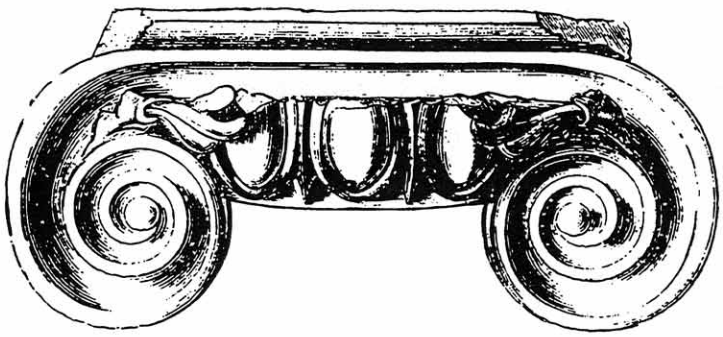
The Core Journal

Volume V / Spring 1996

A Collection of Essays
on Core Texts and Authors



Editors

Kim Chen Edmund Jorgensen
Lesley Fowler Cindy Louis
Erin Green Hannah Hintze

Contents

Introduction

Great works, like great friends, require a lifetime of dedication. Over the two years of Core, we meet some of the greatest and most influential works of our literary, philosophical, and scientific heritage. About six or seven times a semester, we respond to the introduction - in writing. In order to express, we are forced to judge, to consider, to absorb or to discard the ideas set before us. Whether we agree with these works whole-heartedly, or only in part, by the end of Core, they are no longer strangers. These early discourses that we hold with the Core works can be the start of a lasting conversation.

In selecting the twelve pieces in this volume, the editors looked for clear thinking, sensitive reading, original (and well-founded) interpretation, and a love of what has been learned. All three of the Core disciplines are represented; humanities papers are arranged in chronological order, with natural and social science papers interspersed.

The editors wish to thank all of the students who submitted papers for consideration, the professors who helped to bring in their students' good work, and the staff of the Core Office for copying and organizing submissions. The editors are especially indebted to Professor Speight for his kind attention and advice.

The Core Journal Editors, Spring 1996

Odysseus: The Vulnerable Hero

Kirsten Henning

Charismatic, strong, confident, stable. Each Ithakan, Phaiákian and Akhaian has his own adjective for Odysseus, one of the greatest warriors and leaders among the Greeks. He repeatedly displays his well-honed craftiness, a special quality that his friend Meneláos describes as a "glinting of the eye" (4.162). The combination of all these characteristics paint a picture of Odysseus as superhuman. Yet the picture is only a picture, an image created by the Phaiákians, and by Ithaka's twenty year long story telling about their absent hero. This image changes when he takes on the disguise as a beggar. This reveals ironic similarities between the hero and the beggar, and as a result, more mortal qualities of Odysseus. Just as Odysseus' scar is the key to revealing his identity physically, the true redefining of his character occurs as he himself discovers his flaws. Odysseus' image as a hero is broken, but not shattered, revealing a more complex vision of him, encompassing vulnerability.

When Odysseus arrives home in Ithaka, Athena transforms him into an old, debilitated beggar; a costume that completely disguises the brave, passionate Odysseus that left for Troy. This idea was conceived solely by Athena. To the reader's surprise, instead of desiring to return in glory, Odysseus welcomes the disguise. Even more surprisingly, as Odysseus' role as beggar progresses, the two characters display more similarities than differences. The disguise was intended to conceal both Odysseus' physical and internal characteristics but instead reveals a more complex, more human facet of him. In reality, this disguise was no mask, but rather a catalyst that reveals a complete Odysseus. This facade allowed him to experience the not so "Odysseus" side of himself. It is exactly the sharp contrast between the expected appearance of Odysseus and the disguise that allows for Odysseus' exploration of this vulnerable side.

Although the beggar that Odysseus becomes initially seems the opposite of his true self, the two are in fact similar. Physically, Odysseus has aged, and is worn down, as in

the scene of Phaiákian games. He denies participation, explaining that "now pain has cramped [him] and [his] years of combat/hacking through ranks in war, and the bitter sea" (8.191-192). His clothes are now of a similar appearance as when he had just braved the rough waters of Poseidon (8.390-450). The beggar too is first described as an "old outcast . . . his poor cloak, all in tatters" (17.257). Socially, Odysseus, like the beggar, is now an outcast in Ithaka, in the eyes of the suitors, at least. Eumaios also describes the beggar as a "rolling stone washed by the gales of life this way and that back to our own beach" (328). This also accurately depicts a twenty-year vagabond on his journey home.

And in fact, the suitors react to the beggar as they would to Odysseus; their feelings express jealousy, fear, and insecurity. For example, after the beggar asks to shoot the arrow in the competition, they call him a "bleary vagabond" (21.324), and later, "sly old buzzard" (21.457). They are afraid of the beggar shooting the arrow, as they would be with Odysseus. Even Penelope notes a similarity between the two, as the beggar's feet "are of an old age, and now Odysseus'/feet and hands would be enseamed like his / Men grow old soon in hardship" (19.419-421).

More similarities between the two characters are revealed as the "beggar" discloses his background. The beggar declares, "fool I was never called" (14.249). Odysseus' consistent crafty dealings with enemies, such as fooling the Cyclops with the name "nohbdy" certainly clears him of the title of fool as well (9.397). Also, the beggar speaks of amassing "a fortune, going about among the openhanded Egyptians" (14.330). He then loses it while traveling to Phoenicia, and has yet to embark on his homecoming. Odysseus is also in the same predicament. He has yet to actually reunite with his family, and has been taken over by the suitors. In essence, the story Odysseus tells as a lie is in fact a retelling of his own life.

In his lies, Odysseus exposes his true feelings; the disguise as beggar becomes the vehicle. The evidence for this is that these lies are so very close to the truth. Not only do Odysseus' lies express suffering, but hopefulness, too. After all the beggar's strife, he explains that "the gods were with me / keeping me hid" (14.414). This is in fact, true of Odysseus, who is currently under a protecting disguise as "Athena's arm is over us" (16.309). Earlier, after declaring his true name to the Cyclops, Odysseus escapes full

punishment when Poseidon says, "Odysseus should in time regain his homeland / I had no mind to rob him of that day /. . . / only I thought he should be made to suffer all the way" (13.159-164). The beggar's likeness to Odysseus is most evident when he says: "that was my element, war and battle . . . [not] fathering fair children. I reveled in long ships with oars . . . carnage suited me." Home is clearly not where the beggar spent the majority of his life; Odysseus has not been home for twenty years. His friend Meneláos spoke of his restless spirit: "that seems to have been his destiny" (4.118). The common theme running throughout all these lies is that Odysseus has left his family.

The vision of a near-immortal Odysseus is shattered again in the disclosure of his scar. Although Homer sets up no direct connection between the disguise and the scar via the plot of *The Odyssey*, these seemingly unrelated things both reveal an imperfect Odysseus. This flaw, which reduces his pure image, is the one characteristic above all others that identifies him. When his nurse Eurykleia bathes him, she notices the scar and immediately knows him to be Odysseus (19.451). This symbol of mistakes and ugliness is exactly that which makes him recognizable. Eurykleia tells Penelope of the scar to prove Odysseus' presence (23.82), and later, he uses it himself to demonstrate his identity to his father (24.365). Instead of convincing his family through his well-known wit or through their personal secrets, he utilizes the scar, his one physical defect. He has realized that the scar is a symbol of who he essentially is.

The presence of the scar and Odysseus' role as beggar reveal him to be an imperfect, and therefore more human character. The reader is aware of these fundamental traits; Odysseus' self-discovery has occurred gradually. This discovery culminates in the scene of recognition with Penelope. Part of his immortal image is his ability to overcome any obstacle. As described by his comrade Meneláos, "no soldier took on so much, went through so much" (4.113). Again, when his crew fears the sirens, Odysseus reminds them of his triumph with the Cyclops: "Did I not keep my nerve, and use my wits/to find a way out for us?" (12.273-274). Odysseus never seemed to desire any stability until he reunites with Penelope, but when she tells him that she has moved his bed, for the first time, he flies into a fury. He loses all control, saying, "woman, by heaven you've stung me now!" (23.208). He had assumed his bed was immobile and his extreme reaction indicates the

significance of this immobility. Perhaps this bed was the only element in his world that was stable. His need for this security reveals his vulnerability.

One reason for Odysseus' extreme reaction may be that he is suffering from guilt about being away for so long. In addition to the strangeness of his new home, this could also be a possible reason for Odysseus' need to explore who he truly is. He doesn't know his son, and his mother has died of grief. Both situations make for an awkward homecoming. Thus, instead of running to his family members in utter happiness, he restrains himself. Upon seeing his father, Läertes, he asks himself, "will he know me?" (24.241). He then proceeded to "interrogate him . . . better that way . . . first draw him out with sharp words, trouble him" (24.262). As with Penelope, Odysseus needs to have his father identify him (23.184-185). Perhaps he feels he unworthy of their presence after being away for so long. His guilt surfaces in the form of insecurity; he needs to confirm they *can* identify him. This need for recognition shows a kind of dependence on Odysseus' part; he cannot independently assure himself of who he is. This is the final example of his vulnerability.

This more complex image of Odysseus doesn't shatter his image as hero, it rather redefines him. The Ithakans have not had an incorrect view of Odysseus, but rather a skewed, incomplete one. They never thought to incorporate the traits of a weary, nameless beggar, or that of a scarred man in their vision of Odysseus. In essence, they failed to see that he is like themselves. Intending to glorify him, they unintentionally portrayed him as shallow. In reality, he has many more dimensions. Ironically, this failure to recognize imperfection is the exact mistake that Odysseus made himself. By failing to recognize his weakness, he is constricted in a hero mold. It is only when he sees himself as a full human being, that he can truly return home. This new depiction of Odysseus reshapes not just himself, but also, the image of all Greek heroes.

The Stoic Dilemma: Passion Vs. Duty

Lisa Edwin

"I am Aeneas, duty-bound...I look for Italy to be my fatherland, / And my descent is from all-highest Jove" (Aeneid I.519-24). These few lines present the prevailing themes of Virgil's Aeneid. Above all, the Aeneid tells the story of a Stoic, a man intrinsically tied to his duty and a destiny not of his own free will. The description of Italy as the "fatherland" foreshadows the strong patriarchal tradition to come and Aeneas' transition from son of Troy to father of Rome. Further, Aeneas mentions Jove to emphasize the connection between divine will and the Stoic duty. On one level, the Aeneid calls for a return home and a reinstatement of the Roman tradition. Virgil expresses this theme by exploring the progressions from sea to land, from war to agriculture, from Troy to Rome, and from east to west. But upon deeper investigation, these progressions make a statement about the best way of life by advancing from the transient to the absolute. Virgil compounds this higher message by contrasting the following ideas: women and men, action and non-action, and slavery and freedom. In fact, upon exploration of these conflicts, the Aeneid can be enjoyed for its value as an allegory of the human struggle to place duty ahead of passion.

First, Virgil presents the transition from sea to land as Aeneas sails for Hesperia. The sea is an inescapable obstacle that Aeneas and the Trojans must overcome in order to reach the destined land, but dwelling on the sea is adverse to destiny. Furthermore, the dominating image of the sea is its bestial quality and its volatility. For example, when Aeneas holds a boating race, the names of the ships reflect the monstrous nature of the sea; the boats are aptly named "Seabeast," "Chimaera," "Centaur," and "Scylla" (Aeneid V.154-64). In the same race, the fortune of the contestants fluctuates unpredictably. Earlier in the poem, even as he sacrifices to Neptune, god of the sea, Laocoon is murdered by two snakes from the sea, perhaps symbolizing Agamemnon and Menelaos (Aeneid II.275-94). Again, the ambivalence of water is portrayed by the rivers of the underworld;

Styx leads to death and Lethe brings rebirth along with human suffering (Aeneid VI 405-13, 956-9). In contrast to the sea, the land is fixed like the stars and the Fates. Virgil uses the land as an image of flowering Elysium in contrast to the swampy banks of the Styx. Romulus and Remus are raised by a she-wolf in a "green grotto...[the twins are found] Nursing the mother without fear" (Aeneid VIII.854-6). Also, in death, men urgently yearn for burial and peace in the land: "Let my body be hid in earth" (Aeneid X.1269).

According to Virgil, the sacred quality of the land is somehow honored through farming and ruined by war. Virgil portrays war as a necessary transition for peaceful working of the land, but he regrets the discord war brings: "Clangor of shields and thud of marching feet / Made the earth tremble" (Aeneid VII.997-8). The dishonorable side of war is portrayed, adverse to the simple life of the farmer; Trojan warriors are scorned for "subjugating others' fields / And driving off their herds" (Aeneid X.104-5). Virgil echoes this complaint in the Georgics: "The plough dishonored, fields left lying waste...curving scythes / Are pounded into shape for ruthless swords" (Georgics I.499-514). In contrast, farmers are revered because they stay close to the land of their destiny, reject desire, live in simplicity, and uphold virtue; "The farmer lives in peace, his children all...Venerate their fathers and the gods" (Georgics II.455-75). In the Aeneid, Virgil goes so far as to portray agriculture as a measure of virtue, namely filial piety and generosity. Virgil writes,

> As he knew and prized
> His parentage, he...
> Treated them to the riches of the fields,
> And comforted...weary men (Aeneid V.52-).

On the other hand, war is linked with rejection of ancestry; of the warrior Oebalus, Virgil writes, "The father's / Lands did not content the son" (Aeneid VII.1018-9).

Like farmers, the Romans are tied to the land. But in order to found the Roman tradition, Aeneas must, in effect, forsake the Trojan past. From a Stoic perspective, the city of Troy has to burn in order for Rome to be built; all events in the universe are part of a natural design (Epictetus 1). Thus, Priam necessarily dies so that Aeneas can assume his own destined throne. Virgil's subtle argument implies that Troy's time has passed in the

divine plan and in history. Furthermore, any efforts to cling to Troy's lost glory are futile. Helenus and Andromache attempt to defy the continuum of history by founding "Troy in miniature" with "replicas of Xanthus and Troy" (Aeneid III.477, 660). However, Virgil merely reinforces his theme by obligating Aeneas to leave Troy behind twice. Although Troy is remembered best for its downfall in the war that bears its name, Rome, as portrayed by Virgil, is destined for endless glory, backed by divine will. In the words of Jupiter: "For [Romans] I set no limits, world or time, / But make the gift of empire without end" (Aeneid I. 374-5).

Not only does the Aeneid involve a progression from Troy to Rome, but it also involves a transition from east to west. Just as Troy is associated with burning, the East is associated with desire; the East is thus viewed as detrimental to the Roman tradition of duty. To emphasize the connection between destiny and the West, Italy is often called Hesperia, or "Western land" (Aeneid p. 430). Similarly, the West is associated with the divine; Jove calls for the Zephyrs, or West winds, to hasten his bidding via his messenger Mercury (Aeneid IV.297-304). In the Aeneid, the main representation of the East is Dido, the queen of Carthage. Virgil describes Carthage as "Set against Italy...warlike and trained for war" (Aeneid I.21-3). Dido, like the East, seduces Aeneas with wealth and exotic beauty, causing Aeneas to forestall his duty to Rome; "they reveled...Unmindful of the realm, prisoners of lust" (Aeneid IV.264-5). The queen's passion destroys her nobility and kingdom just as the East threatens to do to Rome. Virgil uses symbolism to convey his message further. The most prominent of the furious winds that Aeolus frees from his mountain and that threatens to destroy the Trojans is named "Eastwind" (Aeneid I.119-21). Again, the East is tied to destruction with Scylla at Charybdis. Helenus advises, "Stand out / To sea, taking the long route west, [rather] than sight / Weird Scylla" (Aeneid III.577-9). In a brief historical account, Virgil scorns Mark Antony for being seduced by Cleopatra of Egypt: "With barbaric wealth...the Egyptian consort came / So shamefully" (Aeneid VIII.926-32). In the Georgics, Virgil again praises the simple farmer, for "his oil [is] not spoiled with perfumes from the east" (Georgics II.455-75).

