officer in the 3rd Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry, he met Edward Courtnay Francis "Paddy" Moore, who was to become his friend and roommate. Lewis was wounded in battle, but he recovered and was discharged. Moore was not as lucky. He was killed, buried in a field just south of the town of Peronne, France. Subsequently, Lewis took over the care of Paddy's mother and his sister, Maureen, as he had promised Moore. Mrs. Moore must have filled a longing Lewis had for his mother because the two lived together until her death in 1951.

In 1919, shortly after World War I, Lewis published his first work, but he was not to become well known for many years thereafter. He spent a few years at Magdalen College in Oxford. And, in 1920, he received "a first" (award) in Classical Moderations, and, then, in 1922, "a first" in Greats (Ancient History and Philosophy). And, in 1923, he received "a third" in English Language and Literature.[3] It was then that he made friends with fellow student, Nevill Coghill, and had "the shock of discovering that [Coghill]—clearly the most intelligent and best informed man in that class—was a Christian and a thoroughgoing supernaturalist."[4] Lewis then went on to be elected a Fellow of Magdalen College, and he met such luminaries as H.V.D. Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien. Lewis would meet every Thursday evening with these men and others so as to read each other's works. They called their group "The Inklings." It was these friends who helped in leading Lewis to his faith. In *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis tells of his coming to believe in God:

> Amiable agnostics will talk cheerfully about 'man's search for God.' To me, as I then was, they might as well have talked about the mouse's search for the cat....That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929, I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and I knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms.[5]

Such was Lewis' journey into theism, his reluctant journey. His Christian friends and mentors continued to be influential in his life. One night in September, 1931, Lewis, Tolkien, and Dyson spent some time together conversing and walking through a forest. Much of the conversation was theologically oriented, and Lewis recounts his conversion a week thereafter to Christianity. William Griffin reports it this way:

> As Monday, September 28th, began in Headington Quarry, the ground was carpeted with fog. During breakfast Maureen rehearsed the reasons for and against their planned excursion to the Whipsnade Zoo. At 11:15 Warren started the Daudel, Jack hopped into the sidecar, and the brothers roared off; the others would follow by car....At 3:00, they entered the zoo; all that is, except Jack, who had to mind the dog. He felt pleasantly relaxed, emotionally refreshed, as 'a man, after long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake.' Lounging on the waterproof, he became aware that, sometime during the last few hours, he had come to a conclusion without the intervention of the intellectual process. When he set out from Headington he hadn't believed, and when he arrived in Whipsnade he did believe, that Jesus Christ was the son of God....When Jack emerged [from the zoo] about 5:30, he found Warren eating Whipsnade Rock, sugar candy that was on sale at the zoo's gate.…The brothers cycled off; the others drove off; and when Jack stepped from the sidecar at the Kilns, he was a bit stiff, but the belief that Jesus Christ was the son of God was still limber.[6]

This change shaped the rest of C. S. Lewis' life—not only how he would live, but also how he would be remembered.

III

At that time, he was a scholar at the University of Oxford, a place where he would spend many years. While there, he wrote many of the works that are still read today. Walter Hooper, a close companion of Lewis in his later years, notes that, after his conversion, Lewis wrote with an ease that he had not known before.[7]

That ease is apparent in *The Pilgrim's Regress*, a parody of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Lewis' book details his own flight from skepticism to faith. By the end of 1935, he had written *The Allegory of Love: A Study of Medieval Tradition*, which was at once recognized as a great literary work. It won the Gollancz Award, and it established Lewis as a prominent medieval scholar. He went on to write works in a wide variety of categories, but all of his works contain the theme common to what he called "*Sehnsucht*," a German word for "longing." It is a theme in his science-fiction novels: *Out of the Silent Planet, Perelendra, That Hideous Strength,* and *Till We Have Faces*. Edwin Ransom, the hero of *Out of the Silent Planet,* is a philologist who is modeled roughly after Tolkien. *Perelendra* is set on Venus and is a "newer" version of *Paradise Lost*. *That Hideous Strength* is the third, and final, adventure of Dr. Ransom; it is a mixture of the real and the supernatural. *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis' favorite fictional work, was unappreciated by others; it retells the Cupid/Psyche myth.

