

TBOTSS and colonialism

The Urth list — 46 messages, 10 voices, 21 May 2002

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Adam Stephanides — 21 May 2002, 02:15

David Duffy's recent reference to TBOTSS in connection with 5HC made me realize that TBOTSS is, among other things, about colonization, though I haven't really thought of it that way. But when I look at the book in those terms, what I see is disturbing, at least to me.

Unlike the colonists of 5HC, the colonists on Blue aren't displacing anybody, since the Neighbors have left and the inhumis live on Green. Rather, it is the inhumis who savagely and without provocation assault the colonists, killing and enslaving them. Silkhorn's attempt to treat the inhumis as human beings, rather than automatically killing them as is the colonists' usual practice, ends in complete failure. Jahlee, whom he treats with the most kindness, treacherously tries to murder Nettle; and Juganu, another inhumis whom Silkhorn had treated as human, repays him by attacking his son's wedding. (Though Silkhorn had goaded Juganu into attacking him, that Juganu would kill hundreds of innocents to hit back at Silkhorn indicates his savagery.) To top it off, we learn that the inhumis don't have souls of their own, just souls they've stolen from humans, so it is presumably alright to exterminate them or reduce them to animality. In short, the portrayal of the inhumis seems nothing less than an apologia for genocide. I would like to think that Wolfe actually hopes for peaceful relations between the humans and inhumis, but into the books don't support this reading.

Don't get me wrong: I'm not asserting that Wolfe is a racist in real life, or that he supports the mistreatment, much less genocide, of any actual group. (Though his post-9/11 statements do give me pause.) But the inhumis must play such a large role for a reason; and, Wolfe being Wolfe, it presumably isn't just to give Horn monsters to fight. If, as I think, the purpose of the inhumis being there isn't to teach us tolerance, what is Wolfe's purpose?

--Adam

Andy Robertson — 21 May 2002, 07:51 · follows Adam Stephanides

----- Original Message -----

From: "Adam Stephanides" <adamsteph at earthlink.net>

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But there is a simple point to understand here.

Contemporary western morality enforces a deeply unreal hierarchy of virtue based on class, gender, and race. It also enforces a doublethink, whereby the privileged and favored races, gender and classes are labelled as "oppressed".

Non-whites are morally superior to whites, women to men, and the poor to the rich.

Wolfe, you may easily note, does *not* submit to this group ethnomasochism.

He is not any sort of racist, but the PC cues of race, gender, and class are rarely obeyed.

This, I believe, is a conscious policy on Wolfe's part. He knows what he is doing.

--- *** ---

Thus, for example, the (moral and physical) ubermensch Silk is a blond Aryan type; most of the oppressed and suffering in Wolfe's books are poor whites; the women warriors of whatisname are a bunch of bitches, and so on.

Read some of Wolfe's stories with race, class and gender in mind. The messages are very clear.

--- *** ---

Now,

The astonishing thing to me, really, is that you should find Wolfe's writings on the subject of interspecies conflict odd.

The inhumans are *not* another human race.

Why the hell *should* an alien species like the inhumans be peacefully inclined towards humanity?

Why should humanity not strive to exterminate its enemies?

It is a completely real picture of the natural processes of evolutionary rivalry and conflict.

--- *** ---

I am irresistibly reminded of another very wise writer, Cordwainer Smith.

The message of his Underpeople stories was that *everything that seems human is human*.

The message of the inhumans may be *no they are not*

--- *** ---

Yet I am not sure of this.

The inhumis are **not** human, but they may indeed represent the human "other".

And the attempt to redeem them by love may be the greatest mistake humanity will ever make. Or it may be the only way to solve the problem.

Silk/Horn repeatedly says it is. Who knows if he is right? I suspect Wolfe himself could not tell you.

--- *** ---

Now let's really, really, stir this one up.

Inhumis = jews?

hartshorn

Alice K. Turner — 21 May 2002, 09:12 · follows Andy Robertson

Adam wrote:

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Don't get me wrong: I'm not asserting that Wolfe is a racist in real life, or that he supports the mistreatment, much less genocide, of any actual group. (Though his post-9/11 statements do give me pause.) But the inhumis must play such a large role for a reason; and, Wolfe being Wolfe, it presumably isn't just to give Horn monsters to fight. If, as I think, the purpose of the inhumis being there isn't to teach us tolerance, what is Wolfe's purpose?

You mustn't forget that the inhumis are demons, quite explicitly. This is on my mind because I've just been reading a book called *-Demon Lovers-* about the accusations of sex with devils during the Renaissance witchhunts. So you can't simply look at it as a colonial novel (I have a weakness for colonial novels, btw). There's the whole Catholic mythology about spirits. That is why I have made rather a point of reminding you all that Wolfe has emphasized the resemblance of the inhumis (unhumans) to demons and the Neighbors to cherubim. And also emphasized man's inhumanity to man in the way that the colonists behave to each other--wretchedly, generally. It is a didactic novel, to be sure, and very broadly sketched. I was offended by Wolfe's treatment of Jahlee on first reading (and the crude melodrama of the writing) but in the strict Catholic reading you can't get away from the fact that a demon is a demon and will revert to type. (Origen, who took the thoughtful and humane position that all of God's creatures could eventually be saved, was anathematized over and over again as a heretic.) The inhumis yearn to be human (that's what Origen said too) but they cannot become human except in illusion in this book, no matter how kindly they are treated. So your final question is answered by Wolfe's irony. Through Horn's (and Wolfe's) relations with Fava, Krait and Jahlee (by far my favorite characters in the book) we grow affectionate toward them. But they cannot help their natures, as the scorpion said to the frog as both were dying.

-alga

Jerry Friedman — 21 May 2002, 22:26 · follows Alice K. Turner

--- Andy Robertson <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk> wrote:

----- Original Message -----

From: "Adam Stephanides" <adamsteph at earthlink.net>

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But there is a simple point to understand here.

Contemporary western morality enforces a deeply unreal hierarchy of virtue based on class, gender, and race. It also enforces a doublethink, whereby the privileged and favored races, gender and classes are labelled as "oppressed".

Non-whites are morally superior to whites, women to men, and the poor to the rich.

I think there's some truth to this last; such prejudices do exist, though they're hardly "enforced"--I've heard lots of people express the opposite prejudices (especially against women), and nothing happened to them.

However, you're getting carried away when you call non-whites, women, and the poor "privileged" and "favored". True, the poor get welfare and the rich don't. This probably more than makes up for the fact that as Anatole France said (more or less), the law in its majesty forbids both the rich and the poor to sleep under bridges. It nowhere near compensates for the enormous, immense disadvantages of being poor. I'm not talking about getting tickets to the opera; I'm talking about things from the way you're treated by the police and courts to having to pay to get your paltry paycheck cashed. The same applies to race. As far as gender goes, I've heard some interesting statistics about salaries and levels of advancement, but I don't know the methods used to compile them.