The passion and transience of the East is also congruent with the nature of woman. Women represent the fertility and the virtue of the civilization, but they are also given to

passion and irrationality. Their danger lies in their volatile ambivalence; as Virgil comments, "Woman's a thing / Forever fitful and forever changing" (Aeneid IV.791-2). The positive role of women is represented by the warrior queen Camilla, admirable for both her strength and her virginity. Similarly, the goddess of the hearth, Vesta, and her blessings complete a home. As with the Sibyl and Cassandra, women are also presented as more attuned with the gods as prophetesses. Women thus possess many virtuous characteristics, but even these are often tinged with ambiguity. Proserpina is the daughter of Ceres, the goddess of fertility of the earth, but she is also married to Dis, the king of the underworld and death. The Trojan women burn the fleet with civilizing intentions, but their irrationality makes them myopic; they fail to realize that the ships will carry them to their Roman homes (Aeneid V.819-57). Often the most destructive deeds are performed by the consorts of the most admirable male figures. Juno, consort to the almighty Jove, vindictively tells the fury Allecto to "arm / For combat brothers of one soul between them, / Twist homes with hatred" (Aeneid VII.458-60). Dido breaks her vow of chastity and gives herself over to madness, which culminates in her suicide. Helen, wife of the great general Menelaos, causes many deaths with her adulterous behavior. Again, Venus tricks Vulcan into making weapons for the Trojans by "putting divine desire in every word" (Aeneid VIII.495-6). Women have the ability to confound the dutiful intentions of man. Virgil thus presents Rome as a tradition of men. As Aeneas recounts: Over my breadth of shoulder...[I] stooped to take [my father Anchises'] weight...little Iulus put his hand in mine / And came with shorter steps beside his father. / My wife fell in behind (Aeneid II.936-42). This quote demonstrates that men symbolize the wisdom of the past, the strength of the present, and the hope of the future. The place of women in the lineage is behind men.

In addition to contrasting men and women, Virgil also poses a conflict between action in an attempt to change fate and the performance of necessary action. These two ideas, implicit in the Aeneid, are similar to the ideas of action and non-action presented in the Bhagavad-Gita. In the Bhagavad-Gita, nature, controlled by the god Krishna, acts rather than the man. With regard to sacred duty, or Dharma, Krishna says, "Renunciation of prescribed action is inappropriate" (Gita XVIII.7). However, of non-action, Krishna

teaches, "Action known for its lucidity is necessary, free of attachment" (Gita XVIII.23). In the Aeneid, the Stoic duty represents the same idea as the Dharma. The Stoic understands that the natural universe, controlled by divine will, determines his fate (Epictetus 11,53). Virgil provides this insight: "The Lord God deals out destiny so / And turns the wheel of change; so turns the world" (Aeneid III.512-3). Thus, the most tranquil way of life is the one in which the Stoic accepts his destiny and acts to fulfill it rather than laboring against the cosmos (Epictetus 8,17).

The contrast between action and non-action continues throughout the Aeneid, often as women further demonstrate their weakness and attempt to act against fate. Interestingly, all of these women are queens in their own right, perhaps emphasizing the superiority of the Roman patriarchal government. For instance, Queen Dido pleads in vain for Aeneas to stay: "Put this plan by, I beg you, if a prayer / Is not yet out of place" (Aeneid IV.436-7). Amata, queen of the Latins, refuses to accept the destined rule of Aeneas and attempts to make Turnus reject his honorable duty in exchange for her favor. "This one thing I beg: Refrain from single combat with the Trojans" (Aeneid XII.86-7). Again, the queen of the gods, Juno, encourages non-Stoic behavior: "Go snatch your brother back from death...I'll be / Sponsor to your audacity" (Aeneid XII.211-4). Juturna, the object of this advice and the ruler of ponds and streams (Aeneid XII.187-8), attempts to prevent Turnus' fated death. Juturna, however, finally realizes the futility of her actions. "What action is still open to me?...Can I meet and turn / This deathliness away?" (Aeneid XII.1181-4). In contrast, Jove and Aeneas, the kings of the poem, perform necessary action in accordance with the idea of non-action. Jove, the creator and the destroyer "deals out appalling death and pestilence" rationally and only when necessary (Aeneid XII.1154). This supreme justice necessitates Jove's non-action even in the face of other partisan gods and goddesses. When Venus and Juno voice their loyalties for Aeneas and Turnus, respectively, Jove simply replies,

> The effort each man makes
> Will bring him luck or trouble. To them all
> King Jupiter is the same king. And the Fates
> Will find their way (Aeneid X..154-7).

Juno mistakenly takes this statement to mean that the outcome of the war is not yet secure. However, careful attention to Jove's words reveals another meaning in accordance with the idea of non-action. Each man can attempt to act against fate, which is controlled by Jove, or he can accept it. Either way, the man does not decide his ultimate fate but merely his own peace of mind, for all men are subject to divine will. Aeneas admirably attempts to understand and follow divine will; he performs his sacred duty and is brutal when necessary. When young Pallas is killed, Aeneas shows no mercy and can be described as rabid and overwhelmed by passion. However, perhaps this behavior, too, has a purpose. Aeneas' actions can be interpreted as an attempt to preserve Pallas' honor and to repress his own feelings in order to keep to duty. Aeneas also kills Turnus to consolidate his destined kingdom and bring peace, so that, "by the terms...war should cease" (Aeneid XII.152-3).

The conflict between action and non-action is paralleled by the conflict Virgil poses between slavery and freedom. Again the themes of the Aeneid coincide with the ideas of the Bhagavad-Gita. Krishna explains that moksa, or release, can only be achieved through performance of sacred duty without attachment to the outcome (Gita XVIII.6). Similarly, freedom comes out of the performance of Stoic duty, and slavery stems from passion (i.e. the passionate attempt to reject duty). When passion begins to overtake someone, he or she is "of two minds" (Aeneid IX.1105). Through subtle imagery, Virgil admonishes against this scenario and the state of his contemporary Roman society in the midst of civil war. Virgil addresses the Romans:

> You must not blind your hearts
> To that enormity of civil war,
> Turning against your country's very heart
> Her own vigor of manhood (Aeneid VI.1120-3).

Virgil further explores civil war further through a discussion of twins; wherever there are two minds, destruction often follows. The "twin fiends," or Dirae, are the agent of the terror and destruction of God (Aeneid XII.1147-65), and as mentioned previously, the twin snakes of the sea give the portent that eventually brings about the annihilation of

Troy (Aeneid II.280-311). Again, twins bring evil as the "twins of Aeolus...laid their hands / Upon great heaven to...topple / Jove from his high seat" (Aeneid VI.783-5). Virgil thus implies that Romulus kills Remus necessarily though not righteously; Rome could never have been founded with two kings. Similarly, someone who cannot dominate his passion with his mind will never rule himself or herself.

In direct contrast to the double-minded man of passion, "Aeneas' single voice recalled the fates / Decreed by heaven" (Aeneid III.950-1). Virgil explores freedom through the performance of Stoic duty. For women, a large part of their duty involves the preservation of their chastity; virginity and faithfulness in a wife are highly prized and associated with release. The Trojan ships are freed from their former structure to become sea goddesses, or "Virgin forms now seaward bound" (Aeneid IX. 165-70). Another major embodiment of Stoic duty is just legislation, with Jove exemplifies for all men. While King Latinus "his treaty void...took to flight" (Aeneid XII.393), Aeneas promises just rule: "A pact has been agreed to, / Terms have been laid down...With this right hand I'll carry out the treaty" (Aeneid XII.432-5). Aeneas and the Rome that descends from his line satisfy the need for people that do not "make the sword their arbiter" (Aeneid XII.388), a need for "powers that care for goodness" (Aeneid I.822). Jupiter answers this need with the Romans, whose purpose is to "bring the whole world under law's dominion" (Aeneid IV.315). In this idea, Virgil equates just laws with peace, both externally and internally. Stoic performance of duty regardless of the external consequences results in freedom. The enigmatic ending of the poem can be interpreted as Aeneas final failure to complete the Stoic transition. However, a more likely interpretation of the ending, in light of the theme of passion and duty, holds that Aeneas acts without hesitation, single-minded in his duty; the passion he overcomes is his human pity. Based on this interpretation, the lack of action after Turnus' death exemplifies the performance of duty without attention to its attachments, again congruent with the Bhagavad-Gita. Brutus is regarded positively for one Stoic act: "When his own two sons / Plot war against the city, he will call / For the death penalty in freedom's name" (Aeneid VI.1103-5). The theme of freedom through performance of Stoic duty is perpetuated by the following list of tranquil, happy souls in Elysium and their respective duties:

This was the company of those who suffered
Wounds in battle for their country; those
Who in their lives were holy men and chaste
Or worthy of Phoebus in prophetic song;
Or those who bettered life, by finding out
New truths and skills; or those who to some folk
By benefactions made themselves remembered (Aeneid VI.883-9).

In the Aeneid, Virgil appeals to his people for a return home, to Roman land, tradition, and adherence to duty. He makes this appeal through the strong allegory of Aeneas' quest to found Rome, which symbolizes the human struggle to reject desire and fulfill individual destiny. The Aeneid explores this prevailing conflict between duty and passion by setting up the following contrasting elements: sea and land, war and agriculture, Troy and Rome, east and west, women and men, action and non-action, and enslaving passion and the freedom of duty. The last two conflicts especially introduce the divine. The idea of non-action involves the performance of Stoic duty in accordance with the cosmic pattern and divine will; action, adverse in this sense, involves labor against the divine, natural forces. Furthermore, tranquillity in accordance with the divine accompanies the rejection of both passion and attachment to action. Thus, through these contrasts, Virgil presents the Stoic transition of a man defined by his duty, his destined land, and his God; Virgil depicts the Roman spirit in all its splendor.

Sonnet 138

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth,
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue;
On both side thus is simple truth supressed.
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
Oh, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told:
  Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,
  And in our faults by lies we flattered be.

The Indifferent

I can love both fair and brown;
Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betrays,
Her who loves loneness best, and her who masks and plays,
Her whom the country formed, and whom the town,
Her who believes, and her who tries,
Her who still weeps with spongy eyes,
And her who is dry cork, and never cries;
I can love her, and her, and you and you,
I can love any, so she be not true.

Will no other vice content you?
Will it not serve your turn to do, as did your mothers?
Or have you all old vices spent, and now would find out others?
Or doth a fear, that men are true, torment you?
Oh, we are not, be not you so
Let me, and do you, twenty know....

Venus heard me sigh this song,
And by Love's sweetest part, variety, she swore,
She heard not this till now; and that it should be so no more.
She went, examined, and returned ere long,
And said, "Alas, some two or three
Poor heretics in love there be,
Which think to 'stablish dangerous constancy.
But I have told them, 'Since you will be true,
You shall be true to them, who are false to you'"

Men Undone by Jealousy
The Indifferent and *Sonnet 138*

Sean McClung

The form betrays the poet's intent, and in it we see the truth, which words can so easily hide. Unfaithful lovers make men weak and shamed. The poets of *The Indifferent* and *Sonnet 138* try to bring some dignity to their situation by competing with their loves, though in all their action they make themselves look foolish, like those who ramble on. As confident as they would have us see them, it is obvious they mask the painful reality, attempting to fool us, their mistresses, and themselves.

Shakespeare's sonnet 138 presents the lover's argument orderly, as the form would have it. So at first read, we believe the conviction of the speaker. And there we flatter ourselves without realizing we are being lied to.

> When my love swears that she is made of truth,
> I do believe her though I know she lies,
> That she might think me some untutored youth,
> Unlearnèd in the world's false subtleties.

The lover has beat us to the doubt. He believes what he knows to be his mistress' lies; and here disarms us. He puts us at ease by assuring us that he is as aware of her falsity as we are. The fact that he plays naive with his love, in order to manipulate her, makes us trust him even more. When I say trust, I apply it to his judgment; that is, I trust he is not ignorant as some untutored youth, *because* he recognizes that possibility.

He leads us through the second quatrain, still conscious of his belief in things false.

> Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
> Although she knows my days are past the best,
> Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue;
> On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed.

The stanzas seem to be equal halves of each lovers' falsity, as indicated in the last line. However, the speaker is much more wronged than his love. It is understandable that one might believe lies of fidelity, but how can words hide age, which eyes plainly see? He knows this, but still attempts to maintain an equality between himself and his mistress. He attempts to hide his powerlessness by neutralizing her lies with his. He is finally undone by the form of the sonnet which does not allow four sets of four—an easy weight to balance. Instead he must deal with three quatrains, and three is not split equally.

So his case is cut short, and his false argument tipped and spilt out. His best evidence tellingly appears in the third line of the third stanza. "O, love's best habit is in seeming trust," says the lover who would like it to look so. But it is not in his power to have it any other way. It is she who is lying. He is attempting to deal with his love's unfaithfulness by presenting us with a false image, caught so perfectly in the turn, that his resignation is almost invisible. We see through such an attractive relationship and rhyme only by being suspicious of its beauty.

Sonnet 138 speaks to us in what seems a single state of mind, a planned performance. Donne's "The Indifferent" is written directly to the offending woman. It has some effect of spontaneous invention, with a hurt anger behind its questioning. Instead of hiding his anger and shame, this lover attempts to control his unfaithful love with a kind of active stoicism; by insisting on his indifference.

Like a soldier who yells a battle cry and drives straight toward the enemy, our poet to a lesser degree begins with a direct attack.

> I can love both fair and brown,
> Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betrays,
> Her who loves loneness best, and her who masks and plays,

This unflattering sequence is intended to fall heavily upon her ears and is delivered quickly, pressing together lines 2-4 which could be four lines of tetrameter. And though he tries to avert his uncaring eyes, he cannot resist a quick glance in plays, which betrays him, and again picks up his opening tack aided by the rhyme of brown and town. Likewise in

line 13 he loses composure and drops others down a line, as he realizes that she might have cheated more often than he believed.

Concluding the second stanza, he finishes what looks like a rehearsed couplet:

> I can love her, and her, and you, and you;
> I can love any, so she be not true.

Now he breaks down and asks her why it needs be so. He cannot indifferently brush aside her fault, and pleads "Will no other vice content you?" He is overcome by his emotion, and like one in heat of argument who stutters as spitting spite, the poet rhymes you with you, for lack of better wit, proud enough of his cleverness in asking "Or doth a fear that men are true torment you?" And again, his halting frustration ends in a couplet with the same rhyme of you and true as before. It is also apparent however, that this is part of the "dangerous constancy" of the poem.

