

Fall 1990

# The Constantin Review, Volume I, Fall 1990

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IN DEDICATION: This first issue is dedicated to Dr. John E. Paynter, who served many years as Dean of Constantin College and Provost of the University. Without his encouragement and support, this publication would not have been possible.

**Constantin College, University of Dallas, Irving, Texas**



# Odysseus as Antihero

by Nick Conger

"[N]either fondness for my son, nor pity / for an old father, nor the love for Penelope / which should have made her happy, / could overcome in me the desire I had / to gain experience of the world and of the vices and the worth of men. / . . . Consider what origin you had; / you were not created to live like brutes, but to seek virtue and knowledge."

Odysseus in Dante's *Divine Comedy, Inferno, Canto 26.94-99, 118-120*

After a cursory reading of Homer's *Odyssey*, many see Odysseus as a man worthy of imitation. However, a closer review of subtle, yet significant lines throughout the *Odyssey* reveals quite different aspects of the actions and words of Odysseus. In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante presents a different Odysseus, an Odysseus selfish at heart. Although he may be the most cunning and resourceful Achaian, he is far from being a true hero because he lacks certain qualities of leadership and virtue that would have made him truly worthy of imitation.

Odysseus reveals his true nature several times in his escapade with Polyphemus, the Cyclops. Odysseus himself recalls,

"From the start my companions spoke to me and begged me  
to take some of the cheeses, come back again, and next time  
to drive the lambs and kids from their pens, and get back quickly  
to the ship again, and go sailing off across the salt water;  
but I would not listen to them." (9.224-228)

Odysseus does not listen to them, and consequently six of his bravest companions die in the cave.

Although Odysseus uses his gifted mind to trick Polyphemus and escape, he departs with six fewer men and only a fraction of the booty he could have acquired had he listened to the sensible advice given. Odysseus is pleased because he has made a name for himself and is no longer nobody. To Odysseus, this change means he is beginning to exhibit heroic characteristics. In fact, he is so wrapped up in his boasting and taunting that he does not recognize his failure, and cares nothing for his lost men. He says, "But they began to mourn for the others; only I would not let them cry out" (9.467-468).

Because of Odysseus' obsession with his own fame and glory, he is in no hurry to reach home. It does not matter to him that his men are weary after ten years of fighting. Since he did not acquire quite as much fame as some of the Achaian heroes during the Trojan War, Odysseus believes that he has to seek new adventure to make a name for himself. While the other Argives anxiously run to their ships to head home, Odysseus takes his men on a detour and sacks the city of the Kikonians. Thus, the ten years of fighting and sacking of Troy were not enough for Odysseus to emerge as a hero.

A further indication of Odysseus' desire to explore and to acquire fame occurs when he is in sight of his homeland. For even with the blessings of the winds of Aiolos, Odysseus subconsciously does not want to go home; if he did, he would not have been delinquent in his duty of steering the ship home and would have remained awake to insure a safe and quick homecoming for his comrades.

In Odysseus' fervor for fame he does not demonstrate virtue worthy of imitation. In addition to Odysseus' willingness to endanger the lives of his companions, Dante focuses on another aspect of Odysseus' corrupt nature when he has Odysseus admit, "The desire I had was to gain experience of the world" (Canto 26. 97-98). What kind of man would, after ten years' absence, continue to keep his family in mournful limbo while he selfishly seeks fame and glory? This selfishness is obvious when he spends one year in luxury with the goddess Circe while his home is being invaded by suitors. Ultimately, Odysseus is not the one who wants to leave, but his crew rebukes him, saying, "What ails you now? It is time to think about our own country" (9.472). Odysseus stays even longer with the nymph Kalypso. Thus, while his wife struggles to fight off the pestering suitors, Odysseus is in effect frolicking with nymphs and goddesses. Homer provides a subtle yet strong indication of Odysseus' vice when he writes, "He wept for a way home, since the nymph was no longer pleasing to him" (5.153).

Odysseus does indeed have a brilliant mind. Time and time again, his cunning, teamed with his gift of rhetoric, enables him to survive the perils of various islands. Many poets and singers will praise his deeds throughout the land. However, with a more critical reading, the subtle phrases that Homer inserts within the text prevent Odysseus from being considered a true hero, for Odysseus is not worthy of imitation. A true hero would have brought as many of his men safely back home alive, but his own taunting of Polyphemus is the reason that Poseidon crushes his ship and kills his men. Finally, unlike Odysseus, a man worthy of imitation would be concerned for his wife, son, and dying father, who faithfully await his return. The Achaian heroes of the Trojan War moved on since the fall of Troy. Nestor and Menelaos are tending to their estates and people, content with home life. Even the ghost of Achilles relinquished his quest for fame: "I would rather follow the plow as thrall to another man, one with no land allotted him and not much to live on, than be king over all the perished dead" (11.489-491). It is time for Odysseus to mature like the real Achaian heroes and concern himself with his family, estate, and people in Ithaka.

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# Socrates' Teleological Revolution

by Greg Schneider

To the modern reader, Thales' proclamation that water is the primal stuff from which all things come sounds terribly absurd and primitive. Furthermore, calling this proclamation a revolution in the history of thought seems all the more rash. Yet, with this statement, Thales for the first time in recorded history had put forth a demythologized account of nature. Instead of Poseidon shaking his staff as an explanation of earthquakes, Thales has the primal waters that support the disc Earth toss and turn. The gods were gone in his explanations and he had replaced them with a more detached and rational approach. Science and philosophy were born. From this point onward, the dialogue of scientific thought progresses. Anaximander would find Thales' water too determinate and too restrictive. Moist water could not explain fire and rock so Anaximander postulated a boundless, indeterminate primal matter. This Boundless which was in eternal motion could swirl and take on forms of planets. He too was later attacked, this time by Anaximenes, who made a plea for air as the primal stuff, condensing and thinning to explain change. Empedocles later incorporated several of his predecessors and put forth four primal elements — earth, air, fire and water. These four elements were combined and separated in various proportions by the forces Love and Strife.

By now, causal forces had been added to the conception of the world. This development continued and Anaxagoras ultimately postulated a world driven and ruled by Mind. An infinite variety of "seeds" are somehow mixed and given an intelligent plan through this universal Mind. Philosophy was now contending intentional design in nature but not with much force. Anaxagoras conceived of Mind, but in describing most actual physical examples, he returned to the seeds as the reasons for things. In some way the lettuce that a rabbit eats contains the flesh seeds and bone seeds that become digested. The Atomist Democritus would find this explanation inadequate. He called for tiny particles like seeds but made them more primal, differing only in size and shape not quality. He believed his "atoms" in constant motion in a void could explain generation and corruption without the danger of something coming from nothing. Finally history arrives at Plato, who inherits the entire preceding dialectic of thought as mediated by Socrates. In his dialogue the *Phaedo*, Plato recounts Socrates' contact with the evolution of philosophy and Socrates' reaction to it. The intellectual biography ultimately reveals a most revolutionary step in the conception of nature. Socrates' interaction with the physical scientists before him left him unsatisfied and he departed from their physical depictions of nature. Instead, he turned toward deliberation and teleology and approached the natural order, as he did the political order, with theories and a series of goods and ends.

Socrates' intellectual biography appears at a point in the *Phaedo* where Socrates is responding to an objection by Cebes. Cebes questions Socrates' contention that the soul is immortal, and not just long-lived, and wonders how the soul's entering and leaving the body can be better explained. Socrates responds by simply going through his own investigation of the problem of change in general in nature. He begins, "When I was young, Cebes, I had an extraordinary passion for . . . natural science. I thought it would be marvelous to know the causes for which each thing comes and ceases and continues to be" (*Phaedo* 96a). Simply by asking himself questions about specific problems in nature, as Thales and Anaximenes had done before him, he thought he could come to a general formula. He ponders the origin of living beings and the place of thought in man's body. The investigation does nothing but frustrate him, though, and he is left with several shaky conceptions. The passages imply a contention by Plato that all examinations of purely physical phenomena, of appearances, do not further knowledge.



In his frustration, Socrates laments, "I was so befogged by these speculations that I unlearned even what I had thought I knew . . ." (96c). Being founded on appearances, physics' goal of explaining movement cannot be accomplished, for only an examination of the eternal and unchanging can provide knowledge. Plato does not appeal to the eternal in this passage specifically, but his frustration with terrestrial phenomena and his placement of the theory of forms immediately after the biography certainly indicate this appeal. Socrates in fact continues to describe his confusion. Holding that growth obviously comes from eating, as flesh comes from flesh in food and blood from blood in food, and that a tall man is literally "taller than a head" than a short man, Socrates rejects these theories upon further consideration. He even becomes befuddled by simple addition: "I cannot even convince myself that when you add one to one either the first or the second one becomes two . . ." (96e-97a). Completely physical and material investigation offers no definitive answers. In the first place, one can never achieve a complete account of all the conditions surrounding a change. In the second place, these conditions, these surrounding facts, do not get at the root of the change itself. Plato is looking for causes not conditions.

Anaxagoras provides this clue to Socrates that causes cannot be reached by examining conditions. His initial exposure to Anaxagoras comes from a reading he hears, and he immediately likes the theory of Mind. As he remarks, "This explanation pleased me. Somehow it seemed right that mind should be the cause of everything ... mind in producing order sets everything in order and arranges each individual thing in the way that is best for it" (97c). With the introduction of the "best," Plato and Socrates begin their revolution in physics. Herein lies Plato's key distinction between a teleological explanation and a mechanical one. All of Socrates' predecessors had insisted on a material depiction of change. Even Anaxagoras' Mind was physical though intellectual. Anaxagoras implied planning and intelligence, but Plato insists on the "best." Everything in nature has a purpose or goal. All heavy objects fall to the earth because it is "best" that they should do so. Falling is not just a mechanistic, random completion of some situation set up by gravity. Plato says that it is more; somehow the earth's gravitational pull is a good. The situations Plato describes include the flatness or roundness of the earth and the motions of the sun and moon. He is ready to grant Anaxagoras his complete loyalty if he can explain why it is best for the earth to be the shape it is or the moon to travel the way it does.

Unfortunately, Socrates finds Anaxagoras sorely disappointing. He had hoped to find out "as soon as possible about the best and the less good." Instead he discovers "that the fellow made no use of mind and assigned it no causality of the order of the world, but adduced causes like air and aether and water and many other absurdities" (98b-c). As Socrates himself had confusedly held that eating causes growth as flesh comes from flesh, he finds similar reasoning in the seeds of Anaxagoras. Conditions like the fact that eating preceded growth were being substituted for the true cause of growth, the end that it serves. Asked why Socrates was lying in his prison cell, Anaxagoras would answer that his muscles, bones and sinews being at certain angles and tensions would explain it. Socrates finds this explanation absurd and says that of course the real reason stems from his condemnation by Athens and his choice to stay and submit to his penalty. The surrounding material descriptions of his situation seem meaningless in any claim of causality. Socrates almost pities Anaxagoras, "Fancy being unable to distinguish between the cause of a thing and the condition without which it could not be a cause! It is this later . . . that most people, groping in the dark, call a cause . . ." (99b). Once again, Plato likes to portray everything in the universe as having an end or goal or purpose. A mechanical explanation must always be subordinated to a teleological one.