There is an underlying, but very important, theme in all of these works: Lewis' characters experience a longing for "something more." As Walter Hooper observes, Lewis realized that in these books, under the cover of romance, he could sneak any amount of theology into people's minds without their ever realizing it.[8]

In 1940, Lewis published *The Problem of Pain*. This book is a defense both of the existence of pain and of the doctrine of hell. Lewis offered the contents of this book as evidence of an ordered universe.

During the same year, he was elected President of the Socratic Club at Oxford, which held meetings every Monday evening during term. When Lewis debated at these meetings, students filled the place. *The Screwtape Letters* were also conceived in 1940. Its theme—of an old devil writing letters to a young devil—came to Lewis while he was sitting in church.

IV

In 1941, Lewis was asked by the Director of Religious Broadcasting of the BBC to give some radio talks. These were aired between August, 1941, and April, 1944, and the series' programs were individually published by the titles *Broadcast Talks*, *Christian Behavior*, and *Beyond Personality*. They were later brought together under the heading of *Mere Christianity*. This book, along with *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, are probably Lewis' most well-known works. Indeed, given its prominence, I shall consider *Mere Christianity* in some detail. It moves in stepwise fashion through basic Christian beliefs, and on a level that is sufficiently clear for anyone. It is filled with illustrations to help the reader both understand and apply the points that Lewis makes. In one section, for example, Lewis explains, "I am not trying to tell you in this book what I could do—I can do precious little—I am telling you what Christianity is."[9] This goes hand in hand with the purpose Lewis states both for his radio talks and for his life. "The best and perhaps the only service he could do for his unbelieving neighbor was to explain and to defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times."[10] To ensure that he remained consistent with common Christian belief and to keep his audience from getting caught up in denominational differences, he collaborated with a variety of religious leaders.

The first series was entitled "Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe." It contained the five broadcasts, and it advanced a version of the moral argument for God's existence. Lewis begins by indicating how awareness at the human level of the moral law gives us an awareness of its source: God. The law he addresses is not a descriptive one (like Newton's law of gravity); rather, it involves our *sense* of right and wrong. He contends that even though we often break this law, we recognize its authority over us—an authority that is not grounded upon our nature, but comes from a higher source.

The second series, "What Christians Believe," begins, thus:

> …if you are a Christian you do not have to believe that all the other religions are simply wrong all through.…But, of course, being a Christian does mean thinking that where Christianity differs from other religions, Christianity is right and they are wrong. As in arithmetic—there is only one right answer to a sum, and all other answers are wrong: but some of the wrong answers are much nearer being right than others.[11]

Lewis indicates that many other religions contain a hint of the truth, and he also addresses the difference between atheism, monotheism and pantheism. Other issues he addresses include the nature of dualism and its relation to Christianity; that is, if Christians believe in both a source of good (God) and a force of evil (Satan), doesn't that make Christianity dualistic rather than monotheistic? If God is all-powerful, how has Satan become so powerful? That evil is prevalent in the world and Satan is in control of evil, doesn't that make Satan nearly as powerful as God? Lewis dealt with these questions by theorizing that Christianity does not posit a war between independent powers, but, instead, it proclaims something more akin to a civil war, a rebellion. And there is an alternative to the Devil, namely, Jesus Christ. Lewis contends that either Jesus must have been who he said he was or he was a liar, or something worse.[12] And it was Christ's death that put us right with God, giving us a fresh start.

> But supposing God became man—suppose our human nature which can suffer and die was amalgamated with God's nature in one person—then that person could help us.[13]

This is a core belief within Christianity, and it is the main point wherein Christianity differs with other religions. But, as Lewis notes, "This means something much more than our trying to follow His teaching."[14] Finally, this series ends with the admonition that God will invade the world without warning or disguise some day, striking "either irresistible love or irresistible horror in every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side."[15] So the time to choose is *now*.

The third series, "Christian Behavior," divides morality into three parts: social relations, our inner conduct, and our relationship with God. It also addresses our behavior relative to the "cardinal" and "theological" virtues of prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude. His fourth series, "Beyond Personality: Or First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity," discusses some more complex theological doctrines.