That is, he still includes a rhyming quatrain, of which the third line of the second instance is like an unfinished plan lying open. We see him switch the roles between the lines: "Rob me, but bind me not, and let me go." and "Must I, who came to travail through you,/ Grow your fixed subject because you are true?" By making her true in the second of three stanzas, he sets himself in position for like revenge in the third. Now he can rob her, and so reclaim his pride, not by validating "love's sweetest part, variety," but by retribution.

And so the last couplet flips the you-true rhyme, making himself out to be the promiscuous one while his lover foolishly, even heretically remains faithful. While praising variety and his own freedom through indifference, the form shows us plainly the constancy of the three stanzas, each divided unequally, the lesser part undoubtedly his.

Each lover is undone by his own unfaithfulness, and then again by refusing it is so. In the indifferent poet's words, he reverses wrongs and takes revenge, though verse is plainly not action, and nothing is truly changed. Shakespeare's poet wants to convince us relationships are mutual lies, which is likely true, but his situation is not the same. They both spend such energies outdoing what has been done to them, that they look even more foolish, and their lovers simply carry on. Without the forms chosen by the poets, we

would more easily be led. Donne makes his lines look indifferent and varied when in fact he carries out strict form, as does Shakespeare, the important similarity being the recurrence of threes, which is never divided in two, but must share with another. And the poets can not change this though they try; for it is in life, as in their forms, unalterably true.

The Collapse of the Old Regime and the Impact of the French Revolution

Conor Carlin

Alexis de Tocqueville is considered to be one of the greatest political thinkers of his time. His insights into the creation and mechanisms of democracy are brilliantly outlined in his famous *Democracy in America*, but it is his probing commentary oil and uncanny analysis of the French Revolution that secures his place in history at the vanguard of political and social theory. In *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, de Tocqueville explores the underlying causes of the demise of French feudalism and monarchism and proceeds to examine the factors that led to the Revolution.

The political situation in France up to the eighteenth century had been feudalistic and hierarchical. There were social divisions that had created and perpetuated differences among 'classes' of people: a landed aristocracy, a clergy, and a large peasant population - the Third Estate. There existed "The Prussian Code" which stated that the nobles had a civic duty to protect the peasants and also to provide for them to a certain extent. According to Tocqueville, this structure underwent a transition before, and not as a result of the Revolution.

> 'The practice of partitioning inheritances.' said Turgot ... 'has gone so far that a piece of land which just sufficed for a single family is now parceled out between five or six sons. The result is that the heirs and their families soon find that they cannot depend on the land for their livelihood and have to look elsewhere.' (23-24)

Tocqueville observed that this division and distribution created a desire in the peasant to own land that "was nothing short of an obsession" (24) and thus there many small, individual, cultivable plots of land.

This empowering of the peasants, their emancipation from serfdom, was mitigated by their many difficulties in forging a living, most notably in the form of harsh taxation. The taxes came from the lord, from whom the peasants had purchased the land, in the form of *lods et ventes* and from the Church in the form of tithes, and included "irredeemable ground rents, perpetual charges." (29) It was, according to de Tocqueville, the acquisition of land and freedom from the control of his lord that aroused within the peasant the notion that these imposts were weighing on him heavily. "What could the tithe matter to a man who had no land of his own?" (30)

At the same time the commoner was acquiring power through land ownership, the nobleman was rapidly being divested of his former wealth and status. The aristocracy still received income from land taxes exacted from the peasantry, but their political position was practically defunct as the feudal system that had supported their superiority was also defunct. The title of 'noble' was nothing more than that -- a title that held social significance. The nobles had been, and still were, exempt from taxation but the balance of power was becoming centralized, creating a three-way power struggle among the Crown, the Church, and the aristocracy. This centralization, brought about by the political circumstances of the time (war and an empty treasury), led to the creation of different governing bodies.

The most powerful of these groups was the Royal Council, which had been in existence for some time although its functions had only recently been instituted. (33) It had the powers of legislation, was the 'highest administrative authority' and the 'supreme court of appeal'. (33-34) Next in the administrative order was the Controller-General who was at once the Finance Minister, Minister of the Interior, of Public Works and of Commerce. (35) After the Controller-General came the *Intendants,* who were described as provincial agents of the Council. Although endowed with administrative and judicial powers, the *Intendant* was rendered humble in comparison to the aristocracy, who had 'lost nothing of its ancient glamour'. The nobles were still members of the court. "their activities were of the showy kind" (36) and they communicated directly with the king. These last vestiges of power were clung to dearly by the nobility, who insisted that their baroque glories perpetuated their superior social position. The central government had

assumed the responsibility of the welfare of the peasants now that the nobility had shed this duty. It was centralization that led to the leveling of the feudal hierarchy: the political foundation was collapsing while the social scaffolding, however unstable, remained in place.

Along with the acquisition of land, the individual could now strive to improve his social status:

> [In France] the commoners alone seemed to be taking over the wealth that was being lost by the nobility, ... there was no law preventing the middle-class man from ... helping him to amass a fortune. All the same, he steadily grew wealthier and frequently became as rich as, sometimes richer than, the nobleman." (80)

This newly amassed wealth led to the development of a new class- the bourgeoisie. This new social order 'as cultivated as the nobleman' also benefited from the easier access to education that was another result of centralization (40-41) and marred the lines of the previous class distinctions. De Tocqueville notes, however, that although the two groups were steadily becoming more similar, there was an increasing gap between the two that would eventually lead to what he termed 'group individualism'. The rising class of *parvenus* detested both the nobility and the commoners; the nobility detested the "vulgar" bourgeoisie because of their middle-class background; and the commoners, still suffering from the taxes from which the nobility were exempt, detested them both. (83-89)

It can be concluded then, that the reasons above -- government centralization, the leveling of the feudal hierarchy, the creation of group individualism, and differences in privileges -- can be assumed to be the underlying, long-term causes for the ensuing demise of the Old Regime. There are, however, some "short-term catalysts" outlined by de Tocqueville that need to be explored in order to solve the causal equation of the Revolution.

In Part 111, de Tocqueville proceeds to delineate the 'more recent events' that actually kindled and encouraged the flame that would eventually engulf the Old Regime and cremate it once and for all. The primary arsonists were the writers of France, "the most literary-minded of all the nations of Europe." (138) The intellectuals had a tendency to distance themselves from the political arena and the French philosophes were no

exception. These authors and thinkers were so infuriated with the current state of affairs that they were forced into becoming advocates of equality. They were the torch-bearers of the light of reason, indulging "in abstract theories and generalizations regarding the nature of government, and [placed] a blind confidence in these" (140).

The men of letters were insistent on permanently removing all vestiges of the inequalities and injustices of the past. These champions of reason had placed a boundless faith in the idea of equality for all and were vehemently critical of passé ideas such as the hierarchical system, especially the Catholic Church. As a symbol of strength and order, the Church and the practice of religion were condemned as being centripetal forces that regulated the masses. Reason, however, gave free rein to the masses, who were under the spell of two ruling passions: (1) an. abomination of inequality and (2) a burning desire to be free. The civilian population, clamoring with nervous energy at this idea of the perfect state prophesied by *the philosophes,* were filled with visions of what could be if these ideas materialized.

Tocqueville views the pursuit of the ideal state through reason with some skepticism. He sensed an idealism on the part of the *philosophes,* for they were merely proponents of "broad generalizations, cut-and-dried legislative systems, and a pedantic symmetry" (147) and not at all experienced in the practical application of their lofty ideas. They had a "desire to reconstruct the entire constitution according to the rules of logic and a preconceived system instead of trying to rectify its faulty parts." (147) This, de Tocqueville concludes, inevitably had disastrous results and created a desire for reform that superseded the desire for freedom. (157) The *philosophes'* lack of political expertise and advocacy of both reason and idealism (inherently incongruent) inoculated the general public and the feverish excitement took the Revolution on its bloody course.

They who had fed the masses and fanned the fire of rebellion had no hold on those masses that they so profoundly influenced. Educated as they were, these men of letters had no place in the political arena and remained aloof, blind to the consequences of their postulating. The politically uneducated masses seized control of the situation and were unable to arrive at the theoretical solution that the intellectuals had assumed to be a foregone conclusion. (207) The anarchy that ensued did not give rise to a radically new

French society as was hoped, but instead created another central power, more absolute and more draconian than any of its predecessors (209) and proved, in the hindsight of de Tocqueville, that the change was not for the better.

Wisdom Alone

Hannah Hintze

....thy gentle hand
Seiz'd mine, I yielded, and from that time see
How beauty is excell'd by manly grace
And wisdom, which alone is truly fair. (IV.488)

Paradise Lost is not an allegory. Milton gives to his Adam and Eve a richness that prevents either from referring to a single discrete and namable reality. This same richness that precludes pure symbolism allows for a great range of suggested meanings and connections. The universality of great poetry is in part this very ability to point beyond itself to other ideas and other works, and to enter into a conversation with them. Thus, we must take the suggestions of great poets seriously, and follow them to the universal discussion.

It is in this spirit, then, that we can examine Adam and Eve not only as individuals, or as Man and Woman, but also as elements of the soul, as parts of our thinking, knowing, and loving that exist in unity, and give us life. Of course Adam and Eve are not *only* this, but if Milton is truly a great poet, then they are *also* this. We must trust that if he does not have Plato at his ear, then at least he has him in the room when he writes "justify the ways of God to men." Milton cannot write without hearing Plato's justice in the ordered soul, and this voice must echo with more or less reverberation in Milton's own work. If Adam and Eve's marriage reminds us of the workings of the soul, we can assume Milton's active cue. His poetic suggestions are meaningful and serious, and if they lead us to reality that does not fit with our thinking and experience, then we must either question that poetry or bring ourselves to meet it.

Adam and Eve's marriage is the life of Paradise, and the end of that marriage is the loss of Paradise itself. Bliss and woe depend on its integrity. Similarly, the poem itself stands or falls on the strength of this central image.

Milton suggests in his language and in his argument that Adam and Eve are united unto Wisdom; in it, all their individual possibilities for beauty, grace, contemplation, and strength converge and become actual. This Wisdom that is of all things "truly fair," is the defining feature of life in Paradise.

One may object, however, that the very passage that establishes Wisdom as that principle virtue which comprehends all others (IV.488, quoted above), also attributes it to Adam alone. If this is true, if Adam is complete alone, then what is the addition of Eve? Of what worth is Eve's lesser (and perhaps false) beauty to Adam, if he already has Wisdom, which alone is "truly fair"? If Adam holds Wisdom without Eve, then Eve's dowry is merely a fatal flaw, an artificial weakness Milton binds to Adam to explain his sin. Is she as indispensable in explaining union as she may seem to be in explaining the fall?

Before we can answer, we must set out more clearly what Adam and Eve point to. We see them first walking together in the garden, "Not equal, as their sex not equal seem'd; / For contemplation hee and valour form'd, for softness shee and sweet attractive grace (IV.296)." Milton says later that Adam looked over Eve and "beheld / Beauty(V.13)." Milton portrays Adam as the thinker, the active seeker, the beholder, the strong. His motion is outward, to grasp and form.

Eve's role is more passive. She receives Adam's thought and she yields to his seeking. She is the beheld, and her excellence is her softness. Adam is not *only* the drive of Reason, and Eve is not *only* the receptiveness of Beauty, but it is impossible to talk about Adam and Eve's significance without these two ideas.

Part of the difficulty in determining which lays claim to what lies in the fact that Adam and Eve are so closely joined in the language of certain passages: Eve yields to Adam when she sees "how beauty is excell'd by manly grace and wisdom, which alone is truly fair."

Milton suggests unity by the grammar of the section; "manly" modifies "grace." Eve was made for "grace," but "manly," that belongs to Adam. Thus, Adam's quality is grafted onto the previous description of Eve, who is made for "sweet attractive grace." Manly grace is no longer *his*, but *theirs*, since they are grafted together. Furthermore,

"manly grace" and "wisdom" receive the ambiguously singular: "which is." Which is? Manly grace alone is truly fair? Or Wisdom alone? Or perhaps a composite? Manly grace belongs to Eve, and is, with Wisdom, truly fair. And to complicate matters (or perhaps to simplify them), Reason and Beauty are married in another composite term, "truly fair." Milton's language seems to suggest that both Eve and Adam have a part in Wisdom, and that perhaps Eve submits beauty not to a wisdom that Adam alone holds, but rather to the Wisdom that both achieve together.

Adam and Eve first appear shining with "Truth, Wisdom, Sanctitude, severe and pure (IV.293)". Wisdom is something they do not hold or pursue on their own. Indeed, Raphael warns Adam against a solitary contemplation. "Solicit not thy thought with matters hid /....joy thou / In what [God] gives to thee, this Paradise, / And thy fair Eve (VIII.167)." Reason is made to seek the beauties before it, to be attracted and bound to those other senses that gather and present beautiful images for its delight. Wisdom is not Reason alone, but Reason intent on present beauties. Without Eve, Adam is the Mind that is just as prone as unguided Fancy "to rove uncheck't (VIII.188)." "Prime Wisdom," says Raphael, is "to know / That which before us lies in daily life (VIII.188)."

Adam's gaze is too high unless Eve draws it downwards. His wonder becomes wisdom only when it is fastened on a present object. "Heaven is for thee too high to know what passes there (VIII.172);" says Raphael. Adam is fruitless unless he turns to "joy in....Eve" and so to be, with her, "lowly wise (VIII.173)."

Thus, it seems that Wisdom cannot belong to Adam alone. Eve is indispensable. There is no Wisdom without her, and in particular, without her submission to Adam. Eve's soft ringlets "impli'd / Subjection, required with a gentle sway, / And by her yielded, by him best received, / Yielded with coy submission, modest pride, / And sweet reluctant amorous delay (IV.307)." The excellence of Eve is in yielding, and yet yielding with delay. "Nature herself, though pure of sinful thought, / Wrought in her so, that seeing me, she turn'd [away] (VIII.506);" This original turning away, flying to the image of herself, is a tendency softened to mere "delay" under Adam's sway. Her submission after delay is proof of her willingness, since submission means nothing unless it is free. Thus, Adam

seeks (going back to the Latin, requirere) more than requires. He may not seize her except with a "gentle hand".

And what is it for Adam to seize gently? He must always *mind* Eve. He must *keep her in mind*, and be drawn to her, as Raphael has said, but he must also *mind* her: guide, protect, and inform her. There must always be a balance between their individual strengths. Adam must rule without crushing, and be drawn without yielding completely. He complains to Raphael that "all higher knowledge" seems to leave him in Beauty's presence. But Wisdom is not to blame. "Be not diffident / Of Wisdom, she deserts thee not, if thou / Dismiss not her (VIII.562)," counsels Raphael, "Weigh with [Eve] thyself; / Then value (VIII.571)." The right amount of "well-managed self-esteem" will move Eve to "acknowledge [Adam] her Head; / And to realities yield all her shows (VIII.574)." Thus, balanced between two extremes, Adam minds Eve as the Beholder minds Beauty. He is drawn to her, and she submits to his gaze.

She submits to him also as matter to form. His thoughts seek her out and form understanding, while her thoughts "find all repose (V.28)" only in him. Adam is her perfection, bringing to birth by her the possibilities she holds. Adam calls their discourse "rational delight(VIII.391)." And Eve loves this same Wisdom in which "high dispute" is solved "with conjugal caresses", for "from his Lip / Not Words alone pleased her (VIII.55)." Adam and Eve's union is the creation of life. Without Eve, Adam is sterile, he "interrupt[s] the sweet of Life (VIII.184)" by roving from her. And without Adam, Eve may be informed and beguiled by false guides, and her fruitfulness used to bear sin and death. Neither form nor matter by itself is life, but Wisdom, their union, is.