Frustrated by Anaxagoras' account of the universe but convinced that the mind still offers a good model for the way the world operates, Socrates turns to his own mind to understand the causes of change. At this point he rejects physical explanations altogether. Considering mechanical explanations to be only confusing and having no access to true knowledge, he abandons physics. Like a person investigating an eclipse who becomes blinded by the sun, Socrates makes the analogy, "I conceived of something like this happening to myself and I was afraid that by observing objects with my eyes and trying to comprehend them with each of my other senses I might blind my soul altogether" (99d-e). Instead he looks to his own theories for the truth about the world. Plato again seems to be pointing toward the eternal and the unchangeable, that is the forms, that he brings up in the next section of the text. In a way he also implies that the universe operates as the human mind does. Now he is justified in choosing a theory he thinks is the best "and then whatever seems to agree with it — with regard either to causes or to anything else — I assume to be true, and whatever does not I assume not to be true" (100a). The Socratic revolution in thought is complete; the explanation of the universe, like the explanation of Socrates' imprisonment, should be given on the model of human decision, of a world bound by "moral obligation" (99c). Just as a person, when he wishes to bring about some certain course of events, deliberates, so all things can be explained in terms of their deliberation, their goal. Just as a person when deliberating thinks about the good he can achieve, so all things and events have some good that they are fulfilling. Finally, just as a person when asked why he did something states the good he was striving for, so all things have a good that can explain the "why" of their



existence. As Socrates says back when he is first acquainted with Anaxagoras' mind, "There was only one thing for a man to consider, with regard both to himself and to anything else, namely the best and highest good" (97d). With this teleological conception of things, Plato alters the course of science forever. Socrates' intellectual biography points to a more fundamental shift in the way man looks at reality.

The biography is followed immediately by Plato's theory of Forms and its relation to the immortality of the soul. Knowledge has been firmly asserted as being only in the realm of the everlasting and immutable and physics has been dismissed. Most philosophy before Socrates and Plato was concerned with natural science. From earth, air, fire and water to physical forces of Love and Strife, from an infinite number of seeds to a material guiding Mind, philosophy sought a tangible explanation for things. Naturally man first asking what makes up reality turns to what he can most immediately grasp on to, the sensible world. Yet Socrates and Plato emphasized more strongly what others had mentioned before — the tenuous nature of this grasp on the sensible world. Plato moreover places more emphasis on ethics and politics than on the natural order. Man's relations to his fellow man stand paramount in the great philosopher's mind. Nature merely imitates the human decision process. No longer are natural events the commands of bickering gods in Homer's *Iliad* but the result of deliberation, possessing an ultimate fulfillment. In fact, according to Plato, all things aim toward a good automatically and the world as a whole is driven toward the best.

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# Virtue and Pleasure in Aristotle's *Ethics*

by Gregory J. Lensing

In modern day America, the concept of virtue has been narrowed and distorted to such an extent that it is difficult to see its connection with the virtue discussed by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. To the modern American, virtue frequently is thought of with regard to the realm of sexuality alone, and then strictly in the sense of self-abnegation. Even when applied to the broader range of human actions, virtue most often is associated with self-restraint, or refusal to indulge in this or that wrong action. Defined thus, it is no wonder that virtue is taken as something unpleasant or even onerous. For Aristotle, though, virtue is much broader than a kind of puritanical asceticism; it is a kind of all-encompassing excellence in one's particular function. The virtuous man is one who is most fully man, who has perfected his faculties of body and soul in the ways peculiar to human beings. Yet, this definition does not answer certain questions. If virtue is painful, why should we desire it? If it is pleasant, why does it require work to achieve it?

As to the pleasantness or painfulness of virtue, it seems clear that Aristotle believes virtue is pleasant. Evidence of this understandably may be found in his definition of happiness, which is simply the active exercise of the soul's faculties in conformity with excellence, or if there are several excellences, with the best and most perfect among them (1.7.15-16). He adds that external goods are also required for happiness, since it is impossible, or at least difficult, to live a life of virtue without the necessary equipment (1.8.15). The possession of virtue is primary in this definition of happiness as "virtue equipped," for these external things are "of the nature of auxiliary means, and useful instrumentally" (1.9.7-8). The reader may well recall Plato's tyrant in the *Republic*, who possesses all manner of external goods but lacks virtue, and so is made miserable by the disorder of his soul.

Part of the reason that Aristotle claims virtue is pleasant, however, is his very definition of the virtuous act as one in which the virtuous man takes pleasure. He writes that "no one would call a man just if he did not like acting justly . . . and similarly with the other virtues" (1.8.12-13). Yet in the modern mind, one who enjoyed acting justly might well be counted less virtuous than one who acts justly but against his inclinations. There might even be a question as to whether the man who enjoyed virtuous acts should be considered virtuous at all.

For Aristotle, though, it is clear that the truly virtuous man acts with knowledge, with deliberate choice, and from a fixed disposition of character (2.4.3), and that the life of active virtue is essentially pleasant (1.8.10). He notes that the multitude takes pleasure "in things that conflict with one another, because they are not pleasant of their own nature," while "things pleasant by their own nature are pleasant to lovers of what is noble" (1.8.11). This argument seems less than conclusive, for there are few things which men could universally agree upon as being pleasant by their own nature, owing to the great range of tastes and opinions. Indeed, it would seem that pleasantness is something that is perceived by the agent, rather than something inherent in the act, for depending on one's habits or upbringing, the same act may be perceived as pleasant or unpleasant, just as the same food may be judged tasty by one man and loathsome by another. Aristotle seems to provide insufficient proof to demonstrate that the acts chosen by the virtuous man are pleasant essentially, while the others are not pleasant of themselves.

Even if we agree with Aristotle that virtue is pleasant, we might well ask at this point why it is that we must work to achieve it. One answer may be derived quite easily from his observation that the virtues are neither naturally present in us, nor in violation of our nature, but that "nature gives us the capacity to receive them, and this capacity is brought to maturity by habit" (2.1.3). Many analogies present themselves to support the plausibility of this proposition. For instance, the condition of being physically fit is a capacity brought to actuality by exercise, which is itself difficult and



laborious, but brings about the pleasant condition of fitness. In the sphere of mental activity, learning is a painful process by which we actualize our potential to be learned, which is generally agreed to be a preferable condition. Thus, once one is habituated to virtue, and his actions spring from a fixed disposition of character, it is clear that Aristotle believes he will prefer his new condition of being virtuous and enjoy performing virtuous acts.

There remains the question of why virtue, if its active exercise is essentially good and pleasant, should be thought painful. The answer must lie in the process of becoming virtuous, since the condition itself has already been said to be pleasant in itself. On the subject of how to hit the mean in one's conduct (which Aristotle takes as the definition of virtue), the Philosopher says that "we must in everything be most of all on guard against what is pleasant and against pleasure; for when pleasure is on trial we are not impartial judges" (2.9.6). This shunning of pleasure is certainly alien to the appetitive part of the soul, and can be accounted painful. Further, when defining what is properly called the opposite of a virtue, Aristotle notes that we are prone to stray from the mean in the direction of pleasure, as in the case of the virtue of temperance and the vice of profligacy (2.8.8). Thus, to maximize one's chance of hitting the mean, Aristotle recommends erring on the side of the vice which is less opposed to the virtue, meaning the one which is less pleasurable. Hence it seems true that the process by which one becomes virtuous is not a pleasant one, and it is easy to see how the reputation of painfulness could come to be attached to the quality of the virtue itself.

Thus, by separating the condition of virtue from the process by which it is achieved, Aristotle seems to give a satisfactory account of why virtue is reputed to be painful, and by distinguishing natural dispositions from natural capacities he accounts for why it is difficult to achieve it. The weakest part of his argument remains his claim that virtuous acts are pleasant of their own nature because the virtuous man judges them to be so. Vicious men would argue that they enjoy their own actions, and even judge them pleasant of their own nature. Considering the fact that the training one receives from childhood is "of very great, or rather supreme, importance" (2.1.8), it seems that even virtuous men enjoy their acts simply because they have been habituated to them, rather than because they are essentially pleasant. If a vicious man is reformed, who can say whether it is because he has recognized the inherent pleasantness of virtuous acts or merely because, by punishment or threat, he has been habituated to do the virtuous act? This question seems to be an unresolved dilemma, at least in the first two books of the *Ethics*.

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*(This essay was written as part of a take-home examination.)*



# Marsilio of Padua: His Plan To Replace The Authority of the Pope

by Carla Marie Clardy

Marsilio of Padua, in the midst of the so-called Babylonian Captivity of the papacy, wrote a colorful treatise on the ills facing the Church. He also presented a solution. Convinced that the present institutions failed to provide the necessary ends of justice and peace, Marsilio determined that an entirely new system was needed. He first outlined the evils of the Church, stating of course the clear need for reform. Then he detailed his plan for a substitute for the corrupt papacy. With what, then, did Marsilio suggest to replace the foul pontificate? After refuting the current politico-theological system, Marsilio suggested a replacement based on closely linked church-state relations, perhaps ultimately forming or causing a theocracy.

To preface his argument favoring an alternate Church structure, Marsilio listed the abuses of the papacy. For example, he declared that the abolition of the episcopal election contaminated those offices affected (2.2, 480). Papal appointments to ecclesiastical offices, especially with intent to claim a percentage of the benefice, resulted in prostitution by those seeking office. Indeed, Marsilio claimed uneducated criminals were appointed to bishoprics, perhaps even in lands where they were unfamiliar with the language (2.3, 480). No longer were the high medieval qualifications of virtue and learning a prerequisite to high church office. Moreover, those selected as bishops by the pontiff were not theologians, but were "shyster lawyers" (2.7, 481), selected for the purpose of gaining temporal goods for the papacy (2.11, 483). The papacy, Marsilio declared, needed the income in order to fund wars against other Christian lands (2.11, 483). Furthermore, the pope disbanded many orders with hopes only of receiving from them the financial benefits (2.13, 484). He also decreed that all wills of bishops had to be approved by him, and that the property of those bishops dying intestate would devolve to himself (2.14, 485). Clearly, aberrant practices flourished within the institutional Church, and Marsilio was confident that checks needed to be placed on the papacy.

The new system or structure suggested by Marsilio included a "faithful human legislator," which he said was the "whole body of citizens, or the weightier part thereof" (3.6, 487). The faithful human legislator would function as the final authority in spiritual matters. For example, no excommunications could take place without the express approval of the faithful legislator (3.16, 488). They would also settle marriage and inheritance disputes, as well as determining the number of churches, priests and benefices (3.19-23, 488). Also, this legislator would provide teaching certificates, grant exemptions, judge heresy cases, call fasts, prohibitions and general councils, and proclaim saints (3.25, 29, 30, 34, 33, 35, 489). And, finally, this faithful legislator, or the ruler by its authority, would appoint bishops and compel them to administer the sacraments (3.41, 40, 490). Marsilio seemed to desire this body of believers to exercise full authority and power over the faithful.

Yet, many problems arise from Marsilio's proposal. First, the precise nature of the legislator is unclear. How was it to be selected? based on what qualifications? under what circumstances? and, primarily, to what end? In other words, who was to be included in the "faithful human legislator" and what was the body's purpose? It would seem that only the virtuous and learned should be selected for the body, or at least to head it, but those were the criteria for the papacy and had proved there to be unsuccessful. So, were the leaders of the legislator the powerful, the rich, or the lucky? Marsilio is unclear on whether the legislator was a branch of the Church or of the State. The functions it would serve were primarily spiritual, yet much of the terminology of the treatise reflects a political basis; "legislator" denotes a formal



process for enacting statutes, laws and decrees, while "ruler" ordinarily refers to those in political power. Also, the legislator, as Marsilio said, was to be composed of the "whole body of citizens," necessitating, then, a political unit of which a common but not essential characteristic would be Christianity. Therefore, one must wonder whether the legislator would serve a spiritual or temporal purpose, since it seems to approach both. If it were a function of the Church, then the role of the State would become unclear, since the legislator would assume responsibility for a large portion of human activity. Or, if the legislator were to act on behalf of the State, then the purpose of the Church escapes understanding. Perhaps the final problem facing Marsilio's "faithful human legislator" is the most serious. It seems this legislator would remain unchecked. Nothing, aside from human reason, one presumes, serves to curb the will of the legislator, since Marsilio claimed it must have ultimate and complete authority. How, then, will the legislator be any different than the corrupt papacy? If the clear line between the realms of power of the Church and of the State evident in the High Middle Ages is blurred so radically, then corruption, and possibly tyranny, seems to be a logical result. Therefore, Marsilio's plan to eliminate moral decay almost surely fosters it.