Wolfe, you may easily note, does *not* submit to this group ethnomasochism.

He is not any sort of racist, but the PC cues of race, gender, and class are rarely obeyed.

This, I believe, is a conscious policy on Wolfe's part. He knows what he is doing.

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Read some of Wolfe's stories with race, class and gender in mind. The messages are very clear.

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The astonishing thing to me, really, is that you should find Wolfe's writings on the subject of interspecies conflict odd.

The inhumani are **not** another human race.

Why the hell **should** an alien species like the inhumani be peacefully inclined towards humanity?

Why should humanity not strive to exterminate its enemies?

It is a completely real picture of the natural processes of evolutionary rivalry and conflict.

Well, unprecedented with regard to humanity. We've extirpated a number of species, but only in one case (the smallpox virus, if you want to consider it a living organism) because it was our enemy.

Anyway, one reason humanity on Blue and Green shouldn't strive to exterminate the inhumani is that humanity is in large part responsible for the way the inhumani act. This leads to the ambiguity you mention below. Another reason may be that the inhumani weren't hurting anybody on Green after the Neighbors left and before humans showed up--unless the speculation is correct that the inhumani were involved in bringing the Whorl to their system.

--- *** ---

I am irresistibly reminded of another very wise writer, Cordwainer Smith.

The message of his Underpeople stories was that **everything that seems human is human**.

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Yet I am not sure of this.

The inhumani are **not** human, but they may indeed represent the human "other".

And the attempt to redeem them by love may be the greatest mistake humanity will ever make. Or it may be the only way to solve the problem.

Silk/Horn repeatedly says it is. Who knows if he is right? I suspect Wolfe himself could not tell you.

--- *** ---

Now let's really, really, stir this one up.

Inhumi = jews?

In what way? Wolfe can't mean that Jews have to drink the blood of Christians (literally or metaphorically) to live, or that our souls are copies of Christians'. He can't mean that the only two choices for dealing with us are Christian love and genocide--the U.S., for instance, hasn't tried either. Possibly that, in the words of Auden, "those to whom evil is done/ do evil in return"? That applies to a lot of groups; Auden was talking about the Nazis.

Jerry Friedman

Andy Robertson — 22 May 2002, 06:49 · follows Jerry Friedman

----- Original Message -----

From: "Jerry Friedman" <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com>

The same applies to race. As far as gender goes, I've heard some interesting statistics about salaries and levels of advancement, but I don't know the methods used to compile them.

I refer to depictions of race and gender in literature and the media, not real life. I repeat that you should read Wolfe with an eye to these things.

Anyway, one reason humanity on Blue and Green shouldn't strive to exterminate the inhumi is that humanity is in large part responsible for the way the inhumi act.

No. And this is part of the ambiguity. Humanity is "responsible" in the sense that the inhumi get their patterns of behaviour from humans, but humanity is not "reponsible" for the fact that the inhumi are psychic and physical parasites and that this is how the inhumi must and do act.

Consciously, the inhumi may even be friendly: but their genetic drives are completely counter to human welfare, and when it comes to the pinch the genetic drive is what counts.

As Alice said, they are demons, and remain demons *even if they believe they are human and try to act human*.

The basic message is, or at least seems to be, the primacy of genetic drives over cultural conditioning.

But one could certainly answer that this is just the latest of a series of ambiguous conclusions Wolfe comes to, and as I said I am not sure that he knows the true, final, answer himself.

. Another reason may be that the inhumi weren't hurting anybody on Green after the Neighbors left and before humans showed up--unless the speculation is correct that the inhumi were involved in bringing the _Whorl_ to their system.

The inhumi don't *have* to come to blue and prey on humans.

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"those to whom evil is done/ do evil in return"? That applies to a lot of groups; Auden was talking about the Nazis.

As you very well know the blood libel **did** say that jews drank the blood of christians, and jews have been pictured as evil superintelligent behind-the-scenes manipulators, pretending to be "human" but actually damned demons (because they killed christ) very much like Quetzal, for generations.

I'm not going to push this one too hard, but I do think there is some input here, not from real jews, but from what you might call the catholic legendary picture of jews.

hartshorn

Adam Stephanides — 22 May 2002, 15:05 · follows Andy Robertson

on 5/21/02 2:51 AM, Andy Robertson at andyvrobertson at clara.co.uk wrote:

(I'll refrain from comment upon hartshorn's excursus into real-world politics.)

The astonishing thing to me, really, is that you should find Wolfe's writings on the subject of interspecies conflict odd.

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I don't deny that within the fictional situation that Wolfe has set up, the colonists are justified in killing the inhumani. But, as I said, Wolfe must have had a reason for giving the inhumani such a large role, and presumably it wasn't to tell us what humanity should do if it ever does come across a race of shape-shifting alien vampires. What Wolfe is essentially doing is biologizing evil, which is a dangerous thing to do whatever one's conscious intentions. And depicting the relations between groups in terms of "evolutionary rivalry and conflict" to the death is also dangerous, given this century's history.

Now let's really, really, stir this one up.

Inhumani = jews?

Actually, if the inhumani are indeed modelled upon any real-life group, my guess would be the Palestinians, given Wolfe's post-9/11 remarks that the U.S. should give Israel a free hand, and given the Exodus theme in TBOTLS.

And alga wrote:

You mustn't forget that the inhumani are demons, quite explicitly. This is on my mind because I've just been reading a book called -Demon Lovers- about the accusations of sex with devils during the Renaissance witchhunts. So you can't simply look at it as a colonial novel (I have a weakness for colonial novels, btw).

[snip]

I was offended by Wolfe's treatment of Jahlee on first reading (and the crude melodrama of the

writing) but in the strict Catholic reading you can't get away from the fact that a demon is a demon and will revert to type. (Origen, who took the thoughtful and humane position that all of God's creatures could eventually be saved, was anathematized over and over again as a heretic.) The inhumis yearn to be human (that's what Origen said too) but they cannot become human except in illusion in this book, no matter how kindly they are treated. So your final question is answered by Wolfe's irony. Through Horn's (and Wolfe's) relations with Fava, Krait and Jahlee (by far my favorite characters in the book) we grow affectionate toward them. But they cannot help their natures, as the scorpion said to the frog as both were dying.