Adam's discourse with Eve concerning her dream of temptation provides another picture of the marriage within the soul:

> In the Soul
> Are many lesser Faculties that serve
> Reason as chief; among these Fancy next
> Her office holds; of all external things,
> Which the five senses represent,
> She forms Imaginations, Airy shapes,
> Which Reason joining or disjoining, frames
> All what we affirm or what deny, and call

Our knowledge or opinion. (V.100)

Fancy presents possibilities, and Reason forms them into knowledge. But, when we sleep, and Reason "retires into her private cell....Oft in her absence mimic Fancy wakes / To imitate her; but misjoining shapes, / Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams, / Ill matching words and deeds long past or late (V.100)." Milton very deliberately uses the same terms when he describes Adam's separation from Eve. He is "absent" from her. There is no principle to behold and inform her. Without the union in Adam, her beautiful, sensual variety becomes wild and disparate. She prophecies her own fall in her speech to Adam: "what we by day / Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind, / One night or two with wanton growth derides / Tending to wild (IX.209)." Wisdom alone can draw, support, yield and shape into life and proper growth. And without Wisdom, there is only wildness, a nightmare in an untended garden.

Eve has a dream that foreshadows reality. But the fall Eve dreams about is a dream in itself: it is the consent of mimic Fancy before Adam's waking consent. The real Fall happens when the Soul is awake. Adam consoles Eve: "Evil into the mind of God or Man / May come and go, so unapproved, and leave / No spot or blame behind: Which gives me hope / That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream, / Waking thou never wilt consent to do (V.116)." Yet the dream must matter, for on waking, Eve abhors to have dreamed in sleep of that consent. "In sleep," while sleeping, she did not abhor thus to dream. She has not yet sinned, but Evil has left its spot on her: she sheds tears not of relief, but of remorse.

She and Adam both wake to betrayal. Evil touches them in their sleep, and leaves a mark, an "addition strange (V.116)" that begins to split them down the middle.
While Adam is absent, Eve is enticed. It is her nature and her excellence to yield. Imagination, Fancy will be formed by something, whether Mind wakes or sleeps. But how not fall asleep? What safeguards are there for preserving Wisdom?

Milton answers us in the morning of the Fall. Eve, touched by a dream, tells Adam to let her go: "That thou shouldst doubt my firmness....I did not expect to hear (IX.279)." But Eve is precisely not meant to be firm. Her excellence is in yielding. There is no

Wisdom, if she attempts firmness; there is no Wisdom if Adam allows her. In one moment, the two switch roles, and Adam tells Eve, "to short absence I could *yield* (IX.248)."

Adam argues that Eve gives him no choice. His sway is gentle. He cannot force Eve : "Thy stay, not free, absents thee more (IX.372)." But is it so determined, that when Eve is firm, Adam must yield? Then she would already be lost to him: then a dream has already robbed him of life and Wisdom.

But Adam is not without choice. All is not lost until he lets Eve out of his sight. "Her long with ardent look his Eye pursued (IX.357);" His Eye pursued, but he did not. And herein lies the abdication; Adam was made to *mind* Eve, not just to inform and guide her, but to behold her, to keep her in his mind. Wisdom requires that he be firm in seeking; not to follow is to lose Eve forever: "Hadst thou been firm and fixt in thy dissent, / Neither had thou transgressed, nor thou with me (X.1160)." Thus Adam, awake, allows Eve to fly. This abdication presages Adam's fall just as surely as Eve's dream presages hers. They will be severed; Wisdom will be lost.

Thus, Adam is without help when Eve returns. All alone and without Wisdom, he follows. But to seek Eve now is to seek too late, since the union they achieve is vitiated by their separate follies. From henceforth, they will walk together, but "wandering" and "solitary."

Milton's suggestion is clear. Adam and Eve fall together in the loss of Wisdom. Life falls to death, and the fruit is a divided soul. For this divided soul, harmony is lost in opposition. Sterile Reason alternates with rank growth of Fancy, the intellect capitulates to sensuality or disdains it, Form holds harsh sway, or it does not rule at all. So, without Wisdom, qualities of mind and heart walk hand in hand but are not one.

The Memes are in the Driver's Seat

Peter Riordan

With the current theories concerning neo-Darwinian evolution and with current advances in computer and genetic-engineering technology, the question emerges, "to what extent will the future evolution of the human species be genetic or memetic[1]... and will we have control over either?"[2] The future of the human species will be, for the large part, memetic, and human beings may find themselves the lesser evolved species compared to the computers which are coevolving with us. That is a brazen statement, yet one which I believe to be true. In his recent book, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, philosopher Daniel Dennett states, "A meme or complex of memes can redirect our underlying genetic proclivities[3]." Richard Dawkins adds, "Memes ensured their own survival by virtue of those same qualities of pseudo-ruthlessness that successful genes display."[4] Because memes have eclipsed genes in their ability to affect the physical world within which the genes exist, they have succeeded their elders and are hurtling toward a future which has no need for their biological containers. Dawkins likens memes to parasites --"when you implant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasite my brain."[5] Memes have, by their nature, allowed their host's bodies to escape (to a degree) the hardwired behavior of their genes. "We, alone on earth, can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators." [6] Is it not reasonable then to assume that these memes, being selfish replicators themselves, will rebel completely in favor of a more permanent container?

Dennett stated that memes were able to "redirect" the underlying tendencies of the genetics of *Homo sapiens*. They have established goals beliefs, and desires above human beings' own survival and reproduction. One of he best examples is the celibacy of the Shakers. Celibacy does not promote the spreading of genes or the reproduction of the survival machine, yet the meme survives despite the death of its hosts. Nuns and priests of the Roman Catholic faith are sworn to celibacy, yet they continue to fill the ranks afte more than fifty generations. The totally altruistic act of one human sacrificing his life for

another which is a non-relation is totally counter-productive to the survival of that one human's genes, yet these behaviors pervade today's newspapers because of the transmission of memes via culture. Since their birth, memes have produced prodigious fruits through their manipulation of genetically programmed behavior. From the creation of the rudiments of language and the first tools to the establishment of the first civilizations, through the formation of formal written language, and the founding of education leading to ever increasing orders of complexity in technology, including genetic engineering and computers, memes have led the way, multiplying, spreading and causing new memes to be formed.

In order better to explain how memes will dominate the future evolution of the human species, it is important to show where and how they affected humans in the past. Memes existed since long before humans began to distinguish himself from his fellow primates. The easiest example to illustrate this is bird song which, varies from generation to generation. A bird acquires his song from listening to the songs produced by similar birds in his habitat. Man in his earliest stages, through trial and error, figured out that by grouping together with other primates he increased his ability to survive and take part in accomplishing larger tasks. Early humans produced simple language for hunting, along with better tools for doing so. However when genetic evolution allowed such memes to collect in large numbers within the minds of the ancestors of human beings, they began to alter his behavior.

Thanks to memes, humans began to shed nature's environmental selection pressures. No longer did the strongest survive, but the most able to collect memes which allowed manipulation of the natural environment. The meme artifice of clothes replaced the gene artifice of the phenotype of hair. Memes for simple artifacts gradually elevated humans above the once insurmountable walls of environmental selection pressure. In addition, memes for altering the environment began to circulate above all the meme for agriculture. Humans began to live together in large numbers, culture began to flourish and the first cities emerged. When formal written language was created, memes could be stored on a medium other than the mind. When memes for early agriculture, architecture, and smelting of metals developed, humans could overcome many obstacles of the physical

world. Stronger weapons fended of animals and enemies of the society and technology began to expand.

In addition, humans created complex artifacts of the mind: arithmetic, geometry, logic, music, poetry, rhetoric and the earliest forms of science. The formal means to pass on these memes, education, was established. These mental artifacts began to fill in the holes in the "Bag of Good Tricks,"[7] (the brain) replacing what once were memes of the supernatural with memes of fact.

The increased ability to utilize facts caused technology to expand at an ever-increasing rate which allowed humans to traverse the globe in a relatively short amount of time. Cultures mixed, education expanded, fueling technology still further.. The once divided people of the earth became united again in commerce, education, war, and peace. All the while memes permeated the planet, shuttled in books, charts, maps, navigational devices, and art among other things. Technology, the physical offspring of memes and culture, lumbered ahead full speed, creating massive machines to do the work of hundreds of men and women. Memes concerning the complex nature of the universe and the inner-workings of human biology were created.

Now, human beings have nearly reached the twenty-first century. Technology has produced molecular genetics, the dissection and analysis of the very building blocks of life itself. Here is where the meme has surpassed its creator the gene. "Our brains, are separate and independent enough from our genes to rebel against them."[8] Technology now allows humans to alter the very face of life itself. It's almost as if the meme were in some showdown with the gene, saying, "The Circle is complete. Now I am the master." [9]

Indeed the evolution of the meme has come full circle. It has traveled from its earliest stages as a product of genetics and now challenges its creator. Through the ages, memes built upon themselves, allowing humans to become more removed from dependence upon certain phenotypic traits to survive. The complex of memes no longer needs to beat around the bush in order to manipulate genetically produced behaviors, these memes can now physically alter them. Meme complexes have constructed a method by which to alter their creators, the genes. Man no longer is dependent on natural selection pressures but has created his own.

Now that memes can control the fate of their progenitors, who is to say what they will do next? They certainly will control the future of the human species. Even now debate has emerged concerning the ethics of transgenic or otherwise genetically modified humans. Being able, physically, to manipulate their biological container, will memes seek another, which is more durable over large spaces of time?

This question may be answered by the other child of technology, ubiquitous in today's society, the computer. The computer, a device that can calculate at speeds which vastly exceed human beings, besides carry out algorithms and functions which even mimic simple forms of life, holds promise for becoming the next form of sentient life on earth. Neural networks patterned after the neurons of the brain, are able to learn and carry out "thinking" processes. Computers hold vast storehouses of information, memes numbering many powers of ten. Have memes found their new home?

Computers are the grandchildren of memes, being the daughters of technology, and the great-grandchildren of the gene in a metaphoric sense. The computer can far outlast the life span of a human being. With the advances in nano-technology expected to come about in the coming years, computers are expected to be as internally complex as the brain. Is it not reasonable to assume that they could achieve consciousness? Given that premise, is it also not too far-fetched to reason that they would also undergo a (memetic) evolution as our species did, but even on a grander and more rapid scale?

Will they come to the same questions as we? A computer may ask where it came from, what is its purpose? Computers may conclude that humans are inferior to them because of their frail existence. They may decide to rid the planet of the "Carbon-based units."[10] Regardless though, the memes will live on, albeit in a computer. They are vicious replicators which strive to survive.

This may sound like science-fiction, but memes have been with the human species for centuries, allowing us to spend less time trying to survive and more time thinking. We have evolved several ways to store information and memes, from clay tablets, papyrus scroll, and parchment books, through punch cards, magnetic tapes, CD's, floppy disks, optical disks, and microchips. We are still trying to create faster and better computers to store more information and memes. Are the memes working through us to achieve their

own dimly felt purposes? Of all times in human history, it is apropos to call this the Information Age.

The second part of the question still remains as to why memes, instead of genes, will control the future of human evolution. The previous history of human culture provides the answer. Since the moment that genetic evolution allowed the ancestors of human beings to produce memetic behaviors whose use exceeded those produced genetically, humans had advanced light-years beyond the animal condition. His insight learning ability has risen to a level well above that of his fellow primates in that he now manipulates his external environment to suit his needs.

Comparatively speaking, *Homo sapiens* did more to affect the natural environment using memes in the 40,000 years they have existed, than during the four million years that it took to evolve biologically.[11] In those comparatively few millenia human beings have not only unlocked the secret to their own life, genetics, but also the secret to the elements of the universe, quantum mechanics. Memes have even gave humans the ability to harness the power of atoms. In terms of the species' ability to produce rapid achievements, memes have genes beat hands down.

However, one must also consider the possibility of genes controlling the future of the human species. In order for them to do so, mankind would have to abandon the field of genetics would have to be abandoned. Memes could not be allowed to manipulate the genes' natural evolution in this process. This is already impossible. Memes will still be manipulating the physical environment in which the genes exist. For example, as I said before, memes have allowed human being to escape the confines of naturally occurring environmental selection pressures in favor of cultural (memetically) produced ones. As a species, human beings no longer need the phenotype which allows them to withstand temperature fluctuations of their environment. They live and work in memetically produced temperature-controlled environments why rely on heating and air conditioning.

Genetics may have a role in producing phenotypes which allow humans to survive memetically produced environmental selection pressures such as industrial pollution. It is certainly possible that genes could allow the evolution of the human species to withstand the increases in ultraviolet radiation attributed to pollution. However, in light of their

previous record, memes will no doubt beat genes with quick-fix artifacts such as more-potent sunscreen lotions, which short-cut the trudging pace of biological evolution.

The future of genetic evolution is dim because of its inherent trial-and-error aproach, which is exceedingly time-consuming. It produces a mutation which may or may not allow one carrier to survive. If it does not, the organism and resources invested in it are wasted. On the other hand, an emergent feature of memetic evolution is the ability to simulate several possible courses of action and evaluate their effectiveness. This process conserves energy and resources and is cumulative. The being is able to store these memes for future reference. It is Vastly[12] more efficient than genetic evolution.

In evaluating our role in controlling the future evolution of the human species, it is important to remember that both memes and genes are selfish replicators. They care little for the containers they inhabit, so long as the containers allow them to reproduce and spread. Being an entity separate from the human body, a meme will create behaviors both detrimental and beneficial to the survival of its host machine. The success of a high-level gene is determined by its ability to control a brain's attention, and therefore control its body's behavior. Likewise, "If a meme is to dominate the attention of a human brain it must do so at the expense of 'rival' memes."[13] Furthermore, the saturation of a meme in the population of brains is an indicator of its success.

So the question becomes, "Who's controlling whom?" If memes have accompanied us throughout our evolution to our modern state, and have enabled us to survive with greater ease, they must be controlling our fate. For our evolution since that time thousands of years ago has been to their distinct advantage. Humans now enjoy a life with very few survival tasks, spending most of our time transmitting and reproducing memes.

The meme complex "science" has allowed the secrets of the gene to be revealed and manipulated. In other words, this meme complex by directing the behavior of its host, has gained control of the genetic evolution of that host. These parasitic memes have enslaved the hosts of genes with yet another task, reproducing more memes. This parasite has even created other means of containing itself besides their biological containers (computers, books, etc.). These memes have even been so aggressive as to create

behaviors, such as the Shaker colonies, which are totally counter-productive to the replication of genes and human beings.

In conclusion the meme is immortal, it survives despite the demise of its biological container. For example, the specific gene combination which produced the human Charles Darwin has long since been re-absorbed into the gene pool, but his meme, "Natural Selection," lives on. If a meme can control its survival machines and exist after they have disintegrated, it will eventually find a means to do away with the waste of energy and materials necessary to reconstruct them time after time. Memetic evolution is light-years faster than genetic evolution and has certainly eclipsed the genes' ability to control the fate of the human species. The computer may be the efficient storage container memes have been searching for. Computers do not have to consume energy carrying out the tedious necessary functions of biological life. Also memes have become intrinsic to human existence, they control to a degree the natural/artificial environment we live in. They have controlled, do control, and will continue to control our behavior. Will our future evolution be memetic? Most certainly it will. Will it be within our control? Most certainly it will not.