Marsilio agreed with Dante Alighieri and William of Ockham that the pope was not the supreme authority, either in temporal or in spiritual matters. Yet, Marsilio made a rather radical claim in asserting that a new body, perhaps one rooted even more deeply in legalism, should replace the centuries-old tradition of the papacy. Throughout the treatise, he considered part of the downfall of the Church due to the pontiff's reliance on lawyers, yet his entire approach to solving the recurrent problems seemed to rest on legislation. He desired to make the Church operate according to the law, which was to be mandated by the will of the legislator. This growing tendency towards legalism, which seemed to unite the Church inextricably to the State here, was potentially dangerous to the faithful. Questions of mercy, charity and hope had no place within the code of law. In effect, a tyranny of law would rule. Marsilio wanted to replace a good system gone awry with a much worse one: a theocracy, political rule by the Church, where the responsibilities of Church and State were fused by the increasing emphasis on legalism and the de-emphasis on virtue and learning, charity and hope. Indeed, the Church was becoming secularized.

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# The New Heroism in Chrétien's *Story of the Grail*

by Christopher Anderson

In the *Story of the Grail*, Chrétien de Troyes' contemporary readers would have expected a tale of the best knights, high servants of the gallant ideal, who with exemplary prowess and gentility prevail against all challengers and win the honor of their many friends. Yet Chrétien's romance addresses these conventional expectations, but fulfills them qualifiedly. His Gawain, whose character remains unchanged throughout the romance, is the seeming epitome of chivalry commonly regarded. But Chrétien pokes holes in the model knight's facade, thus diminishing his appeal. Alongside Gawain, meanwhile, the author portrays Perceval, a knight-in-the-making, who lacks requisite knightly virtues at first, but acquires them with time, along with virtues of which Gawain knows nothing. The irresistible appeal of ascent deflects the reader's sympathy from Gawain to Perceval. By disappointing conventional expectations of knightliness in Gawain while surpassing them in Perceval, Chrétien subtly reveals for the reader's admiration a new code of human greatness.

Gawain, unlike Perceval, has an established reputation as the paramount knight. He is the one closest by both blood and affection to Arthur (the central figure in the chivalric enterprise), and, even before Chrétien's romance begins, is the standard of knightly excellence. The *Story of the Grail's* first readers would have regarded him so. Within the romance, too, Arthur and his court and city consider Gawain their chief hero and more. In an echo of the Creed, Chrétien first refers to him as "my lord Gawain, who was sitting at the king's right hand" (428). He seems to be to the chivalric enterprise what Christ is to the divine. His reputation, furthermore, is grounded in real virtue. As proof, he prevails in the peril of the Wondrous Bed, which requires a knight "ideally handsome and wise, quite free of greed, valiant and bold, with a noble and loyal heart, without baseness or other weakness" (474). If Chrétien raises doubts, they are not about the first of Gawain's essential virtue.

Nevertheless, the imperfections that Chrétien does find in Gawain needle the reader. They diminish Gawain's dignity. During a brief interlude in the story, Gawain is hunting a doe, which evades him when his horse loses a shoe. A vassal must then tell him the obvious: "My lord, it needs to be shod" (449). And in Escavalon Gawain finds himself set upon by a mob of angry peasants. To ward them off he hurls chess pieces at them, the readiest weapons to hand. His host and sworn enemy, who has unwittingly offered him hospitality, must come to his rescue. Both incidents show that Gawain is not always in control, that he sometimes fails, and that he is even, at times, ridiculous.

As in Escavalon, Gawain often bears strangers' hatred. Guigambresil denounces him before all of Arthur's court and accuses him of a dishonorable killing. Greoreas and Guimelant, likewise, have mortal grievances against him. And the "malicious maiden" vows to follow Gawain, until she should cause him to suffer "misfortune, grief and affliction, shame and disaster in [her] company" (463). When he attempts to help her onto her palfrey she excoriates him: "I really have no desire for you to serve me, for your hands are not clean enough to pass me anything I put on or wear around my head. Are you fit to handle anything that touches my body, my mouth, my forehead or my face?" (465). The mantle of honor that fits him so closely at Arthur's court shows gaping holes abroad.

Even within Arthur's court, Gawain bears the ill will of at least one dissenting knight. The seneschal Kay, no



smooth talker himself, disdains his winning ways. He believes he has insight into the secret of Gawain's knightly success and the insight is not flattering. When Kay has tried and failed to capture an unknown knight, and Gawain offers to bring him in peacefully, Kay berates him at great length, playing upon Gawain's reputation as the model knight:

Ah, Gawain, a hundred curses on my neck if you're at all so foolish that there isn't a great deal to be learnt from you! You're very good at finding a buyer for your words, extremely fair and polished as they are . . . . Not that I'm trying to teach you anything. You'll know well enough how to smooth him down like stroking a cat; and people will say: 'Now my lord Gawain's fighting fiercely!'" (432)

To this tirade, his more politic comrade characteristically responds, "Ah, Sir Kay, you might have put that more politely," and even calls him "my dear good friend." King Arthur closes the case with a word to his nephew: "That's a very courtly thing you've said" (432). And because Kay, in comparison, is so coarsely offensive, the reader is certain to side with Gawain. Nevertheless, Kay's charge is never satisfactorily laid to rest, and doubts remain in the reader's mind about the motives behind Gawain's actions.

Gawain's smooth speech, which Kay cannot stand, serves him nowhere so well as in the company of maidens. Where he woos, he wins. Within minutes of meeting the damsel of Escavalon, who would hate him mortally if she knew first his identity, Gawain is making love to her: "They both engage in love-talk, for if they had spoken of anything else they would have been really wasting their time. My lord Gawain asks insistently for her love, saying he will be her knight for the rest of his life; and, far from refusing him, she agrees with alacrity." A vavasour entering at that point finds them "kissing and having a very joyful time together" (451). Having learned that the knight she has just met is the one charged with killing her father, she nonetheless sides with him against all her furious people. But constancy in love does not seem to be among his virtues: shortly after leaving Escavalon he makes advances toward the "malicious maiden of Lorges." She, though, is to the women in Gawain's life what Kay is to the men; she thinks she sees through the model knight, admits that he meant at first to carry her off on his horse, and she curses him: "Don't you dare think of putting me on your horse! I'm not one of those naive, foolish women who provide fun for knights who carry them along on their horses on their chivalric expeditions" (462). He does eventually win her over. Yet even then, something of her denunciation, like Kay's, lingers to pester the reader. Gawain is expert in the *forms* of love, but the substance of it still is doubtful.

The reader's doubt, in fact, extends to all of Gawain's relations with others. He evinces little feeling on their behalf beyond simple pleasures in the company of some. When he comes upon a fatally wounded knight asleep by a grieving maiden, Gawain wakes him despite the maiden's ardent wish to let him sleep, since, as he says, "I'd like to ask him for information about how things stand in this country." He gently shakes the knight's spur with the butt of his lance. The knight's remarks upon waking emphasize Gawain's outward courtesy at the same time as they suggest a lack of deeper concern: "Sir, I give you five hundred thanks for having shown such consideration in nudging and waking me without my suffering any harm" (461). Although, as the reader learns later when Gawain returns, he has the medicinal knowledge to cure the knight, for the meantime he leaves him dying in the wood since he wishes to pursue an adventure elsewhere. The wounded knight shows more concern than Gawain when he begs him not to risk himself in that peril. Not even toward the long lost women of his family, who have suffered for years under an enchantment, including his mother, his grandmother and a sister whom he has never met until he comes upon them all accidentally at Chanpguin, does Gawain manifest any deep love. His most evident feeling on that occasion is pleasure at the great honor shown him. However highly refined his knightly habits are, Gawain seems to lack basic empathy.

All of these limitations in Gawain's character, whether implied or demonstrated, seriously compromise the reader's conventional high regard for that knight. But none of the devices Chrétien employs for this purpose are as effective as his juxtaposing Gawain's story with Perceval's. Gawain throughout his adventures in *The Story of the Grail* remains essentially unchanged, while Perceval grows from a country lout to the greatest of knights. His stasis next to Perceval's rise — particularly since Perceval's greatness eclipses his own by the end — proves deadly to his appeal. Gawain and the conventional understanding of chivalry which he represents simply are upstaged.

Onto the stage of knighthood, then, strides Perceval, a high-spirited but uncouth young Welshman, whose character at the beginning of the romance, though engaging, is distinctly unknightly. First impressions of him, by some itinerant knights, are mixed. "The Welsh are by nature more stupid than grazing beasts; and this one is just like a beast" (377), says one. But another enjoys Perceval's curiosity, and answers all his questions about knighthood. His manners and dress appall courtly tastes, but his natural appeal is still strong. At his first entry into Arthur's court he makes a lasting impression: "The eyes in the head of the uncultivated lad were bright and laughing. No one who sees him thinks him prudent; but all who set eyes on him consider him handsome and engaging" (387). And Arthur gives his own opinion:



"Although the youth is naive, he may well be of good birth; for it's a matter of upbringing, and he has learnt under a bad master. He can still turn out a worthy vassal" (387). Unlike Gawain who, one imagines, was always as he is, Perceval begins his career as a promising boor.

After the defect in manners, Perceval's ignorance of arms is his most glaring inadequacy. He thinks that armor makes a knight and considers himself beknighthed as soon as he puts on a suit of it. Not only does he not know how to wield sword and shield, but he is also ignorant of the rules of fair fights. He thinks of the joust in hunting terms, and of his opponent as a kind of animal to be taken down with hurled javelins. Speaking of the great Red Knight whom he has just killed in this manner and whose armor he wants, Perceval says, "But I'll have chopped the corpse up into steaks before I can get any of the armor off" (389). His early view of knightly combat as a species of the hunt reveals a contempt for his opponent, which has no place in a legitimate joust, even if between mortal enemies. The young Perceval lacks a worthy knight's respect for arms and the opponent.

If his lack of respect for opposites in combat is disturbing, even more so is his lack of respect for opposites in love. His first attempt at "love" exposes a defenseless maiden to great perils and hardships, and reveals his extreme roughness of character. Against her will he takes kisses and a ring. While she weeps he insults her further by commending her for not having bitter breath like a chambermaid's, eats his fill of the lunch meant for her and her lover, and, in spite of her obvious grief, departs without an inkling of his guilt. In his primitive state Perceval is as little chivalrous toward maidens as can be imagined.