These broadcasts made Lewis famous, especially in the United States, where *Time* magazine called him "the apostle to skeptics." Each talk lasted about ten minutes and was broadcast on Wednesday evening. During this time, he also traveled with the Royal Air Force, giving lectures on theology.

V

Oxford University was not pleased with all of the religious work that Lewis was doing on his own, however. So it declined to offer him a professorship. Aware of this situation, and with Lewis specifically in mind, Cambridge University, in 1954, created a new Professorship of Medieval and Renaissance English Literature. It was not an easy decision for Lewis to make, but he did accept the position. The move was beneficial for Lewis, and he continued to write from Cambridge. In 1960, *Studies in Words*, a compilation of lectures written for Cambridge was published. And, in 1962, he published a set of miscellaneous essays in his work, *They Asked for a Paper*.

His works brought Lewis many 'pen friends,' to whom he always responded, but none of these friends was as special as Joy Davidman. She had in part been led to her Christian faith by the writings of Lewis, and the two met for lunch while she was visiting London. They developed an immediate attachment, and Lewis invited her to spend Christmas with him and Warnie at his home, the Kilns. Joy returned later to the Kilns with her sons for another vacation. Soon Davidman and Lewis made the decision to purchase their own home a mile away. The Home Office, however, refused permission for Joy to live and to work in England because of past ties she had had with the Communist Party. As a solution, Davidman and Lewis were married in a secret civil ceremony on April 23, 1956. They did not tell many people about this marriage, and they continued to live apart, in their own homes. In October, 1956, Joy was hospitalized after a fall that broke her leg. The doctors discovered that cancer had spread almost entirely throughout the bone in her leg, and secondary sites of cancer were found. It was thought by everyone that Joy did not have much time to live, and Lewis felt that he should bring her to the Kilns to die. He did not think that it was right to do so without a Christian marriage, however, so on March 21, 1957, the two were married in a church ceremony at her hospital bed. She and a nurse were then moved to the Kilns, and Joy was expected to live for only a few more weeks. But miraculously she got better. The cancer stopped spreading, and it even began to disappear. The bone began to regenerate. Joy recovered to the point that Lewis and she were able to take a trip to Greece in April of 1960. But, after they returned home, Joy's health began to deteriorate once again. And on July 13th she died. *A Grief Observed,* written by Lewis in response to his wife's death, expresses his grief and addresses the effect that Joy's death had on him and on his thought.[17]

VI

C. S. Lewis made much of his reputation through his scholarship, literary criticism, and religious apologetics. But we must not forget his children's literature. The seven books of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, steeped in Christian allegory and stories of chivalry, are set in the magical land of Narnia. They are filled with the *sehnsucht* that is in his other works—the same longing and searching for something more, something better. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,* the first in the series, was written in 1939, after four children, evacuated because of the air raids, came to live with Lewis. In his book, *Past Watchful Dragons,* Hooper explains:

> This book is about four children whose names were Ann, Martin, Rose, and Peter.…They all had to go away from London suddenly because of the Air Raids, and because Father, who was in the army, had gone off to the War, and Mother was doing some kind of war work. They were sent to stay with…a very old professor who lived by himself in the country.[18]

The four children were an inspiration for *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, but after beginning to write it Lewis set it aside and did not pick it up for nearly ten years. Finally, in 1949, he read the completed story to Roger Lancelyn Green, his former student and good friend of many years. And during this period Lewis continued to write *The Chronicles*.[19] Hooper suggests that the books be read starting with *The Magician's Nephew* because, although this book went through many revisions and wasn't completed until after *The Last Battle,* it is this book that tells of the creation of Narnia. *The Chronicles*, spanning a time frame of 2,555 Narnian years (comparable to about 55 earth years) tell of events that began around 1900. In this series, the Pevensie children, the characters followed throughout *The Chronicles*, do not arrive in Narnia until 1940. They are able to spend years in Narnia and return a moment later to the place where they originally left. This concept illustrates Lewis' belief about time. He insists:

> God is beyond time; He does not experience events sequentially, but contains them all. So God's knowing what we will do does not affect our free will. And because God is beyond Time, the Father begetting the Son is not sequential; there never was a time when the Son did not exist.[20]

Some people say *The Last Battle* is the equal of Lewis' essay, *The Weight of Glory*, that they both offer a warning that comes from the New Testament that we will some day appear before God and meet our judgment. Lewis puts it this way:

> In some sense…we can be both banished from the presence of Him who is present everywhere and erased from the knowledge of Him who knows all. We can be left utterly and absolutely outside.…On the other hand we can be called in, welcomed, received, acknowledged. We walk every day on the razor edge between these two incredible possibilities.[21]

The Pevensie children also display walking on this razor's edge, never knowing when they will be called in or left out. As *The Chronicles of Narnia* comes to an end in *The Last Battle*, the Pevensie children are acknowledged and welcomed by Aslan into a land far greater than even Narnia was. As they entered, their exclamations could be heard:

> I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this.[22]

Just as the journey of the Pevensie children through Narnia came to end and they began a new journey in a land far better, so too did Lewis' life on earth come to an end. As he said of the children's endings with Narnia:

> But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.[23]

C. S. Lewis died on November 22, 1963, and, although his death was over-shadowed by the death of President John F. Kennedy on the same day, Lewis' "cover and title page"—his life lived on earth, and the over three million copies of his works sold—he will live on in the Great Story. It is believed perhaps that he is in a place far better than can be imagined, and some day he will see others there who used his writings as a sort of map, on their own journey.

The Writings of C. S. Lewis

Juvenilia:
Boxen

Poetry:
Spirits in Bondage
Dymer
Launcelot
The Nameless Isle
The Queen of Drum: A Story in Five
Cantos

Autobiographical:
The Pilgrim's Regress
Surprised by Joy
A Grief Observed

Novels:
Out of the Silent Plant
The Dark Tower
Prelendra
That Hideous Strength
Till We Have Faces

Theological Fantasies:
The Screwtape Letters
The Great Divorce

Theology:
The Problem of Pain
Mere Christianity
The Abolition of Man
Miracles
Reflections on the Psalms
The Four Loves
Letters to Malcolm
The Pilgrim's Regress
The Weight of Glory
The World's Last Night
Of Other Worlds
Christian Reflections
God in the Dock

Chronicles of Narnia:
The Magicians Nephew
The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe
The Horse and His Boy
Prince Caspian
The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"
The Silver Chair
The Last Battle

Literary Criticism:
A Preface to 'Paradise Lost'
English Literature in the Sixteenth Century
The Allegory of Love
Rehabilitations
The Personal Heresy
Studies in Words
Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature
Spenser's Images of Life
Present Concerns
An Experiment in Criticism
The Discarded Image

Correspondences:
Letters of C. S. Lewis
Letters to An American Lady
They Stand Together

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[1] Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide (*San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996) 56.

[2] Many of the letters written from Jack to Arthur can also be read in the book *They Stand Together.* (Bibliographical references to the individual works by C.S. Lewis are given at the end of this essay.)

[3] A "first" in the British grading system is the equivalent of an "A+" in our system.

[4] C. S. Lewis, *Surprised By Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1956) 212.

[5] *Ibid*., 227.

[6] *Ibid*., 80.

[7] Walter Hooper, *Through Joy and Beyond: A Pictorial Biography of C.S. Lewis* (New York: Macmillan, 1982) 83.

[8] *Ibid*.

[9] C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity: of the Three Books 'The Case for Christianity, Christian Behavior, and Beyond Personality* (New York: Macmillan, 1952) 101.

[10] *Ibid*., Sec. VIII.

[11] *Ibid*.,43.

[12] *Ibid*., 53.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] *Ibid*., 59.

[15] *Ibid*., 66.

[16] A movie—"TheShadowlands"—is based upon their relationship.

[17] The work was not originally published under his own name, but under the pseudonym "N.W. Clerk," which means "I know not whom" and "scholar." In 1964, after his death, it was published under his own name.

[18] Walter Hooper, *Past Watchful Dragons* (New York: Macmillan, 1979) 30.

[19] He wrote them in this order: *Prince Caspian, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, The Horse and His Boy, The Silver Chair, The Last Battle*, and *The Magician's Nephew.*

[20] C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 146 ff.

[21] Quoted from Margaret Patterson Hannay, *C. S. Lewis.* (New York: Fredrick Ungar, 1981) 64.

[22] Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: Macmillan, 1956) 174.

[23] *Ibid*.