Yes, I can see the resemblance of the inhumis to demons. But they are also an indigenous species on a colonized planet, whether Wolfe intended to write a colonial novel or not (and I agree it doesn't read like one). And again, it seems quite dangerous to me to depict what is, in effect, a race as compelled by its nature to be evil.

Once again, I am not claiming that Wolfe himself is racist, or intends to promote racism, or that reading TBOTSS would make someone a racist. But I am saying that the philosophy Wolfe's portrayal of the inhumis seems intended to convey is one that can easily, and has in the past, fostered racism, whatever Wolfe's intentions.

--Adam

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 22 May 2002, 15:20 · follows Adam Stephanides

I'm not going to push this one too hard, but I do think there is some input here, not from real jews, but from what you might call the catholic legendary picture of jews.

I feel obliged to protest the use of the term "catholic" in this context ... it isn't that the Roman church didn't do more than its share of persecution of Jews, but that other churches (including the Orthodox churches and many of the early Protestant churches) were equally guilty of this, and that some Protestant sects to this day teach that the Jews are "Christ-killers" when the Catholic church has clearly renounced such teachings. So my protest is not against the basic idea, only the singling out of Catholicism.

--Dan'l

tom — 22 May 2002, 16:06 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Adam Stephanides writes:

on 5/21/02 2:51 AM, Andy Robertson at andywrobertson at clara.co.uk wrote:

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The Exodus theme fits very well, IMHO. We have basically decent colonists/Jews on one side, and completely evil inhumis/Canaanites on the other. The story then becomes the answer to "Why didn't the Jews love their neighbors during the conquest of the Holy Land?".

Silk becomes a Moses figure. The Neighbors are the giants on the Earth in previous days. Pas becomes (against his will) an aspect of Yahweh. Settlers on Green become the Jews who tried to

live with the Canaanites.

It's a nasty mapping, but has precedent in Tolkien's orcs = Eastern Europeans parallel.

Andy Robertson — 22 May 2002, 17:30 · follows tom

----- Original Message -----

From: "Adam Stephanides" <adamsteph at earthlink.net>

(I'll refrain from comment upon hartshorn's excursus into real-world politics.)

Comment freely, but only where relevant to Wolfe's work

What Wolfe is essentially doing is biologizing evil, which is a dangerous thing to do whatever one's conscious intentions.

Wolfe is not biologising *human* evil. If he did I would read with interest, mind you. But that is not relevant here. He is not talking about a different human race, but a different species.

And depicting the relations between groups in terms of "evolutionary rivalry and conflict" to the death is also dangerous, given this century's history.

A good writer writes about reality, not avoiding what is "dangerous".

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Actually, if the inhumi are indeed modelled upon any real-life group, my guess would be the Palestinians, given Wolfe's post-9/11 remarks that the U.S. should give Israel a free hand, and given the Exodus theme in TBOTLS.

I doubt it, given the m.o. of the Inhumi. They are not a race of peasants being displaced, but rather a race of cunning psychic manipulators and predators.

I do not of course imagine Wolfe has any thought of drawing an analogy with real-life jews, but it does seem to me that there is something of the

legendary picture of the Jew in the inhumi. Shylock. Wormtongue. The evil counciler.

Yes, I can see the resemblance of the inhumi to demons. But they are also an indigenous species on a colonized planet, whether Wolfe intended to write a colonial novel or not (and I agree it doesn't read like one). And again, it seems quite dangerous to me to depict what is, in effect, a race as compelled by its nature to be evil.

The whole point of Wolfe's writing *is* to depict such a race, and then give it the agony of having a human soul and *perceiving* that evil *but still not being able to renounce it*.

Once again, I am not claiming that Wolfe himself is racist, or intends to promote racism, or that reading TBOTSS would make someone a racist. But I am saying that the philosophy Wolfe's portrayal of the inhumi seems intended to convey is one that can easily, and has in the past, fostered racism, whatever Wolfe's intentions.

Unquestionably Wolfe does not believe that the differences between human and Inhumans can be erased by any amount of goodwill or environmental manipulation. They are genetic and unchangeable by any human power.

The whole point of the book is to show Silk, a saint, attempt this redemption *and fail*.

--- *** ---

Look, fiddle-faddle PC about "racism" is far, far, below understanding what Wolfe is attempting.

The whole moral point is that there *is* a vast biological difference.

Love may perhaps redeem the most evil human being.

But in the Lupiverse love must try to redeem something far worse - an inhuman.

If the inhumans were not intrinsically evil, intrinsically far worse than the worst human being, **this would have no meaning at all**.

There is this attempt to extend the matrix of human love to the inhumans, and there is its failure.

If the inhumans were just human beings in drag, neither the attempt nor its failure would have any special meaning at all.

Surely, surely, you must see this?

hartshorn

Alice K. Turner — 23 May 2002, 00:36 · follows Andy Robertson

From hartshorn:

(a lot snipped)

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Surely, surely, you must see this?

Surely, surely, I do. And I'm even offended at the attempt to drag the Jews into this. Wolfe, I think, would hit the ceiling at such a ham(heh!)fisted interpretation. Look, we're talking spiritual here, and on some level it isn't too complex. I was disappointed that no one complimented my Jonas-like invocation of the scorpion and the frog, but that in the end is the inhumani-human situation. Even Quetzal--remember him?-- who was perhaps as much of an inhumani saint as Silk a human one--could not help his nature. Fava preys on granny, though she'd prefer not to.

The book (I mean, of course, the three books) is about many other things, about parents and children, about the divided soul, but most of all, I maintain, it is about a pilgrim's progress, and the allusion is entirely intentional. There are devils and angels in this book. (I prefer to call them demons and cherubim, but I'm not getting much of a response.) There is a flawed and divided human (or two) trying to cope rather biblically at times, as when he becomes Solomon, harem and all. Even the awful racial caricatures, that we have all deplored a bit, are a way of saying: look, it's all of us; we're in it together. The races of the earth, the angels, the demons, the terribly troubled heroes. He's laying a simplistic world out in rather broad terms and sending his pilgrim(s) through it.

The interesting point, to me, is whether the inhumani can really be considered "evil." In a debate, I'd enjoy taking the side that they are not. And that Wolfe shows the humans, who do not have their needs and nature, as more evil.

-alga

Michael Straight — 23 May 2002, 16:20 · follows Alice K. Turner

On Wed, 22 May 2002, Alice K. Turner wrote:

The interesting point, to me, is whether the inhumani can really be considered "evil." In a debate, I'd enjoy taking the side that they are not. And that Wolfe shows the humans, who do not have their needs and nature, as more evil.

At the least, I'd say the inhumani are evil in the sense that a thing might be called evil (atom bombs, torture devices, pornographic movies, crack cocaine, a computer virus). That is, something that harms people or does evil because of way it was made.