Related to Perceval's early failure to respect others is his habit of delayed reaction. The first knights he sees, as a youth at play in his mother's woods, repeatedly ask him for information about some other travelers whom they want to find. But Perceval is so wrapped in the vision of their splendor, which is all new to him, that he ignores their questions until they have answered all of his own. Then it is as though he comes out of a daze and remembers that they too want information from him. When he subsequently leaves the wood to become a knight, he looks back at the house and sees his doting mother fall in a swoon as if dead. But not until he has accomplished (or thinks that he has accomplished) his goal of becoming a knight does he think of turning homeward to see how she fares. At Arthur's court, when Kay strikes the laughing maiden on his account, Perceval fails to answer the affront right away, since he is at the moment intent upon acquiring the Red Knight's arms; when he later has opportunities to redress her dishonor, he does so. In the early part of his chivalric career, Perceval repeatedly manifests a severe self-absorption characteristic of youth, perhaps, but hardly of knighthood.

His self-absorption and insensitivity show also in his impatience with others. His mother, who after years of silence reveals to her son their illustrious but tragic family history, concludes her moving story in this way: "You were all the comfort and the only blessing I had, for nobody else of my family remained: God had left me with no other source of joy and happiness." Perceval's response shows how well he sympathizes with her: "Give me something to eat. I don't know what you're talking to me about. I'd very much like to go to the kin, who makes knights; and so I shall, whoever may be sorry about it!" (380). Perceval "would not have given a penny" (385) for the charcoal-burner's tale of Arthur's grief, nor "a chive" (387) for the king's own. He speaks to people only to serve his own desires, with no regard whatever for their concerns. His insularity and utilitarianism, so characteristic of his youth, stand in glaring opposition to the knightly character whose image he seeks to grasp.

All the defects of his character at the beginning of Perceval's career, however, do not preclude his development. Arthur, for one, considers it possible that he could become "a worthy vassal." The laughing maiden even goes so far as to tell him, "Young man, if you live long, I think and am convinced that in the whole world there will not be, nor has there been, nor will anyone hear of any knight better than you. That's what I think and feel and believe" (388). And, in fact, he does make rapid progress as a knight in several aspects of his character and reputation. Gornemant and Gawain help to improve his appearance, and he learns all that Gornemant knows about arms and their use in a very short time. His speech and his manners improve. And almost immediately after taking arms he enjoys some stunning victories in combat, which make him renowned and honored overnight, so much so that Arthur and all his court embark on a quest on his account, to see him and find out his name. Quite naturally Perceval takes to the knightly life and easily rises to the level of excellence that was previously Gawain's domain.

More crucial to Chrétien's didactic purpose, however, are the dynamics by which Perceval surpasses Gawain. The two knights do not meet and befriend each other until the younger knight approaches parity with the elder. Perceval is coming out of a reverie in which he has discovered how one suffers love, rather than merely appropriating it like a set of arms, and has for the first time understood what it means to care within his soul for another human being. Gawain can appreciate the significance of Perceval's reverie even if he should not likely experience it himself. He leads Perceval into the court where Arthur proclaims the laughing maiden's prophecy to have been fulfilled, and full courtly



recognition of his chivalry is accorded the young knight. In the court's estimation, and thus also according to the conventional understanding of chivalry, Perceval has reached his peak when he attains Gawain's height.

But from this meeting point the two knights part and embark upon separate quests: Gawain to answer an attack on his honor; Perceval to save a people from devastation. Each has a string of adventures that earns him more renown. Gawain wins the overlordship of a devoted people, and Perceval sends sixty great knights in defeat to Arthur's court. But whereas Gawain's character ends just as it started, in pleasures at the honor that has rightly been given him, Perceval's new-found depth makes him uneasy with his success. For five years he acts a part like Gawain's: the exemplary knight, conventionally understood. Not until his chance encounter with a hermit, a man of great spiritual wisdom, does he question the value of his knightly enterprise. Then, in his last great delayed reaction, Perceval suddenly appreciates the nature and gravity of his life's errors. For the first time ever he feels fear: he is "greatly afraid he has sinned against God" (458). The hermit confirms the basis for the fear but identifies his having "forgotten God" (458) with the initial sin against his mother. It is Christ's *duplex mandatum* that Perceval has violated, the cornerstone of the New Law, which commands man simply to love God with all his heart, soul and mind, and to love his neighbor as himself. To be full of one's private purpose, as Perceval is when he leaves his mother for dead, is to turn away from God and neighbor and into oneself. The penance which the hermit gives to the repentant Percéval, then, is not to abandon the chivalric enterprise as being somehow inimical to the health of the soul, but rather to turn it to the service of the New Law. To seek one's own profit is right and proper, but what one seeks must be for the sake of the immortal soul rather than for one's mortal reputations. As Perceval comes to this realization he rises surely above his fellow knight Gawain. Gawain is indeed a great knight, but his greatness is pre-Christian. The man Perceval comes to be, in contrast, is the prototypal Christian knight.

Chrétien's project in *The Story of the Grail*, then, is to Christianize the medieval code of chivalry. His chief means for the purpose is his ability to influence the readers' affections by playing upon their expectations. He presents for their qualified admiration the essentially pagan Gawain, while suggesting his limitations as a model. And for their fuller admiration he presents Perceval, suggesting in this case his *possibilities* as a model. The greener range to which Chrétien leads his audience is the field of Christian human greatness.

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# The Role of Limbo in the Justice of the *Divine Comedy*

by Terry Gilbert

Perhaps the most difficult theological problem that surfaces in Dante's *Divine Comedy* is that of the justice of Limbo. Very soon after he begins to unfold his conception of the justice of the *Inferno* as a whole, Dante presents the reader with what seems to be an anomaly. The justice of the *Inferno* depends on human free choice. Hell is just because its inhabitants are there of their own free will. Yet it seems that Limbo is the place for those who had no choice: unbaptized infants and virtuous pagans—most significantly, Virgil. Despite this problem, Dante seems to have made a point of placing Limbo within hell proper, at the price of rendering an already difficult doctrine almost impossible. By doing so, Dante creates a tension between faith and rational understanding that runs throughout the whole *Comedy*. Far from being forced into this tension against his will by Catholic dogma, Dante extends it and even aggravates it in order to emphasize the absolute necessity of faith and grace both for salvation and for understanding the justice of God.

If the question of limbo is set aside, the overall picture of the justice of hell that emerges in the early cantos of the *Inferno* seems rational and satisfying. Through the story of a journey that he is supposed to have taken through hell under the guidance of Virgil, Dante apparently is trying to enable the rational reader to understand the workings of divine and perfect justice in that realm. The core of that justice is the fact that the inhabitants are there of their own free will. Dante the Pilgrim is amazed to see that the souls want to cross over the river Acheron to the place of horrible and eternal punishment, for their "fear is changed into desire" (*Inferno* 3. 126). This crossing is possible because the sin that they freely chose in life brings its own punishment, a punishment which is the fulfillment of their desire in sinning. Deceived "by the breadth of the entrance" of hell, the sinners do not realize that they are already receiving the punishment of hell in life in the very act of sinning (*Inferno* 5.20). Just as the punishment that sin brought in life did not stop them from choosing it anyway, the souls freely choose the eternal continuation of that sin and the suffering it brings.

Dorothy Sayers sums up well the essential fact that, according to Dante, nobody is ever sent to hell: "Men go there of their own will. Hell is the state in which the will remains fixed eternally in that which it insisted on having; the torments it endures are simply the sin itself, experienced at last, without illusion, as that which it really is ("The Divine Poet," 47). Such a brilliant and rational account would seem to have been enough to dissolve any doubt that one might harbor about the justice of hell, if only Dante had not placed Limbo right in the middle of things and messed everything up. For by situating Limbo in hell itself, after Virgil and Dante have crossed the Acheron, the poet makes the justice of Limbo integral to the justice of the whole of the *Inferno*.

In Limbo, according to Virgil, are those who "did not sin, but having merit / was not enough, for they lacked baptism" (*Inferno* 4.34-5). The inhabitants "are afflicted only / in that they live in longing without hope" (*Inferno* 4. 41-42). Present there are unbaptized pagans "of great worth," unbaptized infants, and prior to the "harrowing of hell," the worthy followers of the Old Covenant (*Inferno* 4. 43-44). It is the fate of these men of "much worth" that is the main cause of Dante's "great grief" (*Inferno* 4. 43). The fact of their damnation becomes a nagging question that surfaces time and time again throughout his journey. The fact that he reacts so strongly shows just how far he is from understanding the justice of Limbo. In other realms his lack of understanding led him to pity the inhabitant to a certain degree. Here, however, his reaction is extreme grief, which indicates the much greater difficulty involved in understanding the justice of Limbo.

More striking, however, is the reaction of Virgil. The anguish that he shows in this realm is in stark contrast to his reaction in the other circles, where he shows no pity. According to Mark Musa, "Reason cannot feel pity for the just punishment of sin; later [Virgil] will rebuke Dante for taking pity on the sinners" (102). If Virgil represents Reason on some level at least, Virgil's uncharacteristic reaction would seem to indicate a great discrepancy in the ability of reason to understand the justice of this circle as compared to the others. And yet Musa goes on to say that the "virtuous shades in Limbo, of course, are not sinners, and the absence there of the light of God is pitiable" (102). Musa totally misses the point here, for if Limbo is perfectly just, there can be no pity. The fact that Virgil does pity the inhabitants, and evidently himself as well, shows that he does not grasp the justice of the situation. The poet seems to be indicating that unaided reason cannot grasp the justice of Limbo to the degree that it can understand the justice of the rest of the *Inferno*.

This fact does not mean that there is no understandable relationship between the justice of Limbo and that of the rest of hell, however. Dante did not place Limbo in hell proper without reason, or because his Catholic faith required



it. As a matter of fact, the traditional teaching on Limbo was very different from Dante's. Aquinas had distinguished the Limbo of the Fathers (followers of the Old Covenant) from the Limbo of the infants, and represented unbaptized children as not grieving at all for the loss of the Beatific Vision, but rather rejoicing in natural perfection and a certain participation in the Divine Goodness (Gardner 119). Dante, on the other hand, puts them all together and adds the virtuous pagans as well. All of them suffer from a vague but hopeless longing that is truly hellish, even if it does not involve the kind of torments that occur in the other circles. Dante presents Limbo not as a separate kind of state, as Aquinas does (*Summa Theologica*, Suppl. Q. 69 Art. 5), but as being the first circle of hell itself.

Clearly Dante has made a point of placing the unbaptized within the context of the justice of hell, at the price of considerable theological innovation. This placement must mean that the justice of Limbo can somehow be understood in light of the justice of the rest of the *Inferno*, despite the implications of Virgil's lack of understanding. An obvious possibility in the case of the honorable pagans would be that the eternal state they are in is simply the continuation of the life they lived before death. Despite the "sighs" and "longing without hope," some of the inhabitants of Limbo live quite a noble existence. Those of "great merit" whose fate caused Dante such grief, such as the great poets and philosophers, continue to enjoy the honor and "light" of natural reason that they did in life. According to Singleton, "In the darkness before the Advent of Christ, these pagans had no other light than this; hence, their condition in Limbo is as it was on earth. This is the justness or justice of their state in the afterlife" (61-62). Just as the sinners continue their sinful life eternally, then, the pagans continue their life of reason and honor eternally. Alan Gilbert agrees that Dante's Limbo represents "the state of the best men before the coming of Christ; in hell they live as they had lived on earth" (78). Such a parallel is not enough to explain why Limbo is part of hell, however, because there still seems to be no free choice involved. After all, it was not by choice that Aristotle did not have the light of Christ.

