

Wolfe's Theology

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Jim Jordan — 28 Jan 2000, 10:05

At 06:39 PM 1/24/00 -0500, you wrote:

BLUE seems to deal with this in a central way, as well. I think I've said before that Wolfe seems to have a strong similarity with Dante's exploration in The Divine Comedy (adopted from St. Thomas, of course)--that only where there is love can there be real moral pain or evil--at the root of the worst things lies a perversion or erroneous hierarchy of loves--for Dante, and, I suspect Wolfe, a hierarchy that mistakes some lesser object for God and inverts the ladder of love into a parodic downward spiral. Thus the insistence that although Abaia/Erebus etc. can thwart the Increate to the extent that they violate, presumably, the inherent good of their own natures, they cannot fail to serve also as unwilling and angry agents of Providence--another theme in the philosophies I'm guessing Wolfe is most comfortable with (anyway, the ones Chesterton's POV is based upon*).

There's no need to guess about this. It is very clear in "The Detective of Dreams" that the Dreammaster has "other servants" who don't like Him but who do His bidding by being allowed to do what they want to do. But none of this thwarts the Increate; Emery's statement to his stepdaughter about why it is important not to lie gives Wolfe's opinion (which of course is just plain old orthodox, non-manichaeian Christianity): Lies can't hurt God; they can only hurt us, which is why God does not want us to do it. Abaia et al. ultimately only "thwart" themselves when they "kick against the pricks" (which is how Jesus explained Saul-Paul's attacks against Him).

* for a (very Christian-biased, of course) treatment of the parts of Aquinas/ Augustine/Anselm/Aristotle and other "A"-list philosophers who seem to have an influence on Wolfe, I suggest Etienne Gilson's *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, especially as Wolfe doesn't claim to have read them all in the original Latin/Greek or anything.

Wolfe told me that when he married and took classes to become a Roman Catholic, he read Aquinas. Given how he does not seem to forget anything, I think it is a safe bet that his religious thinking is largely shaped by Thomas, who of course mediates Augustine and Anselm. Then there's Chesterton, of course. But for straight theology, looking at Aquinas is a safe bet as regards Wolfe.

Nutria