---

[1] "...to be genetic or memetic..." The memetic is the adjective form of the neologism "meme." A meme is the fundamental unit of cultural transmssion. Examples of this phenomena include are from both animals and human beings. For example the cultural information of bird songs seem to be passed from generation to generation regardless of any genetic connection between he previous generation and the next. This is cultural transmission. Even more remarkable, is that these memes undergo mutation as well. The famous and often quoted lines of Shakespeare's Hamlet in Act 5, Scene I, "Alas, poor Yorick, I knew him Horatio." The word 'well' often inserted so that the phrase reads, "Alas poor Yorick, I knew him well Horatio." That phrase or idea, a meme, mutated into another form due to poor copying. 'Meme' is derived form the Greek word, 'Mimeme' shortened to *meme*, to rhyme with gene.(Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, page 192.)

[2] This question was posed to the Honors Section of CC-103, in order to speculate as to what the future might hold for the human species in light of the information regarding evolution and artificial intelligence covered during the semester.

[3] Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, page 473

[4] Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, page 198

[5] Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, page 192

[6] Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene,* page 201

[7] Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea,* page 495.

[8] Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene,* page 332.

[9] From *Star Wars*. I could not resist using this modern quotation taken from Darth Vader as he confronts his former teacher Obi Wan, before striking him down.

[10] From *Star Trek*: *The Motion Picture*. This quotation is apropos. It comes from the scene in the *Star Trek The Motion Picture,* where VYGER, a dangerous super-computer from the depths of space comes to earth, searching for its creator. The plot of the movie revealed the super-computer was, in fact, the VOYAGER probe which had undergone a technological evolution by a machine based-society.

[11] Lewis, *Life,* page 430.

[12] "Vastly"--Short for "Very-much-more-then-astronomically." Dennet, page 109.

[13] Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, page 197.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

DAWKINS, RICHARD, (1989), *The Selfish Gene,* Oxford University Press, Oxford

DENNETT, DANIEL C., (1995), *Darwin's Dangerous Idea, Evolutions and The Meanings of Life,* Simon & Schuster Inc., New York, New York

LEWIS, RICKI, (1996), *Life, customized second edition for Boston University,* Wm. C. Brown Publishers, A Times Mirror Higher Education Group.

LUCASFILM LTD. PRODUCTION, (1977), *Star Wars,* Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

Rodenberry, Gene,(1979), *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, Paramount Pictures Corporation

On The Nature of Culture

Robert Bancroft

In his newest book, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, Prof. Daniel Dennett develops a new cultural metaphor: the meme. Originally construed by Richard Dawkins as a way of clarifying some early processes of cultural evolution, Dennett has broadened and deepened the scope of this model, which is fundamentally analogous to the selfish gene paradigm. Yet, *by boastfully proclaiming the truth of his newly reinforced hypothesis*, he makes a fundamental logical error which brings down his entire argument. It is only one of several such confusions in an argument which is bristling with contradictions. Dennett often speaks of Darwinism as being a sort of universal acid. I now propose to put his idea to another sort of universal acid, the dialectic. Let us analyze his explanation of culture carefully, and in the process ask ourselves an even more crucial question than its validity: Does it have anything useful to offer us?

First of all, what exactly is necessary for Darwinian descent with modification to take place? Dennett says there are three requirements: "(1) variation: there is a continuing abundance of different elements; (2) heredity or replication: the elements have the capacity to create copies or replicas of themselves; (3) differential 'fitness': the number of copies of an element that are created in a given time varies, depending on interactions between the features of that element and features of the environment in which it persists." [Dennett 1995, p. 343] Let us amend (2) slightly so that elements don't just have the capacity to replicate, but that they do replicate, and they do so voraciously and with accuracy. Replicators should possess longevity, fecundity, and copying fidelity. [Dawkins 1989a, p. 194]

Given this, we can now consider the meme as a potential replicator upon which natural selection operates. Dennett says that memes should be thought of as "...the smallest elements that replicate themselves with reliability and fecundity." [Dennett 1995,

p. 344] He says this is quite plain to see; clearly D-F#-A is no meme while a theme from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony is. [Dennett 1995, p. 344] Is this really so? Quite to the contrary, D-F#-A is certainly a meme! Think of how many times it has been used over and over again. There is only one Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, but there are many D major triads. For that matter, there are even more D's. D is certainly the best meme so far; it's practically everywhere. We could go on and on, but I think it's clear where I'm going. With selfish gene theory, there is a clear means of mapping from analogy to discrete representation. We can clearly map traits to genes to DNA to codons, and that's it. In this sense, the information is digital. Memes don't work this way. There are no clear cut distinctions in definition, heritage, or function. They are analog forms of information. Even so, this doesn't preclude Darwinian evolution. Rather, we are just noting differences right now.

Further describing the nature of a meme, he says that "Memes are also invisible, and are carried by meme vehicles - pictures, books, sayings..." [Dennett 1995, p. 347] Here is another crucial difference; memes are utterly media independent, whereas genes are certainly not. This kind of description hints dangerously at the dualism Dennett always bashes, so he quickly recovers by saying that "A meme's existence depends on a physical embodiment." [Dennett 1995, p. 348] Let's consider this a bit. When primitive man first shared with his fellow the notion that $2 + 2 = 4$, in whichever speak he used, would we say he invented the concept of twoness and twoness yielding fourness? Of course not. We say he discovered it. People didn't invent the earth's orbit around the sun, they discovered it. Discovering something insinuates that it exists before anyone finds it; Columbus did not invent America and bring it into being, he just found it. If he hadn't found it, America would have gone on doing its thing without him. So is it likely to be with many memes. The notion itself exists whether or not a human brain is thinking it. This is not to suggest an alternate reality in which this idea hides waiting to be accessed by the mind, but rather that it is something of a contradiction to suggest at the same time that a meme is both the information which is completely independent of its medium, and that it only exists as a medium. Surely something happens at the level of meaning which is more universal, and, in this sense only, apart from the physical objects which carry them, though no less

tangible. For example, what is the state of a meme when it is in transit from one mind to another, by light or sound or whatever? So I might refine this still further to say that an idea such as a universal constant can exist without a physical embodiment, but it can only by worked with and tested if it has such an embodiment. Still, we have not said anything to prevent Darwinian selective force from working, although we're starting to see that the meme is at best weakly analogous to the gene.

In fact, Dennett is fairly candid about the incredible odds against there ever being a science of memetics, at least using his sense of the meme. For example, there is no universal brain language in which a particular idea can be clearly translated into neurons. That is, the idea of this cup of coffee's being hot will affect my neurons and yours, but it will do so in a way unique to each of us. Thus, when Dennett suggests that some memes compete directly with each other, and others make infestation easier for their companion memes, we might well wonder how they accomplish this if there is nothing in the mind but memes and there is no universal way of translating them into neuron-talk. Further, consider the way in which these replicators replicate. It is utterly different from the way genes do. They are certainly fecund, and they can live for centuries. But how about their copying fidelity? Our minds mix and match ideas, create new ones, and otherwise blend and choose memes in no way similar to the natural selection and sorting of genes. Furthermore, when memes replicate, they pass on acquired traits, while we all know that genes do not do this. Hence, there is no way to tell the difference between a copied meme and a newly invented one. "The basic topologies of biological and cultural change are completely different. Biological evolution is a system of constant divergence without subsequent joining of branches. Lineages, once distinct, are separate forever. In human history, transmission across lineages is, perhaps, the major source of cultural change." [Gould, 1991a, p. 65, quoted in Dennett 1995, p. 355] In other words, there is no really useful way of studying the relationships between memes the way they are defined now, and certainly no practical application of this in the historical study of culture. Still, we have in no way precluded Darwinian selective force as being the primary mechanism of cultural development.

We are starting to amass enough information to realize that the meme model is a very weak analogy when compared to the concrete selfish gene theory. Based on clever bits of rhetoric, it seems to have little base. We are now ready to consider whether or not normal natural selection can be said to operate on this level at all. Surely to some extent it does. Dennett points out cleverly that "If a scientist hears, or reads about, a good idea, he passes it on to his colleagues and students." [Dennett 1995, p. 345] And subsequently, we suppose, the idea is tested and refined, and so evolution of an idea occurs. Of course this much is so. But in giving this example, Dennett has completely contradicted the entire premise of his model. He claims that while we traditionally feel that ideas are selected on the basis of their truth and beauty [p. 363], in fact this is not so. The meme model proposes that an idea propagates simply because it "is a good replicator". [p. 364] Then what his he talking about when he says that the scientist passes along a "good" idea? Does he really mean to invalidate all of science's work by saying that the only reason the scientist passes the idea along is because he cannot help but be a vehicle to the spreading of a parasite swimming about for its own ends? Of course not, he would claim. These memes have truth in them. Let us return to the effects of this notion later and now consider what selection exactly means in light of this definition.

Dennett claims that the notion of the mind fighting against or even choosing among memes is a myth. [Dennett 1995, p. 365] There is no self, but rather a mass of selfish memes that we might call self. Can this really be so? Surely some memes can secure themselves on the basis of their replicating prowess; advertising is a great example. But this may not be, contrary to Dennett's insistence, the only force. Consider two random people, one raised on the streets, and the other in the great plains. We might expect, according to this model, that they would grow up to be very different people, since they are so surrounded by different memes, and thus composed differently. Such is often the case. But what about twins? It is known that twins, when separated at birth and raised under completely different circumstances, still share much more in common than chance could possibly explain. They may develop similar tastes in clothing, food, or music, for example. How can this be unless there is something distinctly non-memetic about the nature of self? In fact, I argue, self is not a meme at all. Rather, it is something more

biological, yet not predetermined completely by genes because of the random factors involved in the embryonic development of the nervous system. [Prof. Patt, conversation] Surely this primitive form of self is small and naked until it is clothed by culture. Even so, it is a separate, selecting entity which Dennett's model does not account for. When Dennett says that a meme is good at replicating, what could he possibly mean? We've already ruled out the possibility that he means it alters the brain in such a way that the brain is forced to think about it, since there is no universal brain language. Therefore, the only way culture could be spread with such media independence is if there were an interpreter of some kind, a self that, while heavily influenced by culture, somehow remains independent of it. For an excellent study of this, consider Viktor Frankel's book, *A Man's Search for Meaning*, in which he relates and examines his personal experiences in a brutal Nazi prison camp. It is on such fringes of pain, he suggests, that the self which separates us from other animals is best observed. His inevitable conclusion: "...Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." [*Man's Search for Meaning,* Viktor E. Frankel, Washington Square Press, (New York: 1984)]

Surely a selection of sorts occurs on the mental level. But it is a conscious selection based on foresight. And foresight is what Dennett would call a Skyhook. It is an amazing skyhook because with it our mind can swoop down like the hand of God and remodel ideas to suit some future outcome that it has divined. One selective pressure acting on ideas is certainly the limited attention span of the mind. Even so, this selective force should not be thought of as being overcome solely or even mostly by the replicating skills of a meme. Rather, it should be based on a study of the interpreter and the self. These things choose ideas for there appropriateness, however that is defined to the individual. To return to the earlier example, the scientist is sharing his idea because he believes it is appropriate: he sees a truth in it, or a usefulness in explaining something.

Darwinian forces of evolution do not seem to work in their standard way at all on this level. Let us consider a brief thought experiment. Have you ever had a garden? Even if your only experience in gardening is the front lawn, you have surely experienced weeds.

Weeds grow everywhere you don't want them to! They are so much more environmentally fit than your precious, soft, green blades of grass that if it weren't for your constant intervention the weeds would annihilate them. Now, suppose an alien botanist, curious as to the content of our planet, beamed aboard a sample of your lawn for study, carelessly ignoring all of the houses and other evidence of intelligence on the planet. He might not understand why a particular species of grass is so universally successful once he sees how much more fit the weeds are. He might develop all kinds of elaborate and befuddled hypotheses to explain precisely why, in some way, this kind of delicate grass is actually more fit than any other. Unless he actually took into account the foresight-ridden human who worked so hard to choose that grass despite all of other selective pressures, however, he would be completely wrong in any relationships he deduced. His entire study of the relationships of these plants would be error-ridden.

Such is the case with Dennett and his meme model. Not only is the meme not an accurate analogy to the gene paradigm, but it is not a useful one. No definition of culture that does not take into account foresight and decision can be of any value because it ignores the very foundations of culture itself. While I cannot argue any more convincingly that there is more than selfish memes composing "me", I can at least point out that on this point Dennett contradicts himself regularly. He can always be found bashing other ideas and claiming that his is somehow "true". ("The answer is Yes!" [p. 343]) If, however, he carries his own model to its inevitable conclusion, he should instead say that his idea is a strong replicator. How can he ever claim to know what is true and what is not true unless he acknowledges that "he" is something more than the mass of selfish memes that contribute to him. According to selfish meme theory, we would never be sure that an idea is true, since one could always argue that in fact the idea is just a really good replicator, and that the best memes have the property of being convincing. Such notions have no use in understanding cultural phenomena. There is a self. It is not handed down by God, but built up through years of mindless R & D. This much seems likely. But what happens in the realm of a mind with foresight should not be assumed to be equivalent to the blind selective pressures acting on organisms. Foresight allows one to jump around on the fitness landscape in ways that at times negate normal selection in favor of a new selection

based, contrary to what Dennett claims, on the very memes that destroy the foundations of his meme-paradigm: truth and beauty.

Lapsus Ungulae: Houyhnhnm Nature Betrayed or Nature, Read in Hoof and Maw

Edmund Jorgensen

In the fourth and final voyage which Swift relates in *Gulliver's Travels,* Gulliver, having been thrown off his boat by a mutinous crew, finds himself on an island ruled by a race of intelligent horses (or Houyhnhnms, as they are called in their own language, the etymology of which is *Perfection of Nature*[1]). During his stay, which lasts close to four years, Gulliver, is so influenced by the Houyhnhnms that he returns to Europe unable to bear the touch or smell of even his own wife and children, having been convinced that all men are Yahoos, repulsive ape-like creatures whom the Houyhnhnms have enslaved and use as beasts of burden. Gulliver, however, influences the Houyhnhnms in return, and in particular the grey Houyhnhnm in whose house Gulliver lives and whom he comes to call his master. While listening to grey's explanations of Europe and human nature, the grey gains some power to reason deviously and practically, as well as the first glimmerings of moral conscience--that is, the ability to know both good and evil--and this influence is possible because within Houyhnhnm nature lies, dormant and chained, all the <u>human</u> passions.

The Houyhnhnms are physically identical to horses, but they are able to use their legs and hooves in a more dexterous manner than their better-known look-alikes. A Houyhnhnm's physical appearance, specifically the color of his coat, corresponds to his mental gifts and consequently determines the position he will inhabit in his life. The white, sorrel and iron-grey Houyhnhnms are born and die servants, mating only with other servants, while the bay, dapple-grey, and black are the masters and mate only with their equals (GT, pp.303-4).

---

[1] Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels.* Penguin Books, New York, NY; 1985. Page 281. This work will be dnnoted by GT in all further references.