Virgil's reformulation of the reason that he and the rest of the good pagans are lost in the seventh canto of the *Purgatorio* suggests the possibility that some kind of choice was involved after all. Here Virgil says that "for no other fault did I lose Heaven except not having Faith" (7. 7-8, emphasis added.). Dorothy Sayers interprets this as involving a general lack of faith in the nature of things in addition to a lack of specifically Christian faith (*Divine Comedy I*, 95). This lack of faith was a failure to imagine anything better than the life they had rationally devised; a failure to imagine an eternity of bliss ("Dante's Virgil," 64). Their "condemnation" is just, because in Limbo "they should 'have what they chose'; they enjoy the kind of after-life which they themselves imagined for the virtuous dead" (*Divine Comedy I*, 95).

There are two problems with this interpretation. First of all, it is very difficult to see how the pagans can be blamed for their lack of faith "in the nature of things." Yet Sayers insists that their punishment fits "the outline of eternal justice. In eternity they are deprived only of that which in life they refused — for it is the essence of heaven and hell that one must abide forever with that which one has chosen" ("Dante's Virgil," 62). The question is, how could they have refused what they were never offered? If they had been offered faith in some mysterious way, they should be in a lower circle of hell for having refused it. Secondly, there is the problem of the unbaptized infants who inhabit the same circle. Certainly there is no possibility of free choice on their part.

And yet, on the level of allegory, Sayer's account does seem to explain the poetic reasons why Dante placed Limbo in hell and put the good pagans in it. By placing Virgil and the good pagans in hell, Dante places a harsh judgment on the natural man and shows clearly his own inadequacies. As Sayers explains:

For the whole theme of the *Comedy* is that Virgil is fundamental, indispensable, and yet of himself inadequate. Man is inadequate. Natural Reason and art, Natural Morality, Natural Religion, if without grace, without Revelation, without Redemption, cannot at their best attain any higher state than Limbo. ("Dante's Virgil," 60)

By placing the pagans in hell, Dante emphasizes the absolute character of the necessity of grace for salvation. Such a construction also affords him the opportunity of setting up the allegory between their state in Limbo and the inadequacies of their merely rational and humanly virtuous lives on earth. If he had followed Aquinas and simply left open the possibility of the salvation of the heathens without giving them a special place in hell (Aquinas, *De Verbo* 14. 2), he would not have been able to use the allegorical structure he has set up in the *Inferno* in order to show just how inadequate life is apart from faith and grace, no matter how noble and virtuous it may be.

Even if Dante's version of Limbo does work well poetically and allegorically, the problem of understanding its justice remains. Dante takes no short-cuts in trying to make that justice understandable. On the contrary, his unusual treatment of Limbo seems to make the possibility of even beginning to understand it out of the question. He did not have to place the unbaptized infants, whose position in hell demands that they



scheme of hell in order to make it clear that its justice may not be as simple and neat as it might appear apart from Limbo. Perhaps the question is not so much how the justice of Limbo fits in with that of hell, but rather vice versa. The very justice of the rest of hell, which seems so clear, becomes more mysterious itself when it is understood in the light of glaring fact of Limbo.

There is a great temptation to ignore Dante's hints and warning about the limitations of Virgil's account of the justice of hell. By placing his impossible Limbo within that account, Dante makes much less likely the temptation of thinking that one can fully understand divine justice through mere human reasoning. Because the justice of hell can be fully understood only together with that of Limbo, the questions that arise later in the *Paradiso* concerning the salvation of the pagans can be seen to apply to Dante's whole conception of justice in some way.

In Canto 19 of the *Paradiso*, Dante the Pilgrim hopes to have his doubt solved concerning the salvation of the unbaptized, but in the end, he is led only to see that the mystery of God's justice is even deeper than he had thought (*Paradiso* 19. 60). The only real relief he gets for his doubt comes in the form of a mystery just as deep and beyond human understanding, the mystery of divine grace. Here he "marvels" at the fact that a relatively unknown Trojan, Ripheus, was saved by a special grace enabling him to believe in Christ before his actual coming (*Paradiso* 20. 100-125). Finally, he is led to the ultimate mystery of predestination, and warned "not to presume any more to advance toward understanding such a goal" (*Paradiso* 21. 97-98). What emerges ultimately from Dante's extended treatment of the Pilgrim's doubt is that the workings of divine justice and divine grace rationally cannot be understood by the human mind, but must be accepted in faith. And because Limbo intimately is tied up with the rest of hell, Dante's rational account of the justice in the *Inferno* as a whole cannot be supposed to suffice without the help of faith.

Dante's aggravation of the problems of justice serves to make this absolute need for divine help in understanding as clear as possible. Beatrice tells Dante in Canto 4 of the *Paradiso* that "for our justice to appear unjust in mortal eyes is a proof of faith, not of heresy" (lines 7-9). Dante seems to have done his best to make sure that his account of God's justice in the *Inferno* does not come off as being too just to human eyes due to its ingenious and convincing reasoning. Dante certainly does not downplay the importance and value of reason in relation to faith, but clearly wants to show that in matters of justice and grace, one ultimately must submit in faith. Only the "faith that destroys every error" can be trusted to reach the truth in these difficult matters (*Inferno* 4. 47-48). As Lumentani points out: "Just as Dante uses his treatment of Limbo to emphasize the absolute inability of man to save himself apart from grace, he also uses it to emphasize the absolute inability of man to understand the justice and grace of God. The tension between reason and faith exists because the realm of faith goes so much beyond that of reason. Regarding mysteries which reason cannot look very deeply into, "the only course for a believing Christian [is] to submit his intellect to the mystery of God's judgment" (53). There is much reasoning in the *Comedy*, but Dante is careful to make sure that the reader does not get caught in the trap of thinking that such reasoning can ever exhaust the mystery of God's justice and mercy, even in the case of his own seemingly clear and satisfactory account.

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## Gedanken über Siddhartha

by Breanainn Carmody

Die Suche nach dem Selbst ist ein bekanntes Thema in den Werken Hermann Hesses. Seine Romane Demian, Narziss und Goldmund und Siddhartha erzählen von diesem archetypischen Suchen. Der Weg ist sehr schwer für Emil Sinclair, Goldmund, und besonders für Siddhartha. Seine Geschichte ereignet sich zur Zeit des Buddha im uralten Indien. Siddhartha beschreibt das Streben eines Mannes, der Weisheit und Erleuchtung sucht.

Die indische Szenerie dieser Novelle verdient einige Beachtung. Hesses Stil ist einfach und fließend wie der indische Fluss, wo Siddhartha seinen Frieden gefunden hat. Es ist augenscheinlich, dass Hesse schon eine persönliche Beziehung zum Osten hatte (er hatte durch seine Familie viel davon gehört und war auch selbst nach Indien gereist). Siddharthas Weg zum Frieden ist auch interessant. Zuerst ist er ein Bramahne, ein Priester, und dann wird er ein Asket. Es scheint mir aber, dass er mehr von der Kurtisane Kamala und dem Kaufmann Kamaswami aus der kindischen Welt von "Sansara" lernte als durch seine Weisheit und Lebensverneinung. Er musste sein Selbst zerstören, und er konnte das nur in der kindischen Welt erreichen. Dann wurde er unschuldig und einfach wie ein Kind; dann konnte er den Frieden finden. Vorher war er zu intelligent, zu hochmütig, um diese Weisheit zu finden. Er lernte das Zuhören von dem Fährmann Vasudeva. Am wichtigsten war die Liebe, die er erfuhr, als er seinem Sohn diente. Die Liebe stand im Gegensatz zur normalen indischen Philosophie, aber Siddhartha fand seine Erleuchtung durch diese Liebe zur Welt.

Die Lehrerfigur ist typisch für Hesses Werke. Wie Emil Sinclair und Goldmund ihren Demian und Narziss hatten, so bekommt Siddhartha seine Lehrer in den Samanas, der schönen Kamala, und in Vasudeva. Die Samanas lehren ihn die Selbstverneinung, während er von Kamala Liebeskunst und Lebensgenuss lernt. Als Brahmane hatte Siddhartha nie gewusst, wie man richtig hören soll. Vasudeva hat ihn das Zuhören gelehrt, und danach konnte er das Geheimnis des Flusses lernen. Nun versteht er die Zeitlosigkeit der Existenz. Siddhartha selbst fungiert als Lehrer durch seine Beziehung zu seinem Kindheitsfreund Govinda. Dieser Schüler des Buddha war verloren und verwirrt, als er ihn nach Jahren wieder sah, aber Siddhartha konnte ihn gut beraten.

Der Fluss ist ein archetypisches Symbol. Er stellt die Veränderung der menschlichen Existenz dar. Der griechische Philosoph Heraklit hat den Fluss als Beispiel für seine Meinung über den ewigen Wechsel aller Dinge gebraucht. Siddhartha hat gemerkt, dass in der Stimme des Flusses die Stimmen aller Geschöpfe enthalten waren. Dieses Geheimnis, zusammen mit seiner Liebesfähigkeit, hat ihm geholfen, seinen Frieden zu finden.

Hesse betont die Wichtigkeit der Suche nach dem Selbst. Er beschreibt sie fast als eine religiöse Erfahrung. Hesses Helden sind bewundernswürdig, weil sie auf ihren Wegen zur Erleuchtung keinem regelmässigen Schema folgen; sie schmieden selbständig ihre eigenen Schicksale und finden dadurch ihren eigenen Frieden.



# Tradition and Innovation in Borromini's Renaissance Masterpiece, Carlo alle Quattro Fontane

by John Dovic

Many aspects of Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane are unprecedented and unique in their architectural incarnation, yet underlying all the sinuous curves and inspiring details is a knowledge of preceding styles and theories of art, mingled with Borromini's personal inspiration by nature.

The form of the church itself, loosely based on a Greek cross transformed by ovals, has roots in the Renaissance development of centrally planned churches, which itself was influenced by classical Roman temples. The writings of Vitruvius, as interpreted in the Renaissance by Alberti, proclaimed the beauty of the circle and the perfection of nature to which man should look for inspiration. Yet Borromini takes this centrally focused circle and elongates it, so that while retaining the beauty and structurally harmonizing effect of the curves, he adds a dimension of basilican axiality and focus to one end of the church, albeit without the use of straight aisles and side aisles. One is thus treated to a mingling of both plans; the curves imitate natural fluidity and the ideals of Alberti, and the elongation leads the eye straight ahead to the altar. The eye is also drawn upwards to the central dome of the church, not immediately, but via the altar and its capping half-dome.

Though having respect for the appreciation of nature in the Renaissance, Borromini did not limit himself to its geometric and numerical rules. He was more influenced by the mannerists' disregard for formality, and in particular, by Michelangelo. Some of the dramatic curvature characteristic of Borromini is foreshadowed in the imposing stairway and wall ornaments of the Laurentian library in Florence. The plasticity of architecture, not its angularity and rigidity, was of interest to Borromini.

Earlier influences on his work are seen, of course, in classical Roman buildings. The Pantheon, with its central plan and deeply coffered dome, no doubt had some bearing on Borromini's treatment of the dome in San Carlo; in fact, the half-dome over the altar in the Pantheon, following its Christian conversion, has an identical coffered design. Hadrian's Villa and the Palace of Nero, with their respective treatments of circular and domed spaces, set a precedent for curvilinear architecture which Borromini, among others, adopted. The church of Santa Costanza, and especially the coffering of its barrel-vaulted ambulatory constructed by Constantine in 330 as a mausoleum for his daughter and converted into a church in 1256, may also have provided inspiration.

For Borromini, as for most Renaissance architects, columns were primarily used for decoration. The larger columns of San Carlo do seem to have structural purpose in carrying heavy establatures, but they are backed by walls, not entirely free-standing and adhering to Albertian principles; they do not carry arches. They serve mainly to demarcate sections of the church to outline the meeting of opposing concave and convex walls. Smaller columns go even further in their decorative role; they, along with pilasters, create niches for statues and other decorative features.