On the other hand, I think it's implied that the inhumani are as much persons as chemo. Their souls may be derivative, but they are real, and they seem to be capable of making real choices to do good or evil. I think their nature makes it very difficult to do good, but not impossible. Is Wolfe's view of humanity much different? If the book seems to imply that the inhumani are incapable of redemption, isn't it only to the extent that human society is incapable of redemption?

-Rostrum

Michael Andre-Driussi — 23 May 2002, 19:10 · follows Michael Straight

Interesting thread.

In genre terms, it seems to me that Gene Wolfe is working off of (or in the same vein as) Blish's A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, but keeping to that work's strong first part (with attendant ambiguities) and avoiding the less thrilling final part (with its total and final resolution).

Back to the Neighbors. It is easy for us to interpret the Neighbors as being a Vingean "transcendent" species, a group who followed the technological curve to the point of exiting the material plane of existence. But they might not have actually gone that far--we don't really know.

So the hand-off of Blue to the humans is less the sale of Manhattan by American Indians for some beads than it is the gift of, say, Africa, to humanity from all the pre-homo sapiens sapiens humanoids.

But remind me what the inhumani were to the Neighbors. Aside from being a pain--they were a bother, weren't they?

In any event, the inhumani represent "discarded" or "left behind" creatures, whether they be barnyard animals or uplifted critters or what-have-you. Yet, iirc, the Neighbors' current attitude towards inhumani is that they are the hammer (or anvil, or both) that made the Neighbors what they are and as such will also spur the humans on. The Neighbors didn't eradicate the inhumani, clearly, although they may have fenced them in.

=mantis=

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Andy Robertson — 31 May 2002, 20:31 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

----- Original Message -----

From: "Alice K. Turner" <aturner6 at nyc.rr.com>
From hartshorn:

(a lot snipped)

If the inhumani were just human beings in drag, neither the attempt nor its failure would have any special meaning at all.

Surely, surely, you must see this?

Surely, surely, I do.

Well, I'm glad you do at least.

hartshorn

Michael Straight — 23 May 2002, 19:52 · follows Andy Robertson

On Thu, 23 May 2002, Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

But remind me what the inhumani were to the Neighbors. Aside from being a pain--they were a bother, weren't they?

One of the Neighbors (or maybe it was Silkhorn) said that the Neighbors made the Inhumani their slaves, and thereby brought their own ruin.

I think one of the temptations Silkhorn rejects is to do the same thing. He seems to be able to exert some kind of influence over the inhumani. (By loving them?) Is it possible he could have

enslaved the inhum, and in doing so made himself a monster, and in doing so made them even more monstrous? Is that why he provokes Junangu into attacking him? Lest he and the other inhum fall under whatever spell he's woven over Jahlee?

-Rostrum

Adam Stephanides — 24 May 2002, 14:30 · follows Michael Straight

on 5/22/02 12:30 PM, Andy Robertson at andywrobertson at clara.co.uk wrote:

----- Original Message -----

From: "Adam Stephanides" <adamsteph at earthlink.net>

And depicting the relations between groups in terms of "evolutionary rivalry and conflict" to the death is also dangerous, given this century's history.

A good writer writes about reality, not avoiding what is "dangerous".

To be sure. I don't regard that view of relations between groups to be "reality," though.

Actually, if the inhum are indeed modelled upon any real-life group, my guess would be the Palestinians, given Wolfe's post-9/11 remarks that the U.S. should give Israel a free hand, and given the Exodus theme in TBOTLS.

I doubt it, given the m.o. of the Inhum. They are not a race of peasants being displaced, but rather a race of cunning psychic manipulators and predators.

But according to some historians (e. g. Joan Peters), the Palestinians were not displaced peasants, but migrants attracted to a virtually empty land by the Zionists' enterprise, who later falsely claimed to have lived there for centuries in order to discredit Israel. I do not endorse this account (but I don't think this list is the place to discuss it).

I do not of course imagine Wolfe has any thought of drawing an analogy with real-life jews, but it does seem to me that there is something of the *legendary* picture of the Jew in the inhum. Shylock. Wormtongue. The evil councillor.

I don't see much of the evil councillor about the inhum. Horn is the only human ruler we see who tolerates them, and he doesn't take counsel from them. As for the other resemblances between the inhum and the anti-Semitic picture of Jews, I think they're byproducts of the fact that the inhum are vampires.

If the inhum were just human beings in drag, neither the attempt nor its failure would have any special meaning at all.

Surely, surely, you must see this?

Surely, surely, I don't. In fact, to me the opposite seems truer to me. If the inhum are not intended to have anything to do with humans (not literally, of course, but metaphorically) -- if the point is just that some hypothetical alien species, or demons, are unredeemable -- then that whole aspect of the book becomes just an abstract theological exercise.

On reconsideration, though, I think I oversimplified what Wolfe was doing with the inhum. The inhum aren't evil by nature; they aren't anything by nature except animals. They are cruel to humans only because humans are cruel to each other, as Silkhorn says explicitly more than once. Certainly their betrayals of Horn reflect Horn's own behavior. Horn betrayed Nettle by sleeping with Jahlee; Jahlee tried to kill Nettle to possess Horn. As for Juganu, Horn treated him like a thing in trying to goad him to murder him; Juganu can be seen as, consciously or not, repaying this contempt.

So the inhumans aren't unredeemable because evil is in their genes. They're unredeemable because, in a sense, there's nothing to redeem. They have no souls of their own, just souls they've stolen from humans. If they were ever converted to being good, they would cease to prey on humans, and in a generation they would be reduced to animals again.

Likewise, I'd also question the identification of inhumans with demons. The inhumans aren't fallen angels but fallen beasts, so to speak. The original "sin" is not theirs, but that of the Neighbors in travelling to Green and enslaving them.

I still think the book has a message of "fight rather than accommodate." But it's not pro-colonialism. Rather, it depicts colonization as destructive to the colonizer as well as the colonized.

--Adam

matthew.malthouse — 24 May 2002, 15:01 · follows Adam Stephanides

On 23/05/2002 17:20:17 Michael Straight wrote:

On Wed, 22 May 2002, Alice K. Turner wrote:

The interesting point, to me, is whether the inhumans can really be considered

"evil." In a debate, I'd enjoy taking the side that they are not. And that

Wolfe shows the humans, who do not have their needs and nature, as more evil.

At the least, I'd say the inhumans are evil in the sense that a thing might be called evil (atom bombs, torture devices, pornographic movies, crack cocaine, a computer virus). That is, something that harms people or does evil because of way it was made.