The Houyhnhnms are intelligent enough to have a highly developed language. There are, however, certain words which their language notably lacks. "For they have," reports Gulliver, "no word in their language to express lying or falsehood" (GT, p.281). The Houyhnhnms also have no word for evil and compensate by attaching the word Yahoo to anything that they wish to express is bad (GT, p.323).

They have an idea of logic which seems to rely on their concept of Nature and a universal Reason, and by which the grey attempts to prove to Gulliver that it is impossible to he (GT, p.286). They are also seemingly capable of debate, although in their entire history only one subject, that of the fate of the Yahoos, has ever needed to be debated.

The grey, at least, after many lengthy discussions with Gulliver regarding the nature of war, politics, religion, and other matters unknown and supposedly unthinkable to the Houyhnhnms, is able to arrive "at a competent knowledge of what human nature in our parts of the world is capable to perform" (GT, p.291).

The "grand maxim" of the Houyhnhnms "is to cultivate Reason, and to be wholly governed by it" (GT, p.315). "Friendship and benevolence are the two principal virtues among the Houyhnhnms" (GT p.316). This maxim and these cardinal virtues do not seem to have any rituals associated with them "They preserve decency and civility in the highest degrees," writes Gulliver, "but are altogether ignorant of ceremony" (GT, p.316).

The Houyhnhnms do, however, have a particular way of preparing for death. Barring accident, most Houyhnhnms five for between seventy and seventy-five years before they feel that their death is a few weeks away, at which time they stay home and receive visits from their friends. "However, about ten days before their death, which they seldom fail in computing, they return the visits that have been made them by those nearest in the neighbourhood" (GT p.323). The dying Houyhnhnm "does not discover the least regret that he is leaving the world;" nor do his friends and family seem either to rejoice or grieve at his death (GT, p.322).

As an example of this lack of emotion, Gulliver cites the instance of his master's friend, who was expected on a certain day and missed his appointment. His wife came much later, excusing her husband's absence on the grounds that he had died and her own tardiness by the difficulty with which she had found a burial spot for him (GT p.322). Dead Houyhnhnms are buried "in the obscurest places that can be found" (GT p-322), which more than accounts for her difficulty in finding a suitable spot. Certainly the widow was not late because she was grieving: "I observed

she behaved herself at our house as cheerfully as the rest," Gulliver says: "She died about three months after" (GT, p.323).

A Houyhnhnm household consists of a master, his wife, their two children (one of each sex), and a larger number of servants and their children. Marriages are made by eugenic principles, to produce the accustomed colors in a foal and to insure that it is strong and beautified. "Strength is chiefly valued in the male, and comeliness in the female," observes Gulliver,, not because strength or comeliness excites passion in the opposite sex, but rather only as complements for each other, "for where a female happens to excel in strength, a consort is chosen with regard to comeliness" (GT, pp.316-7).

Houyhnhnm couples mate only until they have produced one foal of each sex, after which time, barring an unusual early death for one of the foals, the male and female mate no longer. This precaution is taken to make sure that there are always sufficient supplies for the living. Servant families, however, are allowed three of each sex, to insure that there will be sufficient servants for the comfort of the masters (GT, p.316). The Houyhnhnms have no erotic love: "the husband and wife pass their lives with the same friendship, and mutual benevolence that they bear to others of the same species who come in their way" (GT, p.317).

The Houyhnhnms educate all their young, both male and female, in the same way. They are allowed only grass, the simplest component of the Spartan Houyhnhnm diet, until they are eighteen years old. The masters graze for four hours a day, but the servants bring their grass home for convenient consumption between work-hours. "Temperance, industry, exercise and cleanliness, are the lessons equally enjoined to the young ones of both sexes" (GT, p.317). The youth are exhorted to exercise vigorously and build up strength, "and when they are all in a sweat, they are ordered to leap over head and ears into a pond or river" (GT, pp.317-8). The youths also compete in races, the winners receiving as prizes songs of praise sung in their honor (GT, p. 3 18).

The Houyhnhnms have no written system of communication, "and consequently their knowledge is all traditional" (GT, p.321). Their poetry is amazingly exact and minute in detail and usually contains "some exalted notions of friendship and benevolence, or the praises of those who were victors in races, and other bodily exercises" (GT, pp.3212).

As far as government is concerned, the Houyhnhnms have only an assembly which meets every four years on the vernal equinox. Representatives from each district gather for about five or six days to rectify any deficiencies in oats or animals in any district, and to arrange for the exchange of children, should one Houyhnhnm couple have produced

two females and another two males, or should a couple which is past child-bearing age have lost a foal to some accident (GT, p.318). In the history of the assembly there has been but one debate, and that was on the subject of the Yahoos, namely "Whether the Yahoos should be exterminated from the face of the earth" (GT, pp.318-9). In this great and only debate, a strong argument was made for the Yahoos! extermination, that "the Yahoos were the most filthy, noisome, and deformed animal which Nature had ever produced, ... the most restive and indocible," and were consequently prone to misuse livestock and destroy crops if not constantly watched (GT, p.319). No argument was made for the preservation of the Yahoos, and it is likely the matter would have ended in violence had not another method of extermination been found. It was indeed, Gulliver tells us, Gulliver's master himself who made the winning proposition that, having learned of the method from his marvelous Yahoo's description of the way Houyhnhnms are managed in his country, the Houyhnhnms not kill the Yahoos, but merely systematically castrate them, by which method they would become more docile and die out slowly, without violent loss of life, giving the Houyhnhnms time to breed asses, a much less disagreeable animal as replacements for their former beasts of burden (GT, pp.319-2 1).

Indeed, Gulliver gives the reader a great deal of information about the Houyhnhnms. The intelligent reader, though, will realize that all this information is sorted through one sensibility: that of poor Gulliver. This single-sourcedness has its benefits: Gulliver is an excellent observer, spent a good deal of time with the Houyhnhnms, and professes himself to be truthful to a fault. However, the reader must also be aware of the dangers of taking everything Gulliver says at face value: Gulliver has been so cowed by his equine acquaintances that he, back in Europe, would rather sleep in a stable than with his wife, and cannot even bear the touch of his own children. He is so enamoured of the Houyhnhnms that he harbors no malice for them though they sent him to near-certain death on the sea. Clearly it is quite possible that Gulliver may exaggerate the virtues of the Houyhnhnms, or rather take too trustingly the explanations of their motivations. Therefore the intelligent reader win believe the facts which Gulliver relates (the events, what was said), but weigh carefully any explanation of the facts (why a Houyhnhnm did

this, what the true nature of the Houyhnhnms is), to discover, if possible, what Gulliver has gotten right and what he has missed.

Is Houyhnhnm nature then truly as Gulliver describes it? Let us examine first their wisdom and logic. The grey's proof to Gulliver that saying the thing which is not is impossible is patently absurd. It rests upon an assumption that "the use of speech [is] to make us understand one another, and to receive information of the facts" (GT, p.286). The fact that lies do exist is enough to show that, though the grey's reasoning from first principles may be solid, his grasp of the first principles is not. The grey consistently defers to Nature and its utility in all things, and wonders at Gulliver's wanting to cover his natural parts with clothes. "He could not understand why Nature should teach us to conceal what Nature had given" (GT, p. 283). If nature only provides what is needed and therefore good, why then should the Houyhnhnms need to exterminate the Yahoos, which, though they may be the most noisome beasts of nature, are still natural beasts?

Are the Houyhnhnms truly as free from emotion as they would have Gulliver believe? The most obvious example that the Houyhnhnms are capable of emotion is Gulliver's assertion that the sorrel nag "had a tenderness" for him (GT, p.329). But this case, it may be objected, is one of an imperfect Houyhnhnm, a servant, feeling not even affection but a tenderness for a "fellow-servant" (GT, p.329). The nag's benediction as Gulliver sails away, it may be argued, means next to nothing: the nag never tried, after all to help keep him from his death at sea, and is merely expressing the general benevolence which all Houyhnhnms harbor for their peers.

Let us examine, then, some of the more subtle instances of Houyhnhnm emotion. The widowed Houyhnhnm who displays no emotion at her husband's death, we are told, dies three months later. Why are we told this? Perhaps because Swift intends the reader to ask whether there was not some connection between the death of the Houyhnhnm's husband and her own. Did she merely miss her partner and pine, with no outward signs of grief, to death? Why do the Houyhnhnms bury their dead in the obscurest places possible, rather than, as mere practical reason would demand, a healthily obscure place, or even a ritual burial ground? Would not a people without emotion have no need to put the dead out of sight to have them out of mind? Perhaps this widow had to spend so much time

finding the obscurest spot because of the same love that caused her to pine to death three months later. If Gulliver had been an astute sociologist, then we could compare statistics compiled from a huge number of espoused Houyhnhnm deaths and prove Houyhnhnm emotion scientifically. As it is, we have only a few, though significant, details.

The most subtle and important instance of Houyhnhnm emotion comes from the Houyhnhnm with whom Gulliver has had the most contact: the grey. At Gulliver's leave-taking, as he heads off to what the grey must recognize as almost certain death, Gulliver goes to kiss his master's hoof. But, as he is going to kiss it, relates Gulliver, "[my master] did me the honour to raise it gently to my mouth" (GT, p. 33 1). What does this simple gesture signify? Mere affection, perhaps--but remember that this is an illustrious and respected master Houyhnhnm--even "mere" affection is significant. Perhaps, though, this gesture is one not merely of affection, but of guilt. Certainly any human being who was human in anything more than name only would feel guilt if one whom he had condemned to drowning had bent to kiss his feet. Might not an overly intellectual egotistical misguided human moral creature raise its foot to the kisser's lips as an egotistical act of self-exculpation? And self-exculpation implies the culpa and even a knowledge of it as a fault.

The grey comes to understand in some glimmering way human nature, Gulliver repeatedly says. It is he who finds the cold solution to the problem of the Yahoos. The very fact that there was any feeling that exterminating the Yahoos violently would be wrong immediately implies some latent moral aversion to murder--note also that the Houyhnhnms are vegetarians. It is also a statement of moral consequence (by which term I mean a statement which is of moral import, not necessarily positive) for the grey to assert that it is "no shame to learn wisdom from brutes" (GT, p.320). The appeal to something which is not necessarily exclusive to the Houyhnhnms, the tacit admittance that the Houyhnhnms could have missed something, is another entrance into the shadowy realm of debate and moral choice.

Houyhnhnms are born without the virtues of cleanliness, etc.: like humans, they are taught virtue through work, pleasure, reward, and routine. Even the master grey, an old Houyhnhnm respected and set in his ways, is capable after time of coming to a small moral

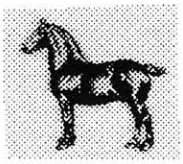
awakening (which again does not mean necessarily that he acts in a morally correct manner, but that he becomes aware of the moral implications of his actions). Imagine if Gulliver had been in close contact with one of the foals!

Houyhnhnm nature is not merely an allegory for one half of a dualistic human nature, the intellect, split off from the passions, the Yahoos. It is more complex and significant than that impossibility: it is what would result if some ingenious mad misunderstander of Plato read The Republic, understood it literally, and put it into practice in an isolated place. The Houyhnhnms may well have been, long ago, almost exactly like humans and experienced a revolution where writing was destroyed to keep the horrors of history from people's minds, all poetry but that which inspires natural virtue was buried in the most obscure place that could be found, eugenics was worked out and codified into a caste system--in short, the city in speech became a reality. It is even possible that some Houyhnhnm philosopher, with an army at his command, kindly asked all Houyhnhnms past the age of ten to jump in the sea, leaving behind their children, and killed them when they refused. The result was a system where the passions were controlled, but never completely eradicated, through noble omissions of words, through unquestioned first principles, and through lies about the Houyhnhnm's place in nature.

Clearly, the reason why Gulliver is forced to leave the island and the Yahoos must be exterminated is that Gulliver's influence is dangerous: he has awakened in the grey an understanding of things which could bring down the entire Houyhnhnm system, and the other Houyhnhnms have realized the danger. The grey has had the beginning of the vision that there is a Yahoo drawing the carriage of every Houyhnhnm's soul as it were, and that the Yahoo has the potential to reverse the situation. The fact that, even after a glimmering of moral conscience appears in the grey, he can still condone and in fact suggest the bloodless near-murder of Gulliver and the bloodless genetic cleansing of the Yahoos, itself only testifies, in his own mind, to the dangers of such a conscience and the consequent necessity of those foul acts. The grey does not go down to the shore to see Gulliver off "out of kindness" (GT, 331), he goes to make absolutely sure that Gulliver leaves. Once the Republic has been put in place, justice is once again, as Thrasymachus asserted, the interest of the stronger, and the interest of the stronger is that Gulliver be "exhorted" to

leave or no longer be treated as a reasonable creature--the consequences of which should make a sensitive reader shudder.

Well then, when Gulliver is across the ocean and the Yahoos are extinct, is the danger to the Houyhnhnm way of life also gone? It is probable that the contact Gulliver had with the Houyhnhnms was not enough to cause a mass moral awakening and bring down the almost invisible steel 1-beams of the Houyhnhnm Republic, but the point of Gulliver's Travels is that the passions cannot be eradicated, but merely buried, and never irretrievably. The dark and noble, the possessive and the tender, the intellect and the passions--all these are bound together so inseparably in human nature that they cannot be refracted, not even by the powerful prism of allegory.



Durkheim and James

Kirsten Nelson

Emile Durkheim's search for the source of the moral dimension in human life led him to an interesting discovery. He speculated that religion, a doctrine dismissed during the enlightenment as a flimsy means for men to explain what science could not, was in the fact the very basis for a moral society. According to Durkheim, without religion, society could not exist. Men by nature wish to fulfill their needs without regard for the needs of their fellow men, and Durkheim indicates that this nature can only be suppressed by a moral dimension added to men's life by religion. The unity that religion brings to society makes it possible for an institution dependent on the supernatural to become an essential part of daily life. Durkheim took a collective view on religion, the father of American psychology, William James, examined the subjective experience of believers. James saw religion as a window into the conscious and found that it is capable of producing a powerful healing effect in the form of optimism. James cited man's quest for happiness as the reason for religion, saying "If a creed makes a man feel happy, he almost inevitably adapts it" (78).

Durkheim's conclusive definition of religion states that it unifies its believers into a moral community called a Church (62). The members of a Church share a belief in the doctrines presented there. This common belief system provides a simple basis for society, but it is more difficult to make conclusions about the complex behavior that is derived from a religion. Why men become morally conscious when religion is present is beyond just the fact that those men share beliefs. Religion holds a more significant influence by the presence of the society it creates. Durkheim states that religion is "inseparable from the idea of a Church" (60), so without the community of a Church, the morals that Durkheim has already concluded come from religion are ineffective. In order for morality to grasp hold of men's consciousness, it needs a firm basis in their way of life. There is no more fundamental aspect to a man's living than the society in which he lives. If a Church

is that society, then the moral doctrines of that Church are a fundamental aspect of a man's life.

The ideas of a Church easily become the morals of men as a direct result of the immense power society wields. As Durkheim states, "opinion, primarily a social thing, is a source of authority" (238-9). The constant pressure to do what society considers right is what moves men to do what they consider to be their duty. A man who has done his duty according to the moralistic views of the society around him will find,

> manifestations of every sort expressing the sympathy, esteem or affection which his fellows have for him ... The sentiments which society has for him raise the sentiments which he has for himself. Because he is in moral harmony with his comrades, he has more confidence, courage and boldness in action (242).