Another major influence on Borromini was Giovanni Battista Montano, who in 1624 published a book of architectural drawings based on unusual examples of classical architecture. He did not seek a unity and conformity in architecture, but found discrepancies and played on them in fanciful and imaginative ways, free from rigid conventions. Borromini apparently took on a similar attitude, and though basing himself most generally on classical and accepted form, (he went off on curvaceous tangents).

Borromini, before taking on the commission of San Carlo, had worked with Carlo Maderno and Bernini, from whom he may have developed principles of Baroque architecture which he nonetheless implements in his unique style, full of disdain for their attitudes of architecture as a reflection of human proportions. A major difference between Borromini and Bernini can be seen in their treatment of sculpture within architecture: for Bernini sculpture was animating and part of a theatrical story, as in his framing of the stained glass window with frolicking angels in the apse of St. Peter's; for Borromini, sculpture, when not embodied abstractly in the curves of the architecture itself, was supplemental to the architecture and fit itself in as best it could, as with the angels framing the statue of San Carlo on the facade.

Borromini freed architecture and stone from conventional constraints. His reliance on and appreciation for the forms of nature led to an architecture of fluidity, that, though hinted at in earlier buildings, was liberated from the "perfection" of the circle and other geometric conventions with rhythmic curve and flow.



# Madame Bovary: The Absurdity of Romantic Ideals in a Base Society

by Patrick Butler

Madame Bovary has an incurably romantic view of what life should be like. Through each phase of her life, Emma imagines idealized future situations. She believes that entering the convent has some mystic spell; she thinks that living on a farm has some rustic charm; she sees married life as a stroll under a full moon with her husband reading poetry to her; she dreams that an affair has some sweet, forbidden sensuality; finally, she views death as the dramatic end to a wretched, luckless existence. Every time that one of her utopian, romantic thoughts fails in reality, Emma recalls the past as a much better time when, in fact, the past had just been a disappointment of past dreams. Thus, in a sometimes comical, sometimes bitter satire, Flaubert reveals the absurdity of romanticism and the irony of reality.

Emma desires a life of storybook pleasures for herself. As a child filled with glorified ideas of life in the convent, Emma reads novels that portray a more appealing form of romanticism. She becomes filled with ideas of courtly love. She can no longer be bound by the simple pleasures of convent life or life on her father's farm. The heroines of the novels live in grand settings and marry the most charming men or, oppressed by their wretched husbands, they endure suffering until their white knight, the perfect lover, delivers them. In her attempt to live out her romantic ideals, Emma discovers that reality differs from the fantastic and her life withers with her dreams.

Not finding even temporary satisfaction in her marriage to Charles, Emma becomes ill as her wish for a romance-filled marriage remains unfulfilled. Charles, overjoyed with the simple pleasures of his life, has no idea that his wife finds him unable to reveal "the intensities of passion, the refinements of life, all the mysteries" (46). In a new setting Emma finds a love that society forbids, but she eventually loses Leon. Emma then plays the role of the suffering heroine. She believes that her external display of generosity and cordiality while suffering internally shows nobility of character, but it actually reflects a selfish protest of what she considers to be fate. Furthermore, as in marriage, the initial thought of suffering degenerates into something that has no romantic value.

Viewing an affair as the only escape from her fruitless suffering, Emma relinquishes her reservations concerning social disapproval and succumbs to the attraction of Rodolphe's status and deceptive charm. Flaubert reveals the absurdity of the seduction through the juxtaposition of Rodolphe's persuasive phrases with the announcements of the agricultural show:

"Did I have any idea that I'd be coming with you to the show?"

"Seventy francs!"

"A hundred times I was on the point of leaving and yet I followed you and stayed with you..."

"For the best manures."

"...as I'd stay with you tonight, tomorrow, every day, all my life." (168)

The beginning of the affair consists in many superficial, romantic gestures, but these gestures disappear as the lovers become more familiar with one another. At this point, a significant but incomplete change occurs in Emma. She realizes that none of her attempts at romantic happiness has worked and she vows to make the best of what she has been given in life. However, when Charles' attempt at greatness fails, she cannot live with his failure and she returns to Rodolphe, who, finally leaves, causing her a deathly-ill state.



The reappearance of Leon in Emma's life allows her one more chance for true love. The occasional rendezvous between Emma and Leon have the appearance of authentic fulfillment; however, since their encounters come at large intervals, their imaginations allow them to exaggerate each other's virtues. Then, desire drives Emma to lie to Charles so that she can see Leon once a week. She also tries to satisfy her love of material things by signing notes of debt with Lheureux. During the frequent meetings that follow Emma's deception of Charles, Emma and Leon lose their lofty feelings toward each other. They still have mutual attraction, but Emma degenerates into a pure sensualist to maintain higher, ecstatic passion; she becomes a user like Rodolphe. Because Leon senses the change in Emma and wants something better for himself, he distances himself from her and their love loses importance.

Finally, when forced to look at a practical side of life, Emma romanticizes her plight until harsh reality exposes itself. The threat of her financial deceptions being exposed to Charles causes Emma to perform base acts that contradict her romantic ideals. At the notary's house she begs, but refuses to relinquish her pride and prostitute herself. Then, at Rodolphe's house she begs and offers to relinquish her pride and prostitute herself. Failing in all practical endeavors, Emma does what any romantic heroine would do and commits suicide in a traditional manner; she poisons herself and leaves a note saying that her death is nobody's fault. However, when the pain and unattractiveness of death strike, she cannot even find solace in the way that she dies.

Emma experiences a loss of everything that she gains in life by trying to gain something unattainable. Amidst Emma's downfall another element of society thrives. Homais embodies this element (to which Lheureux also belongs). He, like Emma, deceives and manipulates people, but he applies himself to base, practical ideas whereas Emma grasps for lofty, unreachable ideas. The primary basis for Homais' success stems from his lack of belief in anything except improving his status, both socially and financially. The irony that this reality presents is that if a person strives for anything higher than the mundane, he will fail, but if a person relinquishes all scruples and seeks only to impress society through deception and flattery, he will succeed. Flaubert thus presents a satiric picture of romanticism highlighted by the base requirements of social greatness.

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# Keats' "In drear-nighted December": Melancholy Memories of Past Happiness

by Tom Lawler

Keats' poem "In drear-nighted December" presents the melancholy reflections of a *persona* who laments his painful state. He speaks of nature as the impersonal, unfeeling element which cannot understand what it is like to remember past joys which are no longer. Then he turns to reflect upon the state of mankind and wishes that man could be so unaffected by his memory and its often painful remorse.

This theme of remorse is presented by Keats' use of figurative language. The first line of the poem sets an initial tone of somber melancholy. The words "drear-nighted" suggest an unhappy state of the soul. "December" reflects the cold, death-like and frozen condition of the *persona's* feelings. The diction is colloquial and simple, making the poem seem direct and tensely stated. The rhyme scheme stays regular throughout the three stanzas, with a stable, quieting effect.

Each stanza is short, consisting of generally iambic lines with three stresses per line. The rhyme scheme in all the stanzas (ababcccd) reflects the emotion evoked. The first four lines alternate in rhyme setting a congenial, somber tone. But then, the next three lines all rhyme, presenting a rising tension and a building up of the power of the rhyme. Finally, the last line changes the rhyme in a dramatic shift, as if to abruptly disrupt the growing repetition of rhyme. By this device, the rhyme reflects the emotional character of the poem, with its somber beginning, growing intensity, and final resoluteness.

The material of the poem is divided into three reflections. The first (stanza 1) is an address to a solitary tree, standing bare in the cold winter. It stands in opposition to the frozen, numbing north wind. The question arises as to how this tree can be "too happy." The poet seems to be saying that because the tree cannot remember (l. 3) the time when it bloomed with green freshness, it is happy and lucky. The wind from the north (l. 5-6) has no power to affect the memory of the tree and cannot destroy it. This strength is why the tree is happy compared to the *persona* who envies the tree. This image is reflected in the changing meter of line 6 which begins with an anapest and continues with trochees. Yet, since the wind cannot "undo" the tree, the rhyme returns to iambic in line 7.

The second stanza compares the state of the *persona's* soul to a river or brook. Like the tree, the brook is "too happy" because it is unaffected by remorse. The brook cannot remember its happier times when it flowed with "bubbings" in the summer. Again, the meter changes in line 6 from iambic to trochaic to emphasize the comparison. Since the memories of better times do not cause "petting" or a turning away from complacency, the rhyme returns to iambic in line 7. The end rhyme of line 7 links it to the rhyme of stanza 1, as if to say that both the tree and the brook share a common element.

The Greek mythology reference in line 4 of stanza 2 gives it a more serious, reflective and stately tone. The brook is subtly compared to Lethe, the Greek river of forgetting. This image is central to understanding the theme of the poem, which is the desire to escape remorse and the pain of today which is brought on by remembering the joys of yesterday.

Stanza III begins with the interjection "Ah" which signals the *persona's* acceptance of his condition. He then reflects that it is a shame that young people cannot be so unaffected by the poet as nature is. With this rhetorical statement, the *persona* becomes more calmly accepting of his own feelings. He asks in the next line if there were anyone who was not "writhed" or stung and afflicted by the sharp pain of remorse. The verb is appropriate to this stanza because it contrasts sharply with the calmness of the earlier line ("gentle girl or boy"). It startles the reader to think of a child writhing in pain because of his passed happiness. The imagery evoked by this line is of an innocent animal struck by something painful.

Finally, the last lines attempt to express the purpose of the poem. Keats is saying that this experience of feeling what is not felt was never expressed by poetry before. The unfeeling elements of nature cannot tell us what it is like to be unaffected by remorse. That is why it "was never said in rhyme." The *persona* reflects upon his own attempt to express the helplessness and despair ("more to heal it / nor numb sense to steel it") which he feels. The only way man can express this sentiment is by verse ("rhyme"). Nature (the tree or brook) has no need to express it because it is not afflicted; it is "too happy."

Thus, Keats successfully utters the cry of despair and remorse. By using devices such as personification of nature and strong imagery, he creates a poem which tells the suffering of a man haunted by memories of past happiness. He successfully relates the condition of his soul "In drear-nighted December."

(This essay was written in one hour as part of the senior comprehensive examinations.)



# A Natural Wretchedness in America's Founding

by Jason Henderson

Even at the time of drafting the Declaration of Independence, the "peculiar institution" known as American slavery threw a wrench in the machinations of creating a society based entirely around the principle that "all men are created equal" and that only through respect for this equality could a viable, healthy nation flourish. At the time, the 1770s, the debate was laid aside. Slavery was seen as a sadly necessary evil, whose disruption could be detrimental to the economy of the South. Slaves, treated as something more than animal and less than human, were allowed to remain on trade. Soon, however, the winds began to change. As the nation grew, and as Southern economics called for a new interest in slave trade, the sides of the argument became more clear. The conflict was not one of promoting an animal to the rank of man, but of deciding what to do with a race of men taught to see themselves as inferior but human. In the end, either America was to uphold the less than one hundred year-old maxim that all men were created equal, or hypocrisy must go aside and America would once and for all reject this as a *passé* and limited philosophy.