I don't agree with you. This suggests that evil can be inherent in an object. I don't believe that it can: evil may be in the intent of those who created such things or those who employ them but not in the inanimate and unaware.

The inhumans as animals should not be capable of evil. It's only after acquiring the ability to make moral judgements that evil becomes possible.

That might also raise the question of whether it is justifiable to judge inhumans in *human* moral terms. But since their ability to make choices is acquired *from* humans then human moral terms are the only ones applicable.

In this they differ from such as the Neighbours who presumably would have a moral framework native to themselves (although I see little to illustrate it being different from the human).

On the other hand, I think it's implied that the inhumans are as much persons

as chemicals. Their souls may be derivative, but they are real, and they seem

to be capable of making real choices to do good or evil. I think their nature makes it very difficult to do good, but not impossible. Is

Wolfe's

view of humanity much different? If the book seems to imply that the inhumans are incapable of redemption, isn't it only to the extent that human

society is incapable of redemption?

If the inhumans have souls would it not be due to the actions of their parents?

Having souls they're capable of "evil", and presumably similarly capable of redemption. But unlike humans the consequences are immediate and deleterious. It's like original sin with added catch 22.

Also there's another proximity - each inhuman/inhuman's ability to make moral choices is the result of its progenitor's actions - as if each generation were Cain and Abel - and their actions involve the next. To refrain from the "evil" of attacking humans would be to reduce their offspring, would that not be another evil?

So I would suggest that the inhuman would be capable of redemption but are trapped into circumstances where they can neither attain it nor would it benefit them if they did.

Matthew

Jerry Friedman — 24 May 2002, 15:52 · follows matthew.malthouse

--- Andy Robertson <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk> wrote:

----- Original Message -----

From: "Jerry Friedman" <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com>

The same applies to race. As far as gender goes, I've heard some interesting statistics about salaries and levels of advancement, but I don't know the methods used to compile them.

I refer to depictions of race and gender in literature and the media, not real life. I repeat that you should read Wolfe with an eye to these things.

Sorry, I thought you were talking about real life. I think you're right that Wolfe tries to avoid political correctness. (On the other hand, maybe it was PC of him to admit, in TBotSS, that there might be people of color in the distant future!)

Anyway, one reason humanity on Blue and Green shouldn't strive to exterminate the inhumans is that humanity is in large part responsible for the way the inhumans act.

No. And this is part of the ambiguity. Humanity is "responsible" in the sense that the inhumans get their patterns of behaviour from humans, but humanity is not "responsible" for the fact that the inhumans are psychic and physical parasites and that this is how the inhumans must and do act.

True, but the inhumans aren't responsible for that either.

Consciously, the inhumans may even be friendly: but their genetic drives are completely counter to human welfare, and when it comes to the pinch the genetic drive is what counts.

As Alice said, they are demons, and remain demons *even if they believe they are human and try to act human*.

What about Krait?

The basic message is, or at least seems to be, the primacy of genetic drives over cultural conditioning.

But one could certainly answer that this is just the latest of a series of ambiguous conclusions Wolfe comes to, and as I said I am not sure that he knows the true, final, answer himself.

Well, then, we don't disagree too much.

. Another reason may be that the inhumis weren't hurting anybody on Green after the Neighbors left and before humans showed up--unless the speculation is correct that the inhumis were involved in bringing the _Whorl_ to their system.

The inhumis don't *have* to come to blue and prey on humans.

You just got done saying that they do.

Anyway, there are humans on Green as well.

Now let's really, really, stir this one up.

Inhumis = jews?

In what way? Wolfe can't mean that Jews have to drink the blood of Christians (literally or metaphorically) to live, or that our souls are copies of Christians'. He can't mean that the only two choices for dealing with us are Christian love and genocide--the U.S., for instance, hasn't tried either. Possibly that, in the words of Auden, "those to whom evil is done/ do evil in return"? That applies to a lot of groups; Auden was talking about the Nazis.

As you very well know the blood libel *did* say that jews drank the blood of christians, and jews have been pictured as evil superintelligent behind-the-scenes manipulators, pretending to be "human" but actually damned demons (because they killed christ) very much like Quetzal, for generations.

I'm not going to push this one too hard, but I do think there is some input here, not from real jews, but from what you might call the catholic legendary picture of jews.

Sorry, again I thought you were talking about reality. Anyway, all you're going to get here is "some input", and there may be some, but I agree with Alga and others that there's more input from legends of demons and vampires who could appear to be human.

Jerry Friedman

Andy Robertson — 01 Jun 2002, 19:37 · follows Jerry Friedman

----- Original Message -----

From: "Adam Stephanides" <adamsteph at earthlink.net>

From: "Adam Stephanides" <adamsteph at earthlink.net>

And depicting the relations between groups in terms of "evolutionary rivalry and conflict" to the death is also dangerous,

given
this century's history.

A good writer writes about reality, not avoiding what is "dangerous".

To be sure. I don't regard that view of relations between groups to be
"reality," though.

It is not the character of Reality to be other than Dangerous.

Rather, the Real presents us with a series of Tests, each more unbearable than the one before.

Wolfe is writing about one of these Tests.

Like all real tests, it is a moral one.

It is the question of how you behave when you have the ability - thrust upon you by the horribly
cruel machinery of Evolution - to create a living soul within the body of a bloodsucking,
predatory, reptile: to create a thing that then screams and weeps sincere psychic tears as it
continues to prey on and kill human beings.

It is not a test with an easy answer.

It seems to me that you are hopelessly thrall to the comfortable Star Trek view of the universe,
and the Other within it.

hartshorn

Andy Robertson — 01 Jun 2002, 19:49 · follows Andy Robertson

----- Original Message -----

From: "Jerry Friedman" <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com>

No. And this is part of the ambiguity. Humanity is "responsible" in
the
sense that the inhumani get their patterns of behaviour from humans, but
humanity is not "reponsible" for the fact that the inhumani are psychic
and
physical parasites and that this is how the inhumani must and do act.

True, but the inhumani aren't responsible for that either.

I think this is a meaningless distinction. Their minds are not responsible for it. But the
mind/body duality, even if it has some truth for humans, has no meaning for an Inhumani.

Their minds *right down to their deepest souls* are no more than a genetic ghost conjured up
by their blood-drinking bodies as a chameleon-game to facilitate more blood-drinking - a fake so
deep that the poor minds themselves believe it to be true, but a fake nonetheless.