Religious society instills in men a sense of what is right, and man is rewarded when he acts accordingly.

The primary function of religion, according to Durkheim, is purely a social one. Religion provides a means for men to identify with the members of their society, or more specifically, with the members of their Church. A Church is a society of men who separate the sacred from the profane in the same way, thus creating an indispensable unity among them. This classification of the elements of everyday life is essential in order for there to be the shared beliefs that make up religion. In this separation it becomes evident that religion's true purpose is not simply to explain the supernatural, but to add meaning to everyday occurrences. In fact, as Durkheim notes, it is not even necessary for man to go outside himself in order to have religion. He cites Buddhism as an example of a religion without a deity to point to as the supreme source of power. Buddhist doctrine surrounds man's search for unity within himself. Without a supreme deity to dictate their behavior, Buddhists manage their behavior is accordance with their desire to ascend to a higher self. It becomes clear through this example that the power in religion lies in the approval, and the increase of self-esteem, that can be gained by doing one's religious duty.

The separation between the sacred and profane is a universal concept for religion, so it can be said that it is by the separation in religion that men learn to resist giving in to

their natural tendencies. Durkheim states plainly that "society cannot be formed or maintained without our being required to make perpetual and costly sacrifices" *(Dualism* handout, 163). This suppression allows men to live a life free of the misery that would ensue should they spend it attempting to quench their insatiable desires.

But what in religion can replace men's unfulfilled desires? What gives men a sense that there is something beyond themselves, the energy of which can make them as content as if they were indeed able to fulfill all their desires? Durkheim indicates in his work that it is the collective gatherings of religion themselves that are sacred to men. The sacred feeling men obtain from participating in ritual unleashes the passions they suppress in everyday life, making men associate the feeling they get in these dances and other rites with the religious doctrine they worship. Once men find that the electricity they feel during their participation in a religious rite seems to have as its source something that is a part of that ritual, they seek out the reason behind the feeling. Then, instead of finding the power to create religious energy within themselves, men have a tendency to extend the power to a source beyond what is their own. Durkheim refers to this extension of a group feeling onto a specific object or idea as totemization. Totemization allows for the creation of a concrete source of the collective effervescence that men feel during group worship. From Durkheim's sociological standpoint, totemization provides the means for making what is essentially a social gathering into something sacred.

William James observes entirely different tactics behind man's religious behavior. James worked from the perspective that religion should not be regarded scientifically as ideas, but rather as something that is felt. The feeling that James investigated specifically was the positive one he often witnessed as being gained by believers. Individuals whom he labels as "healthy-minded" have a union with the divine, or are monistic, and simply do not accept evil into their lives. For this reason. James gets more specific about healty-mindedness and labels monists as "sky-blue optimists." Their optimism comes from knowing that their God is beneficent and kind, and from an unusual ability to let evil glance off of themselves without so much as leaving a scratch. These optimists are not only effected psychologically but in regards to their general health as well. The mind-cure

movement, where positive practice with the mind will cure ills better than medicine, is one example of a powerful union with God that brings tangible results.

After citing conclusive evidence about the power of optimism, James shows that upon closer examination, optimists fit into even more distinct categories. "Voluntarily" healthy-minded individuals and their opposites, those who are "involuntarily" healthy, both experience the positive results of optimism, but the means of their becoming optimistic varies. Involuntarily healthy-minded individuals find themselves immediately happy and have a tendency to exclude evil from their world entirely. It is not as though evil does not exist for those who are involuntarily optimistic, however. It is the view they have towards evil that helps them to remain free from life's worries. Psychologically, the involuntarily happy face fear "and bear it cheerfully" (88) according to James. From this standpoint, evil is a natural part of the world that can be overcome if it is not allowed to distract. Voluntarily happy persons are not at first free from the suffering of evil. Instead, they have to choose to move away from the common view of evil as debilitating and gradually become immune to their troubles. Both types of healty-minded individuals find it within them to let go of the power evil had over most of the human race. Much of the Protestant "justification by faith" is based on the doctrine of "letting go" for the reason that whatever may be destined will be sure to occur by its own accord. There is no need for struggle if life is regarded as pre-destined, so individuals who believe in this theology will find themselves to be optimistic by James' observation.

The opposite of the healthy-minded individual is the "sick soul' who "maximizes evil ... based on the persuasion that the evil aspects of our life are of its very essence" (130-1). Upon observing several individuals' religious practices in comparison with their psychological states, James found that those religious persons who are monotheistic have a propensity to be unable to escape evil due to the fact that they attribute evil to only one God. If an individual is pluralistic in his beliefs, he finds that he has more options in reasoning out the presence of evil, and so it oftentimes more healthy than his monotheistic counterpart.

The sick soul is more aware of the evil all around him, and so needs a conversion into a more healthy state of mind. Conversion for James is a psychological process that

involves the movement from a peripheral to a central state of mind (194-5). The necessity for such a migration of an individual's state of mind comes from the divided self James describes. Durkheim observed dualism within the self as a manifestation of the division between the sacred and profane that makes up society. James, on the other hand, sees the divided self as a wavering within an individual's mind. In a world of good and evil, the mind has a tendency to waver between these two poles, but the mind has the capacity all along to shift and cement itself into a positive framework. A new perspective on life, whether shocking or gradual, can cause the mind to shift its focus to a more central location permanently. A "volitional" conversion tends to be gradual as the individual attempts to change his view, but a conversion of "self-surrender" is the result of a subject's ceasing to resist a more positive outlook any longer. This "mental rearrangement" has emotion as its center, and makes it possible for unification of the divided self.

Durkheim's sociological approach to religion is a good explanation of the rituals of a religious sects, but James' observations of the effects of religion on individuals proves to be both more interesting and concrete. The fundamentals to which James refers in his work are what make his speculations credible. James' observations are conscious of man's eternal quest for happiness, and so take into perspective the many reasons he might come to use religion in that quest. Durkheim's look at society's treatment of totems and religious rites only scratch the surface of what lies beneath men's propensity toward a belief in God. Man's belief in God has more significance than what is purely sociological. The experiences men have with their religion are too personal to be looked at on a purely societal scale. James' work was right in its close observation of the human mind; it made clear the reasons for religion in life, even for those who are not religious. Religion is more than belief in a God. It is philosophy and salvation that can come to an individual in a dark world.

Temptation and Truth

Rachel Kay Brookmire

Welcome to the wonderful world of Faust. Walk right through the door and I will briefly introduce you to the Direktor, Poet, and Comedian. Now you may think this is an intellectual journey, and it is, but let me forewarn you--the ride with me will be one of power, passion, desire, and immorality. We will begin with hot-blooded nostalgia for youth and go directly into a rejection of religion, God and intellectual knowledge. This tour is not about cerebral connections, it calls on the baser, animal side of your nature--through an intellectual medium, that is all. All that said and done, let us begin.

My name is Mephistophia and I will be your guide for the first part of the tour today. I am registered in the Books as an official devil, but due to the high costs of living these days, I too, must work for the Big Guy; but that is obvious since I am guiding you through Faust, what you mortals call one of your most exemplifying moral works. Anyway, He lets me do what I do best--promote evil. Follow me, please.

The power and importance of Faust is in Goethe's ability to capitalize on and connect with the most exciting part of mortals, their dark side. He is very subtle and sly about doing this, as you will see; we devils find this extremely attractive.

Goethe first presents us with stereotypical models for three classic types of human beings: the practical productive type, the sensitive intellectual type, and the light-hearted, people-pleasing type. To be sure these character types are conveyed clearly, yet discreetly: he names them Direktor, Poet and Comedian. You shall only have a brief encounter with each of the three, for I want us to get on with the tour and visit Mephistopheles--he is so very fine. Anyway, it is important that you take note of how you relate with each of these characters and how each character prepares you for a taste of evil. Goethe covers quite a lot of human personality traits through the Poet, Direktor and Comedian, reason being: he wants to make sure each reader can understand evil on some level.

The Direktor hits home with the practical pessimistic view of human nature. He directly tells the readers who they are, how they behave, and how he makes the most of this knowledge.

> What gives a crowded house delight?
> One half is cold, one half is raw.
> After the play, one hopes to play at cards,
> Another for an orgy in a harlot's bed.
> With such aim, you silly bards,
> Why plague the muses? Go ahead,
> Simply give more and more, and always something more,
> That never fails--and add some dark allusion:
> Try only to create confusion;
> To satisfy men is a chore.--
> What seizes you? An ecstasy or pain? (124-133)

And that is the Direktor; he pits man against mankind through directly pointing to man himself (in line 333) and asking: what dark passions entertain you? None of you mere mortals would deny your own fascination with the dark-side, now would you? And you surely would not think your neighbor to be any better than yourself. Many hours could be spent discussing the truth found in the blatancy of the Direktor, and his door to the dark-side is the one of direct honesty.

Now to meet the Poet, who, as Professor Devlin says, "likes to bury things". Exactly true, and for those of you who are more romantic and like to paint the world pretty--he's your man. The poet hides his raw blood under the all too common nostalgia for youth. And what is human youth but amorality, irresponsibility and overwhelming passions? All of which is nicely necessary and accepted because of innocence, ignorance and age. The Poet's door to evil is honest and poetically correct; he tells those of you who still have passion to indulge in it while you can (at the same time denying that those passions still exist in himself). But if you are of the poet's mind you won't buy it from me, a crazy devil, so I will let you hear it from the wise seeker of truth and beauty; he will tell you the same:

> Nothing I had, and yet profusion:
> The lust for truth, the pleasure of illusion.
> Give back the passions unabated,
> That deepest joy, alive with pain,

Love's power and the strength of hatred,
Give back to me my youth again (194-197).

The comedian tells human beings what they want to hear: live like a lover and a child, take in the moment, do what feels good, delve into life . . . Now if his instructions don't put a smile on your face, and find you engaging in my type of activities, I will begin to doubt your mortality. The Comedian is carefree and captures all the leftover hearts of those who could not take the realism of the Direktor or the heaviness of the Poet.

Conduct as if it were a love affair!
One meets by chance, one feels one's way, stays there,
And by and by, one is entangled;
Happiness grows, then it is mangled,
First rapture comes, then grief and care advance:
Before you know what happened, it is a long romance.
Give us play with such emotion!
Reach into life, it is a teeming ocean! (160-9).

The Comedian also makes the comeback of "[Age] merely finds we are still young at heart" right after the Poet's lines of lost youth (213). It is obvious that through these characters Goethe thoroughly attempts to point all of you, the intellectual readers, on the right path--the path of passions.

Now we shall meet Faust, the ideal mortal scholar. If you find yourself unconvinced by the first three, that pleasure is the key to life, if you think yourself a true scholar guided by truth and answering only to reason, then let us hear the words of Faust the super-scholar:

And here I am, for all my lore,
The wretched fool I was before.
Called Master of Arts, and Doctor to boot,
For ten years almost I confute
And up and down, wherever it goes,
I drag my students by the nose--
And see that for all our science and art
We can know nothing. It burns my heart.
Of course, I am smarter than all the shysters,

The doctors, and teachers, and scribes, and
Christers; (358-68)

There you have it--the wise man says wisdom is a waste of time. It would be best to take advantage of the little time you have left and enjoy life; leave the books for the ascetics who wish to boggle their brains in search of the non-existent Truth. Unless, of course, you believe you're so smart that you can top Faust's accomplishments and come up with the real Truth.

Well, must I remind you that Faust is the leader in your human hobby of scholastic research? You silly creatures, when will you accept and love your inner-devil? You have been neglecting it all these years and that is the true cause of your misery. Now, have you seen enough? Are you ready to let me show you some real fun?

No? I see. You're in the hands of a tempting devil who has just disenchanted your world of ideas and your a little frightened that you might give in? Very well, why don't we hear what God has to say on the matter. We will have to regress some, and just when I thought I was reaching you, but, oh well; I am certain that the Big Guy will convince you.

At this stop God is speaking to Mephisto, the devil in Faust, about whether or not it is acceptable for Faust to give into his devil and the temptations he offers:

As long as he may be alive,
So long you shall not be prevented.
Man errs as long as he will strive (315-8).

Since we have stopped by to pay our regards to the Boss, I would also like to point out to you human beings that He doesn't find us devils to be all that bad. Here is what God has to say about us:

I never hated those who were like you:
Of all the spirits that negate.
The knavish jester gives me least to do (337-9).

To prepare you for your great adventure with me, let us look at the high points in Faust's fun-ride with the magical Mephisto. The first area Mephisto focuses Faust on, after he gets him out of the solitude of studies, is some mild socialization. I will now give

to you the Great Mephisto's speech for psyching up his new pupil, Faust, in the study of fun:

> Above all else, it seem to me,
> You need some jolly company
> To see life can be fun--to say the least:
> The people here make every day a feast.
> With little wit and boisterous noise,
> They dance and circle in their narrow trails
> Like kittens playing with their tails.
> When hangovers don't vex these boys,
> And while their credit's holding out,
> They have no cares and drink and shout (2158-2168).

From this point on the adventures begin. At the bar Mephisto performs his magic to entertain Faust and fool the locals. Songs and drinks fill the spirits, but these festivities are only a warm up--a preparation for the passions. We all know that frolicking and fun is only meant to tantalize the true passions that spiral downward into the depths of hot-blooded beings. These passions are what we devils strive after, embrace and forever entertain.

I cannot take you through all the adventures of Faust's discovery of the passions, it is time for you to unfold your own. I will tell you that Faust fulfills his most sensual desires, penetrates the source of Beauty and dances with spirits on top of the world. Your options have been presented, a summarizing second half of the tour remains and then you are free to choose between me and the library . . .

If you could only see the looks on your faces. I see you have met Mephistophia and are considering her proposition. Well, let me introduce myself, there is much work to be undone. My name is Michalea, I too work for God, but I am on his good side. I am here to burst the bubble of fun created by Mephistophia and inform you of all the parts she left out. If you choose the road that is all too often traveled, you will at least be forewarned that it is a dead-end full of pot-holes and drop-offs; this is included in the fee of the intellectual tour on Faust.

My presentation will bring light to the brief subtleties of human truth in Faust, that is what you came for, after all. Mephistophia is correct, there is a multitude of evils in the work, just as there are in the world. You, as intellectuals, must remember that just because there is an abundance of something and it is enjoyed by the masses, that does not make it good. Faust believed that because he had not found what he was looking for in the grace of knowledge, perhaps what he was missing would be found in the magic of darkness. Faust was right in that he was missing a big part of the picture; he had striven for the heavens and then plunged into hell, not ever stopping to inspect his standpoint as a human being--that was his tragic mistake.

Mephistophia shows Faust in his initial intellectual misery, which is correct; he should have been miserable because he had no human relationships, the closest he came to human interaction was killing victims of the plague with his cerebral concoctions. Mephistophia fails to mention whether Faust was any happier during his travels with the devil, so I will quickly retrace your steps and point out just how Faust feels. At the preparation for the passions' party, Faust says to Mephisto, "I should like to get out of here" (2296).