By the 1830s and 1840s, equality *per se* had ceased to be an issue on all sides. Some, such as David Walker, would scoff at such an idea. Walker viewed blacks and whites as two distinct members of the same over-arching race who can be traced to have distinct responses to the same stimuli. He maintained that "Natural observances taught me these things : there is a solemn awe in the hearts of blacks, as it respects murdering men, whereas the whites (though they are great cowards), where they have the advantage, . . . they murder all before them" (Current 366). Walker saw the races as "natural enemies" everywhere (367). By his standards, men should be treated differently because of their skin color; nowhere did he recognize that each man should be judged individually with respect to himself.

Even Jefferson expressed dismay and indecision over the equality question. Many like him seemed to express a feeling that, even if equality for blacks and whites were desirable, it might no longer be possible. Jefferson conjectured "as suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments of both body and mind" (367).

Some theorists, such as George Fitzhugh, held the long-touted American taste for equality in little regard at all. "The free states of antiquity bounded with slaves," he asserted (415). Fitzhugh held that there are in nature superior and inferior beings, and these are meant naturally to divide themselves as such without the interference of law. Abraham Lincoln saw a destructive trend in such theories. He saw slavery as alien to the Declaration of Independence because it undermined the wisdom that all men are created equal:

When we were political slaves of King George, we wanted to be free, we called the maxim that "all men are created equal" a self-evident truth, but now, when we have grown fat, and have lost all dread of being slaves ourselves, we have become so greedy to be masters that we call the same maxim a "self-evident lie."

Without respect for equality, freedom for individuals, entire groups of people, had no chance of following.

Curiously, Fitzhugh saw the only true remnant of freedom in maintaining slavery. By his standards, freedom is protection from mental and physical harm and unfairness. He compared slaves to women and children, saying, "He who would emancipate women, unless he could make her as coarse and strong as man, would be her worst enemy . . . ; to set [her] free would be to give the lamb to the wolf to take care of. Society would quickly devour them" (418). In other words, there resided with the naturally strongest a divine duty to protect the weaker from the dangers of free choice, a free market, and employment competition. The drawback to such logic lies in the belief that men will be content to live as captives, even if their captors proclaim themselves benevolent.

For American society to continue, neither the Fitzhughs nor the Walkers could be catered to. As Lincoln remarked, "[H]e who be no slave must be content to have no slave. Those who deny freedom for others deserve it not for themselves; and under a just God, cannot long retain it." It would take time for the future generations of blacks to begin actually to rival the whites in learned arts, but the capacity to do so was worth every ruined plantation it created. Finally America had to own up to the words written one hundred years prior in the Declaration of Independence.

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# What is Phenomenological Psychology?

by Carolyn Wehman

Phenomenological psychology has as its subject the human being in her everyday meaningful living. Phenomenology tries to describe and understand its subject in a way that is true to the person. It tries to return to "lived" behavior. As Adrian van Kaam explains, "Phenomenological psychology, in its broadest definition, is an attempt to return to the immediate meaning and structure of behavior as it actually presents itself" (14-15). To do so, phenomenology does not follow the natural scientific methods. The quantitative approach that is valid for physics, chemistry, and biology is not appropriate for the study of humans. It sees the natural scientific method as inappropriate for its living subject because it misses what is uniquely human in the person: perception, cognition, memory, emotions and language. The meaning that humans give to and receive from their life world is what is truly psychological.

Phenomenological psychology is a human science that finds its foundation in the everyday world as it is lived by those who live in and through this world. The approach means to step into the person's world because it sees humans as dwellers in the world. The phenomenon should be studied as part of the existence of the person, moved away from the contrivances of the experimental psychology laboratory design which is an abstraction and artificial construal of real world experience" (von Eckartsberg 56). In looking at the things in a person's world, phenomenology seeks to discover the structures of meaning in human existence. The person is different from all other things in his world in a basic sense. The human has the ability to give meaning and significance to the world and her existence within it. Man is involved with the world; he is "a dialogue with things and processes in his own organism and in his surroundings. At the same time, he remains a subject in the world and lets the world be for him by steadily uncovering its manifold meanings" (van Kaam 7). The subject lives in the world and her living is projected into it. Her worldly existence is the most fundamental aspect of the person. No distinct line can be drawn between human and world. She is who she is through her presence to things. The world of the person is the world as it is perceived by the person. Each person actively is involved and makes the world her own. To be human is essentially to exist, and "to exist means to be-in-the-world" (van Kaam 7). Heidegger used the word *dasein* ("being-there") to describe the fundamental structure and meaning of human existence. The literal meaning of the word *dasein* shows the "ecstatic worldly nature of human existence: to be human is not simply to be, it is to be there! *Dasein* is the individual human being, the Being-the-there" (Craig 11). The human being "shines forth" and permits all that is to show itself in the "clearing" of this realm of world openness. Heidegger sees this openness or clearing as necessary for human existence to be at all (Boss in Craig 66).

The person is not a set of determined, mechanical behavior and instinctual impulses. The human is free to choose her own way of living, acting and responding as an autonomous being. For the person, the facticity of the past and of the body does influence and motivate how the person is present to a given moment, but the past does not determine the person's actions. Only humans have the capacity to transcend the given and move toward their possibilities. "Even as transcendence the subject is freedom, he breaks through the determinism of the cosmos insofar as no facticity whatsoever determines man's action as a human action" (Luijpen 243). The person as a subject in the world intentionally creates certain styles of being in the world. The person freely directs her way through life, yet she is rooted in the world as a thing. Her modes of perception are restricted by the structure of her body and her senses, by time, space and language of her culture, her surroundings, and her interests (van Kaam 58). The person must overcome limitations in order to realize new possibilities.



Another important aspect of the human is sense of self-directedness. The person is an openness toward many possibilities, but he is always directed toward something in the world. The person directs her own way of relating with the world. The quality of tending toward something is the way that a person is present to things and to the world. Her nature is such that she can discover different meanings as "man is always and necessarily intentional; he is orientation, directedness to the world; he is potential openness for all-that-is" (van Kaam 57). The person intentionally gives meaning to the given world in a particular way.

The way for the person to have access to worldly living is through the body. Each person lives her body, she is in the world in and through her body, and "the subject is immersed in the body and, through the body is involved in the world" (Luijpen 59). The body is living itself: it is a tangible perspective on the world in a participatory manner. Things are seen through a presence to the world that is bodily:

I could not feel, grasp, assimilate, understand, perceive, elucidate anything in the world without this bridge which is my body, a bridge that is never absent but always present, a bridge which I truly am. My body makes the world available to me; it is in and through my body that the world becomes-for-me, becomes mine, my world. (van Kaam 16)

Each person, however, is not an isolated self. The human existence is a co-existence. Man is not alone. As Luijpen puts it, "No aspect of man's being man is what it is without the 'presence' of other men in it. The presence of others in my existence implies that my being-man is a being through others" (261-262). It is only with others that a person can be who she is. She is a subject in the world with others. It is with other people that a person gives meaning to existence; a mother is a mother because she has children. One is human through others.

The phenomenological perspective is valuable because it has a unique understanding of these aspects of human existence: immersion in the world, embodiment, living with others, intentionality and self-directedness. Phenomenology sees these qualities as indivisible; each person is a unity. The person is not a set of characteristics, but a whole of existence.

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# Cinematic Construction and Classical Catharsis In Josef von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel*

by Richard Martin

What are the consequences when even the best of society fall prey to the passions which their learning is designed to guard them against? *The Blue Angel* (1930) by German director Josef von Sternberg examines the demise of Dr. Immanuel Rath, a leading and well-respected professor in the secondary school, or *gymnasium*. In his attempts to discipline his students — keeping them away from unsavory places — the professor becomes enamored of Lola Lola, a striking nightclub singer-dancer. Ridiculed by his students and confronted by the headmaster, Dr. Rath determines to marry the performer. His happiness is short-lived, and soon the doctor is merely his wife's pawn, working in a disgruntled fashion, collecting tips in the club. Before long the professor begins to work as a clown, with some success, as a form of comic relief in between the girls' acts. When the troupe returns to Dr. Rath's home town, he embarrassedly takes the stage where, diverted by the offstage action of Lola Lola being embraced in the arms of another man, the professor flies into a rage. Detained and later released, Dr. Rath returns to his home where he is discovered in course to have died.

"Immanuel," from the Hebrew originally, is a common enough German name. However, its etymology should not be forgotten; it means "God with us." "Rath" means "advice." The professor, then, could be said to be "the advice of God among men." Certainly this role is correspondent to his function as teacher of the youth. Yet the name also suggests the man's angelic nature, in accord with the film's title. The matter of the professor's exact importance, other than as main character, ironically is realized upon the consideration that the "blue angel," at least in terms of a literal construction, is some sort of cardboard representation which moves about the stage, circling Lola Lola. "The Blue Angel" juxtaposed upon "Immanuel Rath" hints to the audience that the professor's role as educator and moralist will become entirely meaningless and as humorously ineffectual as the blue angel, whose sole purpose is to hang about Lola Lola mindlessly.

At the film's commencement, Dr. Rath is awakened by his maid for breakfast. His chambers are dark and austere, and he dresses in black as well. There is a long pipe which leads to the furnace and which extends from the far left-hand side of the frame all the way across the top of the frame, culminating in the furnace. As the camera pans left, the pipe is continued until it finally terminates — now at the opposite end of the room. This device frames the room; it achieves a closed cinematic space. The viewer gets the sense that this room is somehow the whole of Dr. Rath's existence. His books are all there — numerous volumes — and a globe sits alongside the books. The professor is protected here in his chamber by his books; the framed scene is its own microcosm of a learned life. Perhaps the membranes of the doctor's shell are as tenuous as the heating pipe; perhaps any sort of earth-shaking experience could bring down the pipe and the feeble protection of the books. Sternberg himself writes, "The camera is only an accessory to the human eye and serves principally to frame — to include and to exclude. Within the frame the artist collects that which he wished us to share with him; beyond the frame is placed what he considers of no value to his thought." Sternberg has carefully



chosen what he wished to include and exclude. The effect he achieves is that Rath comes across as a Faustian figure. Here is a man who has all the knowledge available to the human reason, yet even this is not enough, as the director will prove, to assure that he will perform his duties and live his life in the failsafe manner he would like to imagine.

In this opening scene, the direction also points out the major symbolism which will be carried extensively through the whole of the film. In an otherwise completely silent setting, the professor whistles hoping to get a response from his caged bird. Not hearing anything, Dr. Rath walks toward the cage, lifts the bird, and notices the animal is dead. The maid comes and says indifferently, "No more singing." She tosses the carcass into the furnace. The bird reappears only a few moments later, at the *gymnasium*, where the mischievous boys play with a novelty — a card with a picture of Lola Lola on it. Her "skirt" is composed of so many real feathers. The crude game is to blow on the feather, thereby lifting Lola Lola's "skirt." The boys race to their seats and hide the toy when their master, Dr. Rath, arrives.

Later on, after the professor "falls in love" with Lola Lola, he wakes in the morning, hung-over, to the sound of a singing bird. Lola Lola, like the professor, also keeps a caged bird. It is as if the doctor's dead bird has come back to life. Dr. Rath shortly hereafter begins his downward slide; he leaves the school, marries the singer, and stays on with his wife's band of performers. The leader of the troupe is a magician. At the wedding party, he is invited to stage a few of his tricks; he pulls eggs out of thin air, or rather, from the couple's noses! They begin to cackle like chickens. This scene is recalled at the climax of the film, when the professor, dressed as a clown, stands on stage in his home town and is assaulted atop his head with eggs at the hand of the magician. The scene, played for laughs, nonetheless mortifies the professor. To add to his shame, he notices Lola Lola embracing another man backstage. Dr. Rath now makes those familiar chicken sounds — this time not jovially, but in rage — and he flees the stage in a terror, presumably attacking the amours in a sequence of violence which is not recounted visually on the screen.