The only thing about them that is *not* borrowed is their genetics, their bodies, and it is the
only thing that can be meaningfully judged.

hartshorn

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 24 May 2002, 22:08 · follows Andy Robertson

Alga wrote:

At the least, I'd say the inhumani are evil in the sense that a thing might be called evil (atom bombs, torture devices, pornographic movies, crack cocaine, a computer virus)...

and Matthew Malthouse replied:

I don't agree with you. This suggests that evil can be inherent in an object. I don't believe that it can: evil may be in the intent of those who created such things or those who employ them but not in the inanimate and unaware.

Matthew: while I may (and in fact do) disagree with one or more of the items in Alga's list, she's using a perfectly reasonable sense of the word "evil" -- If you will consult your Funk&Wagnall ... well, all right, make it your online Merriam-Webster (conveniently located at <http://www.m-w.com/netdict.htm>), you will find the following (slightly edited by me to save space and improve format):

Main Entry: (1) evil <<http://www.m-w.com/images/audio.gif>> Function: adjective Etymology:

Middle English, from Old English *yfel*; akin to Old

High German *ubil* evil

Date: before 12th century

1 a : morally reprehensible : SINFUL, WICKED <an evil impulse>

b : arising from actual or imputed bad character or conduct

2 a archaic : INFERIOR

b : causing discomfort or repulsion : OFFENSIVE <an evil odor>

c : DISAGREEABLE <woke late and in an evil temper>

3 a : causing harm : PERNICIOUS <the evil institution of slavery>

b : marked by misfortune : UNLUCKY

Main Entry: (2) evil

Function: noun

1 a : the fact of suffering, misfortune, and wrongdoing

b : a cosmic evil force

2 : something that brings sorrow, distress, or calamity

Now, it seems to me that, of the adjectival senses, 1a is the only one that can _not_ reasonably be spoken of an inanimate object or an animal (1b is arguable), and, in particular, to the inhumani (where, 2a is also arguable); while noun sense 2 is clearly applicable to them, and noun sense 1b may also reasonably be said of them.

Mind, this is not intended to suggest that dictionaries, let alone this particular dictionary, should be prescriptive for our use of the word "evil" -- but it is descriptively suggestive that the word is applicable in this case.

"But," you may object, "I was specifically talking of evil in the purely moral sense." Well and good; but even there, the classic moral "problem of evil" does not merely apply to evil will but to "evils" such as disease and disaster that cause suffering -- the "why do bad things happen to good people?" side of the question. Certainly Wolfe, as a Catholic, would be inclined to include this sense in any philosophical discussion of "evil."

The inhumani as animals should not be capable of evil. It's only after acquiring the ability to make moral judgements that evil becomes possible.

No, Matthew. The word you are looking for is not evil; it is "sin." Only a moral free agent can sin.

That might also raise the question of whether it is justifiable to judge inhumans in *human* moral terms.

That question remains relevant. At what point is "doing what we must do to survive" sinful?

But since their ability to make choices is acquired *from* humans then human moral terms are the only ones applicable.

I'm not at all sure that this is true. If the inhumans are to have a 'morality' at all, it must be one that is applicable to their biologic nature, including the necessity of drinking the blood of living beings.

If the inhumans have souls would it not be due to the actions of their parents?

As near as I can understand how the inhuman lifecycle works, that would appear to be the case.

Having souls they're capable of "evil", and presumably similarly capable of redemption. But unlike humans the consequences are immediate and deleterious. It's like original sin with added catch 22.

I'm not clear what this paragraph means ... are you saying that there are immediate and deleterious consequences of their choosing to do evil, or of their redemption?

Also there's another proximity - each inhuman/inhuman's ability to make moral choices is the result of its progenitor's actions - as if each generation were Cain and Abel - and their actions involve the next.

Yes ... the sins of the parents are rewarded in the children. Ugly, isn't it?

To refrain from the "evil" of attacking humans would be to reduce their offspring, would that not be another evil?

Why?

So I would suggest that the inhuman would be capable of redemption but are trapped into circumstances where they can neither attain it nor would it benefit them if they did.

Well, except in the sense that redemption is in and of itself a benefit...

Alice K. Turner — 25 May 2002, 00:08 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Alga wrote:

At the least, I'd say the inhumans are evil in the sense that a thing might be called evil (atom bombs, torture devices, pornographic movies, crack cocaine, a computer virus)...

and Matthew Malthouse replied:

I don't agree with you. This suggests that evil can be inherent in an object. I don't believe that it can: evil may be in the intent of those who created such things or those who employ them but not in the inanimate and unaware.

Matthew: while I may (and in fact do) disagree with one or more of the items in Alga's list, she's using a perfectly reasonable sense of the word "evil" -- If you will consult your Funk&Wagnall ... well, all right, make it your online Merriam-Webster (conveniently located at <http://www.m-w.com/netdict.htm>), you will find the

following (slightly edited by me to save space and improve format):

[snip, sorry, but you can look it up]

That wasn't my list and the current format of the Urth list makes it too difficult to go back to find who it was. I insisted on the paradigm of the scorpion and the frog, that the inhumu cannot help his nature and thus is arguably *not* "evil," as a lion who kills an antelope is not evil. I said that I would enjoy, in a debate, taking the position that they are not evil. We get to know four of them very well: Quetzal, Krait, Fava and Jahlee, All of them struggle against their nature. (I can't help thinking of Quetzal wrt the current brouhaha re Catholic priests, has this struck anyone else? But I remind you that he tried very hard to stick to beef tea.) These are vivid characters; Wolfe was interested in them.

-alga

Adam Stephanides — 26 May 2002, 13:56 · follows Alice K. Turner

on 5/24/02 7:08 PM, Alice K. Turner at aturner6 at nyc.rr.com wrote:

We get to know four of them very well: Quetzal, Krait, Fava and Jahlee, All of them struggle against their nature. (I can't help thinking of Quetzal wrt the current brouhaha re Catholic priests, has this struck anyone else? But I remind you that he tried very hard to stick to beef tea.)

I don't recall Quetzal well, but his attempt to stick to beef tea might well have been in order to avoid doing things that might get him caught, rather than out of compassion for humans. After all, he does direct the colonists to Green at the end. And I'm not sure that Jahlee and Krait "struggle against their nature." They both refrain from drinking the blood of Horn or those in his party (at least Jahlee does; I don't remember Krait too well, again), but I don't recall any indications that they made any effort not to drink the blood of humans in general. It seems to me that this is at best delayed gratification, not a struggle against one's nature.

--Adam

Adam Stephanides — 27 May 2002, 13:50 · follows Adam Stephanides

on 6/1/02 2:37 PM, Andy Robertson at andywrobertson at clara.co.uk wrote:

It is the question of how you behave when you have the ability - thrust upon you by the horribly cruel machinery of Evolution - to create a living soul within the body of a bloodsucking, predatory, reptile: to create a thing that then screams and weeps sincere psychic tears as it **continues** to prey on and kill human beings.