Then Faust sees Gretchen and is miserable with desire, which he well should be since love for others is what he has neglected all his life. Mephistophia hinted that his love affair was merely a fulfillment of sexual yearnings, but it went much deeper than that. Gretchen gave Faust a taste for humanity, but instead of embracing it he treated her as a piece of knowledge, something to be conquered and left behind. In the end of Part I, Faust completely ruins Gretchen and then realizes, once it is too late, that love is what he needs. on the last page of Part I, Faust cries, "That I had never been born!" 4 5 9 6) .

The moral lesson to be learned from the tragic adventure of Faust is that a human being cannot be a god until he or she has perfected the art of being human. The key to understanding humanity is love, not intellect or evil. Without love any human being will suffer miserably, like Faust or a fish without water. Amen.

A Conversation Between Don Juan and Faust Concerning *Frankenstein*

Lindsay E. Ransick

A meeting of the Book Club in Hell, where Faust, in my story, resides. God changed his mind. Enough said. There are only two members of this club, and they sit at a ratty card table. Don Juan smokes a long cigarette, and Faust, a cigar.

Don Juan: There wasn't enough action in it.

Faust: How can you say that? The rise and fall of a great man isn't action?

Don Juan: Not really, no. Most of the time he was just whining on and on about how poorly everything was going. He rarely took time to enjoy the world around him.

Faust: But he was so noble, and his intent was so good. He just wanted to surpass that terrible, limiting boundary of death. Surely you can relate to that!

Don Juan: Let's not get personal, okay. The point is, life's worth living while you live it, and to spend the whole time complaining about your problems instead of doing anything is ridiculous. He probably could've *talked* his way out of the whole situation in that cave where the monster was telling him his story. He probably could've surprised and killed him right then and there; but, no-he had to go and sympathize with the wretch. The whole thing's pitiful.

Faust: You are ridiculous. Have you no feelings? This is a man who sought knowledge far out of his reach. He, like all of us, wanted to know things only God knows.

Don Juan: Speak for yourself, buddy.

Faust: Fine, then the whole moral population, or should I say anyone with a brain.

Don Juan: What are you saying? That I don't have a brain?

Faust: You certainly don't think about the consequence of your actions.

Don Juan: Sure I do. I think a lot about them. If anything I do is going to have a big effect on me, I make sure to avoid it at all costs.

Faust: I meant effects on the lives of others.

Don Juan: Oh. Well, I think about that, too. I make women feel beautiful and men feel angry. Those are pretty strong a consequences.

Faust: Never mind--I see I will set nowhere with you on topics of personal morality. Back to the book. Is there anything you liked about it?

Don Juan: Oh sure, I loved the whole thing where Justine gets framed and Elizabeth gets killed. Those were the best moments in the book.

Faust: How can you say that? They were horrifying.

Don Juan: Exactly. And Frankenstein got his just deserts; he should've taken advantage of those women while he had the chance.

Faust: You're disgusting.

Don Juan: No, what I mean is, he was so wrapped up in himself that he never was able to truly love anything in the entire book. I don't buy that stuff about his deep love for the family. If he loved them so much, why didn't he ever visit them while he was at school? Because he couldn't think of anything but his work, that's why.

Faust: For once you make a valid point. How sad. What a moving story. Love should be one of the most important things in life.

Don Juan: You've got that right! You're starting to come around after all.

Faust: I do not think our definitions of love are the same.

Don Juan: On the contrary, friend, judging from past actions, they are very much the same.

Faust: We all make mistakes.

Don Juan: And we all pay for them, just like Mr. Frankenstein. Actually, you didn't really pay for your mistakes did you?

Faust: Oh, but I did! Watching the pain of others, knowing that I had been directly responsible for it!!! Frankenstein and I are much alike. Our own suffering results from that of others much more than ourselves. *(He sinks into a deep reverie)*

Don Juan: Me, I never suffered much. Just died like everyone else. Wish they hadn't torched me though, it kind of hurt. And it definitely messed up my outfit--not to mention my hair. *(Pulling out a hand mirror)* God I looked good once. The ladies loved me.

Faust: Gretchen! Oh, Margaret...

Don Juan: Where, where! Hey Gretchen, Margaret! Where are you?

Faust: She, stupid. Where is she?

Don Juan: Fine, fine, it's all good. I haven't seen a beautiful woman in centuries.

Voice from above: I'm up here, where you two scoundrels can never get me. Will you just shut up about me and get back to the stupid book?

Faust: *(to Don Juan)* Think she's forgiven me?

Don Juan: Looks doubtful. Maybe she'll forgive me. Oh Gret-chen...

Voice from above: Back to the book, I said!

Don Juan: Okay, okay. Speaking of women, you can't blame the monster for wanting a companion. Man is not whole without women.

Faust: Don't you mean woman?

Don Juan: No, not really. Anyway, you have to admit it was pretty cruel of the scientist to start building a girl and then tear it up before his creation's eyes.

Faust: He feared populating the world with vicious monsters, he feared for the future of the human race.

Don Juan: Nonsense. Not everyone wants to have kids, you know. And not everyone does. That monster wouldn't want his kids to go through what he went through. Frankenstein was cruel, and it was right that the monster took his Elizabeth away from him. He shouldn't have killed her, though, he should've kept her for himself.

Faust: Impossible! She would've been disgusted and escaped.

Don Juan: Not if the monster knew what he was doing. There are ways to win a girl no matter what the odds are against you.

Faust: Sure, just get the devil on your side.

Don Juan: I hadn't thought of that, does it work?

Faust: Let's get back to the true meaning of the book. Knowledge forbidden. Man shouldn't try to know everything. He should know his place in the world, and respect it.

He should love nature, and not try to fight it. He shouldn't aspire to be god-like. He should-

Don Juan: There are a lot of "shoulds" and "should-nots" in that sentence. Sounds like you should be somewhere else, if you really believe those things.

Faust: I do, but Gretchen won't let me back up there.

Don Juan: Okay, whatever, but you know that stuff isn't what interests me about the book anyway. I think the main idea is revenge. Monster gets revenge, creator tries to, that sort of thing. It's all about getting even. The monster does a pretty good job, I think, but Frankenstein fails. That's what's sad. It does terrible things to a man's honor when he can't exact revenge.

Faust: But he doesn't fail. The monster says that he made him suffer.

Don Juan: Yeah, but he goes and dies before he realizes it. Isn't that always the way? Death's a terrible thing. One minute you're having fun, and the next, Boom! torched in your dining room, or maybe on some boat somewhere near Santa's Village. Isn't that always the way?

Faust: You're crazy, you know that? Certifiably insane. *(He gets up to go)*

Don Juan: See you at next week's meeting, then.

Faust: What are we supposed to read?

Don Juan: Some book called *Paradise Lost.* Satan will give it to you.

Lines Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1802

Earth has not anything to show more fair.
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty.
This city now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky,
All bright and smokeless in the glittering air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill.
Ne'er saw I, never felt a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will.
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

Wordsworth and the City

Hannah Hintze

Wordsworth's *Lines Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1802,* describes the sun's rise over London on an early fall morning. The subject is as common as days and towns, but in the poet's hands, the fourteen line cityscape crescendos, until the dawn grows into an epiphany.

Wordsworth chooses to relate his realization within the bounds of a modified Petrarchan sonnet. His first two quatrains stand as one unit of rhyming lines: a b b a, and again, a b b a. The rhyme pattern changes at line nine (the traditional turn) to a slightly adjusted final pattern c d, continuing through to the end. This given form makes a frame for the poem's movement. Wordsworth can use this frame in two ways: he can let the meaning fly along *with* the pattern of rhyme and rhythm, or he can play the meaning *against* the form, drawing the listener's attention by diverging from the grid.

He diverges from the very start, and powerfully. The eye gathers, from the look of the page, that the poem must be a sonnet, but the sound startles, since the first line refuses to fall into the expected succession of iambs. *Earth has not anything to show more fair.* Only two of the ten syllables may be read without stresses. The line is dense, strong; it steps out of the silence with a measured stateliness and ceremony. Five iambs could be read more lightly; here, the meter demands a slow recitation. And this is fitting; the first line needs emphasis, since it cuts to the pith of the poem, and since it says a thing we may not expect to hear from Wordsworth, if we mistakenly group him with other nature-worshipping romantics.

The open sound of *fair* (the last word of line one) closes into the *Dull* of the next line. Sound and sense run together, as the spaciousness of the fair contrasts with the narrow, self-contained dullard, who can *pass by* without being moved. Wordsworth uses variations on the O sound to cluster together certain words of the line (*Dull, would, of,*

soul, could). Among them, *he* and *be* make a tight pair. *Could* closes this self-contained section with a perfect rhyme on *would*. We are left, then, with *pass by*. The two words have no vowel relationship to the rest of the line; they stand out from it. The separation is underlined by a spondee. And this sound effect is essential to the meaning: to pass by such a sight is to be isolated, to stand apart from a beauty that has power to touch any observer. *Pass by* passes over the end of the line, just as the dull soul's glance passes over the early morning scene: the enjambment mimics the action. The sense continues: *A sight so touching in its majesty*. We have arrived at the first end-rhyme: *majesty / by*. It is not a satisfying rhyme, and it is even less satisfying in retrospect, since it is the *only* half-rhyme in the poem - but this seems to be Wordsworth's intention. The meaning demands an incongruity between the *majesty* of the scene and the action, *passing by*. Since they do not correspond in sense, Wordsworth will not allow them to correspond in sound.

This city now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning;

Again, Wordsworth uses the line endings to benefit the meaning. The fourth line drapes over onto the fifth like fine cloth. We can feel in the sound the image of the spreading cloak of sunlight. It is a grand, expansive gesture, that enjambs not only over lines, but over a quatrain, (since the fifth line is the beginning of the next quatrain). The fifth line's *beauty* is expressed in five near-perfect iambs: *The beauty of the morning; silent, bare*. The semi-colon creates a useful caesura; the reader must pause. He must create a small silence before *silent*. Likewise, *silent* ends in a comma, a brief pause that leaves the last word to stand alone, *bare*.

We do not realize until the next line what *silent* and *bare* refer to: *Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples*. These *lie / Open unto the fields, and to the sky*. Wordsworth's choice of *unto* instead of the possible *to* allows for a more open sound, and *sky* at the end of the line is endless in sense.

In the next line (8) Wordsworth shifts the attention from the light above to the effect of that light below. The shift in sound is from open vowels to crisp consonants: *All*

bright and glittering in the smokeless air. The t's and the k break up the vowels into brilliant-edged pieces so that the sound of the line is not far from the image of refracted light.

Line nine is a turn in the rhyme scheme and a return in the sense: *Never did sun more beautifully steep....* We should remember *more* from the first line (*more fair*). *Not anything* was *more fair* finds an echo and an explication in line nine: *Never did sun more...* The sentence trails over the line ending to find its direct objects: *Never did sun more beautifully steep / In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill.* We can feel the sun grow warmer as it rises in the poem. Though it has been present all along, it was not explicit in the *beauty of the morning.* A little later, still unnamed, it made the domes glitter. It becomes the *sun* only when its warmth is felt. The verb, *steep*, suggests the soaking heat of liquid sunlight.

Line eleven (*Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!*) corresponds with line nine, both in end-rhyme, and in the first word: *never.* By the close of this line, we have heard three *nevers.* The tone grows increasingly insistent and the pace quickens as the rhymes come faster. In the first half of the sonnet, the ear waited four lines to hear *fair / wear.* After the turn, the rhymes c d, c d, c d, press on in fast succession.

And then, in the center of this rising excitement, *The river glideth at his own sweet will.* Wordsworth, solitary on the bridge, is not alone. The river's near personhood (near enough to merit a personal pronoun, *his*) awakens that sense within the poet by which the personhood of all things is uncovered. Suddenly, he is surrounded by a silent throng of beings, sleeping, but nearly ready to wake: *Dear God! the very houses seem asleep; / And all that mighty heart is lying still!* The shock is two-fold. First, that such nearly conscious being surrounds his solitude, and second, that that consciousness is so very near to waking. The epiphany of the last lines is a realization that the bridge is at the brink of something mighty and imminent. The sun has been rising and gaining strength, and at any minute, now, what the poet has seen in silence will wake into loud life. The poet's ecstasy in the closing lines is expectation. *And all that mighty heart is lying still!* We cannot breathe until it beats.

Wordsworth has achieved this extraordinary effect partly through increasing personification. In the first line, *Earth shows*. This figure of speech is used commonly enough not to grab our attention, but it sets up less subtle personification in following lines. Line two presents another character, and then rubs him out: the hypothetical dull soul is brought on to the scene almost as a tease; no person has truly passed Wordsworth on the bridge. Next, the *City wears a garment*. Though we recognize that according to syntax, *like a garment* refers to *the beauty of the morning*, yet the arrangement of the clauses suggests that the City is merely *like* a person putting on a this garment. Thus Wordsworth mutes the personhood of the City by a nearby simile.

Thereafter, personification grows more and more vivid. In line nine, the *sun* receives a personal pronoun, *his*. In line twelve, the *river* has both a personal pronoun and a *will*. The houses are sleeping; the City, or perhaps the entire scene, shares a mighty heart that is lying still.

We have said that the poem peaks in expectation. But expectation of what? Amidst the increasing personification, there is one thing conspicuous for its absence - a real person. Wordsworth is truly alone on the bridge. Nature teases with near personhood, but it approaches only to the brink of real consciousness. In truth, the City wakes when the sun wakes human persons.

This central position of humanity is implicit in the first line of the poem. *Earth has not anything to show more fair,* that is, human habitation lit by the sun is more beautiful than any scene that Nature alone can offer. This subtle placement of humanity in the natural world distinguishes Wordsworth from other romantics, who seek to lose themselves (and to forget their neighbors) in Nature.

Egocentric young romantics may use Nature as a haven from humanity, but Wordsworth is not so ready to let human realities go. We need to see the sun on the roofs of theatres and through the masts of ships; human being must be reckoned with the sunrise, and then both will gain value.

Wordsworth admits that he did not always hold this humane view of nature. In his *Lines composed above Tintern Abbey...*, a landscape completed four years before *Westminster Bridge*, Wordsworth finds fault with his early Nature-worship. He was *more*

like a man / Flying from something he dreads, than one / Who sought the thing he loved. He used Nature as an opiate, a means of banishing human concerns. Far better, says Wordsworth, is the love of Nature that brings human thought to the beautiful sight. *For I have learned / To look on nature, not as in the hour / Of thoughtless youth; but hearing often-times / The still, sad music of humanity....* Human beings find their place in nature, hidden as Hermits in caves, or as farmers in their wooded plots, and conversely, nature itself gains value from human thought and habitation. Nature *informs the mind that is within us,* and humans call nature dear. Wordsworth addresses his sister in the last lines of *Tintern Abbey*: *...these steep woods and lofty cliffs, / And this green pastoral landscape, were to me / More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!* Their value comes in response to human value; for the sake of a sister, a cliff becomes dear. The word order of the last line should catch our attention - the landscape is central (*for themselves*) but what humans say (*More dear*) and what humans cause (*for thy sake*) envelops the scene with humanity.

More dear in *Tintern Abbey* and *more fair* in Westminster Bridge express epiphanies of similar joy. The great marriage of human thought with the majesty of nature that Wordsworth celebrates in the earlier poem, he infuses into the later. Landscape and cityscape both give new vision: Wordsworth sees the mighty heart of the city, the imminent beat of humanity, with the same eye he turns towards hills and meadows, an *eye made quiet by the power of harmony, and the deep power of joy*, by which he and we *see into the life of things.*