Dr. Rath's association of the real birds — his dead bird with the living bird of his future wife — is an unrealistic hope for better things to come into his barren life. His life is "dead," while the life of Lola Lola seems vibrant and "alive." He mistakes what are appearances for the real satisfaction for which he longs. His "becoming" a dirty bird, a chicken, suggests that he is less than his nature; his choices and the life he leads amidst the performers dehumanize him — he is stripped of the reason which makes him a man and is given the nature of an animal. The audience gets the sense that he is no longer in control when it is obvious that he is ordered around entirely by his wife. She takes away part of his identity when she insists that he should have his beard, in order to increase the sales of those novelty cards (which his students have purchased before). Dr. Rath walks about despondently, bereft of all that constituted his personality and his essential humanity.

Inserted disturbingly among the recurrent bird symbolism is the presence of another clown. He keeps watching the developments in the courting and subsequent adventures of the doctor and his beloved. The clown's face is not the theatrically happy one; rather it is the face of depression, the face of a troubled inner life. When the viewer witnesses the sad decline of Dr. Rath, he perceives that the professor is one in a long line of cuckolds; he is her new "clown," and he will be ushered out just like the one before him.

The professor has mistaken the illusory stage world for the real world. There is a scrim on the stage, which, at the film's end, separates Dr. Rath from his unfaithful wife. The stage is always faithful; the stage is where Lola Lola can sing with all honesty "Falling in Love Again." Yes, the person behind the persona is falling in love again, and she will fall in love again, married or not. It is no wonder she laughs when he proposes to her.

The clubs as a setting are "unreal" to begin with. They are dark and hazy, smelling of tobacco and corruption. The club is the place the professor visits so that he might rid the establishment of his students. Who could have guessed he would be tied to the club for his livelihood? When the spotlight sets upon the professor, the facts of his future are written in stone. But perhaps the doctor's fate is more predictable than even he would think. After all, the maid comments on the smell of tobacco in the apartment; is this the missing link in the professor's personality? Is he inclined secretly to the nightlife of immorality? Does he enjoy scolding his students for their indiscretions because he recognizes the deficiency in himself? This is all psychologically speculative. The film does not offer any clear answers, except that Dr. Rath's nature is unquestionably weak and spurious. Clearly too, he lives under the pressure of appearances.

The audience cannot help, however, but experience a *catharsis*. The purging of the emotions through pity and fear is accomplished cinematically by the audience's identification with the main character. The doctor's story is truly tragic — and in the Aristotelian understanding of the term. Dr. Rath, from all appearances, is a great man of learning who is dedicated to his work and to his students. If he desires a "secret life," the audience is not privy to it, so it is relegated to the realm of conjecture. The viewer has to admit that the doctor is a noble personage who, because of a flaw in character — in this case, falling in love imprudently — undergoes a reversal of fortune, a fall into misery. "Tragedy" in *The Blue Angel* consists in Dr. Rath's fall into a state which is not human. The viewer may identify passionately with the professor because through the entire film the camera has followed this main character and no other. The viewer



does not see through the eyes of Dr. Rath *per se* — as perhaps in *Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* — yet there is a definite subjective leaning taken in the narrative. The plot is unraveled in terms of Dr. Rath; the cinematic angle is not a dispassionate third person storytelling device. The audience sees all the emotion of Dr. Rath, and they feel the full force of the action because of their close association with the trials of the professor.

Josef von Sternberg is meticulous with his details. Sound, editing and language are just as important in creating meaning as symbol, theme and setting. The montage effectively and disconcertingly communicates contrasts between what has already been discussed as a dichotomy between real and imagined time. When the professor wakes with Lola Lola, he is smiling, the bird is singing and the atmosphere is heaven-like. The actress' apartment is flooded with light. The edit takes the viewer to the "real" life of the professor's lodgings. Again, his room is dark. His maid enters his room to discover Dr. Rath missing. He is not where he should be, and the edit declares the fact to be true. Dark and dreary as his other world may be, it is the life which is most real for him; it is that for which he has worked for years. The professor acts childishly, staying out all night — he is no better than the students he scolds.

Sound is almost completely absent from *The Blue Angel*, except for dialogue and the singing in the club. Sound does surface starkly, but not until the very end of the film. After Dr. Rath has been released from his straight-jacket, he goes to his old home. The next scene shows a man in a heavy cloak and dark hat approaching the dwelling; the sound is eerie and it reaches a crescendo as the mysterious man enters the home, finally coming upon the professor. The heavy-handed use of the medium strikes to the bone largely because it has not been used until now in any way which would color the narrative. Sternberg's placement here of this harsh music seems to say that not only has the professor died, but he has also not benefited from any sort of moral revival which could have been the result of his tragic downfall.

One notices, especially owing to the reaction of the students when they discover the liaison between their master and Lola Lola, the particularly jarring use of language. The students, who have been disciplined for the frivolity which they now witness manifest in Dr. Rath, shout "Garbage!" Hypocrisy is garbage, as is the course of action upon which the professor embarks. One curious aspect of the language that arises only as a consequence of providing *The Blue Angel* with English subtitles is the fact that titles are supplied only under the most crucial circumstances of interpretation. There are many scenes where no titles are given at all — for instance, at the wedding party. The audience does need to know that the students are shouting "Garbage!" and not "Bravo!" so the title is given. But most of the time the filmmakers rely upon common human experience to suggest the content of meaning and language in several instances. This is reminiscent of T. S. Eliot's theory of the objective correlative; that is, that a particular pattern of events, a situation, or set of objects bring about a particular correlative emotion, regardless of speech barriers. Thus, on at least one level, the film is universally aimed — and the filmmakers recognize this fact in their execution of the art.

*The Blue Angel*, despite its themes of self-deception and imagined reality, communicates a very real portrait of life. The cinematography deliberately refuses to call attention to itself — refusing thereby to admit, in the course of the seamless narrative, the artifice of the vision. Sternberg wants his viewers to accept his vision as something experienced and universal; self-deception and consequent tragic downfall is something which is not reserved for Germany. The austere silence and the shocking editing that show the reality-dream world dichotomy also contribute largely to the creation of this realistic presentation of the dilemma of tragic misapprehension of appearances. In the end however, Sternberg's particularly grim vision of human possibilities is countered by his representation of the opposite of Dr. Rath's failure. If books and teaching were the way for the professor, no matter how lonely he may have been, to achieve his ultimate dignity as a human, then there is value in the books and in the teaching for him. Sternberg seems to say that, despite the professor's wasting of time, time is always retrievable; it is never too late to regain one's dignity and purpose in the world.



# A Moral Defense of Capitalism

by James W. Bush, III

The idea of communism was developed in the nineteenth century in response to an increasing disillusionment with the capitalist system in the Western World. This was a period in history during which the majority of the population in most civilized countries belonged to a working class exploited by a minority who owned and operated the means of production. The radical response to the harsh and cruel conditions imposed on the populous surfaced in the ideology of communism proposed by Karl Marx in his infamous *Communist Manifesto*. Marx advocated and ultimately incited rebellion as the solution to the class oppression. However, a more realistic and positive approach came in the form of a papal encyclical by Pope Leo XIII. Known as *Rerum Novarum* or *On the Condition of the Working Classes*, it supported capitalism, but called for certain improvements.

In the opening line of *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx claimed that “[t]he history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (9). He believed that history would bring inevitable class conflict between the proletariat workers and the bourgeois capitalists, leading to the eventual destruction of capitalism. Marx developed his theories of exploitation and of alienation, which explained the sole cause of the suffering of the working class as the drive of the capitalists to attain greater material wealth by increasing and revolutionizing production. Marx recognized that men, women, and children were exploited by being forced to work long hours at difficult, slave-like jobs for meager subsistence-level wages. In explaining their alienation, Marx observed that “owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character and consequently, all charm for the workman” (16).

Marx went on to accuse the capitalists of centralizing the means of production, “concentrating property in a few hands,” and creating a national government and system of laws to protect themselves and exploit the workers” (13). Given this character, Marx believed that capitalism was self-destructive, for the exploitative means of production that it had developed would become the uniting force for a rebellious working class: “Not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons, the modern working class, the proletarians” (15). Thus, if pushed hard enough, the Communist workers would rebel, overthrowing the capitalists and abolishing private property, since “property is based on the antagonism of capital and wage-labor” and is symbolic of the capitalists’ control of the workers (23).

In his 1891 encyclical, *On the Condition of the Working Classes*, Pope Leo XIII recognized, as did Marx, the exploitation of the masses by a small class of wealthy and often inhumane employers. Unlike Marx, however, Pope Leo did not believe that socialism or communism offered a viable solution to the atrocities associated with the capitalist system. He stated that doing away with private property would actually do more harm than good for the workers. Pope Leo maintained that man by nature has the right to possess private property, and since the worker supplies his labor in return for wages, he has the right to dispose of them freely. Pope Leo warned, “In abolishing the freedom to dispose of wages [the socialists] take away from [the workers] by this very act the hope and the opportunity of increasing their property” (8). Also unlike Marx, Leo XIII foresaw that class conflict was not necessary: “If the productive activity of the multitude can be stimulated by the hope of acquiring some property in land, . . . one class will become neighbor to the other” (41). He further emphasized that the middle class does not truly look upon the poor with hostile intent, and should not therefore be accused of doing so. Leo XIII did acknowledge and condemn the exploitation of workers, but he insisted that a solution could be found if labor and capital would cooperate. Because the capitalists need the workers, and the workers need the capitalists, each should do their part to foster a harmonious relationship. The workers should perform to the best of their ability, while the employers should respect their dignity (18-19, 35).

Marx developed a logical and intelligent argument using simple language and very selective historical examples to support his interpretation. However, his writing was actually a reaction to the social injustice of the period in which he lived and not a solution to what he referred to as a history of class conflicts. For this reason, *The Communist Manifesto* did not present a solution to the problems in capitalist society in the nineteenth century. Marx incited rebellion against a system that he believed imposed suffering on the masses. He proposed a classless, propertyless society instead in which each man would work according to his ability and receive according to his need. Yet he did not address how order could be maintained in such a society. Nor did he deal with such factors as jealousy that is inherent in all men.

Pope Leo XIII acknowledged the suffering and injustice of this period in history, but rather than creating a new social order, he suggested positive ways of improving the existing system. He stated, in opposition to Marx, that “in civil society



the lowest cannot be made equal [in wealth] with the highest”(16). He also argued that there is no reason for there to be conflict between classes if the employers pay fair wages, treat the workers with respect, and allow them the opportunity to acquire private property. He insisted that no man should be exploited or treated as a mere slave, for this opposes his God-given dignity. In Leo XIII’s view, a reformed capitalist society is better than a communist society because it provides the incentive for one’s own livelihood and it encourages individualism, unlike the “uniform wretchedness and meanness of communism” (15).

Capitalism and communism, as characterized by Marx and Pope Leo XIII, are placed at opposite ends of the socio-economic spectrum. Marx perceived capitalism to be evil and destructive, yet he promoted a violent rebellion to achieve a harmonious and classless society in which all would somehow become completely equal in wealth. He proposed a society in which there would be no incentive to work because one’s needs would be fulfilled anyway. Pope Leo XIII, in contrast, realized the problems with Marx’s communism and saw it as a far greater evil than capitalism. He argued convincingly that a reformed capitalist society which respects the dignity of humanity — by, for example, offering fair wages, good working conditions, and equal opportunity — is what the world actually needs.

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