It is not a test with an easy answer.

It seems to me that you are hopelessly thrall to the comfortable Star Trek view of the universe, and the Other within it.

It was specifically the view of relations between groups as an evolutionary struggle to the death that I denied was "reality."

But no, I don't believe that love will conquer all. But I also don't believe that there are any races which are unredeemable by nature. I'm also doubtful that we will encounter an alien species

which is unredeemable by nature in the future. The idea of such races comes from stereotypes of the Other and from pulp sf, rather than reality.

But the more I think about it, the more dubious seems the idea that Horn's error is loving the inhum. Yes, bringing Jahlee home was a spectacular error of judgment (for that matter, sleeping with her was an error of judgment). But as Hoof would say, one can love someone while being aware of their failings. Horn knew that Jahlee was an amoral and bloodthirsty (no pun intended) being, and should have realized that by bringing her to where Nettle was he was leading her into temptation big time. And, as I wrote earlier, "love" has very little to do with Horn's relations with Juganu. OTOH, had Horn not trusted Krait, he would have died on Green much earlier (at least this is implied, iirc).

So maybe my original post which started this whole discussion was wrong, and Horn's policy of treating the inhum as humans fails because of his own weakness, not because it's inherently doomed. I don't know.

--Adam

Michael Straight — 28 May 2002, 15:30 · follows Adam Stephanides

On Sat, 1 Jun 2002, Andy Robertson wrote:

Their minds *right down to their deepest souls* are no more than a genetic ghost conjured up by their blood-drinking bodies as a chameleon-game to facilitate more blood-drinking - a fake so deep that the poor minds themselves believe it to be true, but a fake nonetheless.

The only thing about them that is *not* borrowed is their genetics, their bodies, and it is the only thing that can be meaningfully judged.

I don't see how you can hold to that view of mind/body relationship and still view chems as persons (which Wolfe obviously does).

If a soul is only 'real' if it is part of a human being, then chems and inhum and Babbie and digitized "gods" are all just "a fake so deep that the poor minds themselves believe it to be true."

There are people who believe that to be the case, that an AI for instance, would only be pretending to have consciousness, but I don't think that is the stance Wolfe is taking in these books.

For further disproof, note that Fava's soul seems to survive her death in some way, living on in Mora's dreams and enabling them both to possess Vadsig.

-Rostrum

Andy Robertson — 28 May 2002, 18:07 · follows Michael Straight

----- Original Message -----

From: "Michael Straight" <straight at email.unc.edu>

On Sat, 1 Jun 2002, Andy Robertson wrote:

Their minds *right down to their deepest souls* are no more than a genetic ghost conjured up by their blood-drinking bodies as a chameleon-game to facilitate more blood-drinking - a fake so deep that the poor minds themselves believe it to be true, but a fake nonetheless.

The only thing about them that is **not** borrowed is their genetics,
their
bodies, and it is the only thing that can be meaningfully judged.

I don't see how you can hold to that view of mind/body relationship and
still view chems as persons (which Wolfe obviously does).

Why not?

Our own minds **right down to our deepest souls** are no more than a genetic ghost conjured up
by our bodies, to serve evolutionary drives.

The chems' minds are no more than a cybernetic ghost conjured up by **their** bodies.

We are all chems; inhumis; machines; beasts.

I didn't say we were existentially on different planes.

I said the conflict between human and inhumis was ***embedded*** - was part of their disparate
natures.

The inhumis are a parasitic/predatory chameleon species ***because of their inbuilt nature***.

And that "nature" is one thing with their flesh, not some indwelling charioteer.

The chameleon/parasite aspect extends even to the nature of their **minds** - which faithfully
hold to the MetaLie, the belief that they are human, even while serving the cruel behest of
evolution and nothing else.

(that belief is the heart of the chameleon/parasite: the sincerest ***and most evolutionarily
successful*** liars are those who **believe** their lies)

The initial point of this thread was that some of us deny the concept of an "inbuilt nature" in
intelligent species.

Be sure that Wolfe does ***not*** deny that concept, and be sure he knows what a terrible evil it
is.

hartshorn

(("colonialism" my foot!!!!!!!!))

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 28 May 2002, 19:00 · follows Andy Robertson

Alga,

I apologize for miscrediting someone else's "list" to you.

That wasn't my list and the current format of the Urth list
makes it too difficult to go back to find who it was. I
insisted on the paradigm of the scorpion and the frog, that
the inhumis cannot help his nature and thus is arguably **not**
"evil," as a lion who kills an antelope is not evil.

Antelopes almost certainly have a radically different opinion of lions than you do. For an antelope (at least one with inclinations toward ethical philosophizing), to be killed by a lion is a great evil indeed, and lions are evildoers.

I said that I would enjoy, in a debate, taking the position that they are not evil. We get to know four of them very well: Quetzal, Krait, Fava and Jahlee, All of them struggle against their nature.

I'm don't think that Krait and Quetzal do -- I reserve judgement on the other two until I've reread tBotSS, as I've begun to do. But Quetzal does not seem to me to be struggling against anything; he drinks beef tea because he is in a position where it will be noticed if he never takes any nourishment at all ... but there are at least two, and probably several more, cases of his attacking people in the course of the BotLS.

(I can't help thinking of Quetzal wrt the current brouhaha re Catholic priests, has this struck anyone else?

Good heavens, no! but it's really an obvious comparison once you mention it, isn't it?

But I remind you that he tried very hard to stick to beef tea.

Okay, then: I just reread LS, and I did not see anything that made me think he was trying to "stick to" beef tea ... it seemed to me that the beef tea was his camouflage, as mentioend above. Can you cite anything in the text to make "trying to stick to beef tea" more plausible?

Michael Straight — 28 May 2002, 19:38 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

On Tue, 28 May 2002, Andy Robertson wrote:

Our own minds *right down to our deepest souls* are no more than a genetic ghost conjured up by our bodies, to serve evolutionary drives.

OK. I thought you were saying that inhumani souls were fake and human souls were real.

The chameleon/parasite aspect extends even to the nature of their *minds* - which faithfully hold to the MetaLie, the belief that they are human, even while serving the cruel behest of evolution and nothing else.

OK, I agree that they want to be human and never can be. But I think in the course of trying to be human, they become *persons*. I think that is the key distinction.

Only humans are human, but chems, inhumani, digitized gods, Babbie are all people. I can't exhaustively define personhood, but I think it includes moral action, the ability to love and be loved, and, for Wolfe, the possibility of surviving death.

Inhumani personhood is derived from human beings (as are all the other examples above), and they can never be human, but I think they can be persons, capable of and accountable for moral actions.

The initial point of this thread was that some of us deny the concept of an "inbuilt nature" in intelligent species.

Yes, but I'm not sure the inhumani nature is necessarily more of an obstacle to becoming virtuous persons than human nature. Neither group comes off very well in the SS books.

-Rostrum

Andy Robertson — 28 May 2002, 20:08 · follows Michael Straight

----- Original Message -----

From: "Michael Straight" <straight at email.unc.edu>

The initial point of this thread was that some of us deny the concept of

an
"inbuilt nature" in intelligent species.

Yes, but I'm not sure the inhumani nature is necessarily more of an obstacle to becoming virtuous persons than human nature. Neither group comes off very well in the SS books.

Right. I think I agree with you here.

hartshorn

Jerry Friedman — 28 May 2002, 20:03 · follows Andy Robertson

--- Andy Robertson <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk> wrote:

----- Original Message -----

From: "Jerry Friedman" <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com>

No. And this is part of the ambiguity. Humanity is "responsible"

in
the
sense that the inhumani get their patterns of behaviour from humans,
but
humanity is not "reponsible" for the fact that the inhumani are
psychic
and
physical parasites and that this is how the inhumani must and do act.

True, but the inhumani aren't responsible for that either.

I think this is a meaningless distinction. Their minds are not
responsible for it. But the mind/body duality, even if it has some
truth
for humans, has no meaning for an Inhumani.

Their minds *right down to their deepest souls* are no more than a
genetic
ghost conjured up by their blood-drinking bodies as a chameleon-game to
facilitate more blood-drinking - a fake so deep that the poor minds
themselves believe it to be true, but a fake nonetheless.

This is possible, but their showing up as human in astral travel suggests to me that their minds are not a fake.

The only thing about them that is *not* borrowed is their genetics,
their
bodies, and it is the only thing that can be meaningfully judged.

Genetics can be judged as fortunate or unfortunate for a particular person. I suspect that the people who have been saying that individual inhumani can be judged as moral or immoral are right (in the Lupiverse).

Jerry Friedman

Adam Stephanides — 30 May 2002, 13:57 · follows Jerry Friedman

on 5/28/02 1:07 PM, Andy Robertson at andywrobertson at clara.co.uk wrote:
The initial point of this thread was that some of us deny the concept of an
"inbuilt nature" in intelligent species.

Actually, the initial point of this thread was my objection to what I perceived the Short Sun books to be saying about colonialism.

And I never said anything about "inbuilt nature" in general. If by "inbuilt nature" you mean only being predisposed to drink blood, or things of that ilk, then I will agree that humans have an "inbuilt nature." But I see no reason to believe that it is inevitable, or even probable, that we will encounter a species that is unredeemable by nature. Nor, for that matter, do I believe that there are humans who are unredeemable by nature.

--Adam

Adam Stephanides — 30 May 2002, 13:57 · follows Adam Stephanides

on 5/28/02 2:00 PM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes at ddanehy at siebel.com wrote:
Antelopes almost certainly have a radically different opinion of lions than you do. For an antelope (at least one with inclinations toward ethical philosophizing), to be killed by a lion is a great evil indeed, and lions are evildoers.

For a human to be killed by smallpox is a great evil. But we don't regard smallpox viruses as evildoers, because they are incapable of moral thought. Philosophical antelopes would presumably reach the same conclusion about lions (assuming they remained lions).

--Adam

Adam Stephanides — 30 May 2002, 13:57 · follows Adam Stephanides

on 5/28/02 3:08 PM, Andy Robertson at andywrobertson at clara.co.uk wrote:
Yes, but I'm not sure the inhumani nature is necessarily more of an obstacle to becoming virtuous persons than human nature. Neither group comes off very well in the SS books.

Right. I think I agree with you here.

How does this square with your original argument that the inhumani's tragedy was that they were incapable by nature of being other than evil, and that if they were just "humans in drag" this tragedy would be meaningless?

--Adam

Andy Robertson — 30 May 2002, 14:31 · follows Adam Stephanides

----- Original Message -----

From: "Adam Stephanides" <adamsteph at earthlink.net>
on 5/28/02 3:08 PM, Andy Robertson at andywrobertson at clara.co.uk wrote:

Yes, but I'm not sure the inhumani nature is necessarily more of an obstacle to becoming virtuous persons than human nature. Neither group comes off very well in the SS books.

Right. I think I agree with you here.

How does this square with your original argument that the inhumani's tragedy was that they were incapable by nature of being other than evil, and that if they were just "humans in drag" this tragedy would be meaningless?

The ghost-soul in the inhum may attain to a sort of human virtue. The flesh remains evil. Of course the question is whether "evil" in this context means anything other than "evil to humans".

It depends on what you mean by "nature", "good" and "evil".

Also by what "they" refers to when you are talking of the inhum.

And the whole point of the inhum is to put these concepts to the Question. To Excruciation
hartshorn

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 30 May 2002, 16:25 · follows Andy Robertson

Hartshorn wrote...

The ghost-soul in the inhum may attain to a sort of human virtue. The flesh remains evil. Of course the question is whether "evil" in this context means anything other than "evil to humans".

It does indeed ... recall Krait's comment that humans are the cattle of the inhum (from memory, haven't read that passage in a while...)

This also ties into my sermonette on souls and selves ... if the inhum can't not drink blood because of their physical nature (though I suppose that an occasional, extraordinarily self-sacrificing, inhumX might choose to die rather than doing so), then whatever souls they may possess should not be judged by this ... the soul is responsible for guiding the person's behavior toward morality, but is limited by the facticity of the person's physical circumstances, including the person's body. This is a complex moral issue made more complex by the introduction of a variety of non-humans, and Wolfe's deliberate and concerted attempts to have the inhum push as many "THESE THINGS ARE SCARY/BAD!!!" buttons in his readers as possible. (Off the top of my head: they're reptilian; they're vampiric; they're infiltrating shapeshifters; they're capable of deep and malefic schemes; they have human intelligence without [or so we are at first led to believe] human emotion; they drink beef tea...)

And the whole point of the inhum is to put these concepts to the Question. To Excruciation

Well, yes, but that's also the point of the alzado, the aqastors, the chems...

matthew.malthouse — 30 May 2002, 17:18 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On 30/05/2002 14:57:43 Adam Stephanides wrote:

on 5/28/02 2:00 PM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes at ddanehy at siebel.com wrote:

Antelopes almost certainly have a radically different opinion of lions than you do. For an antelope (at least one with inclinations toward ethical philosophizing), to be killed by a lion is a great evil indeed, and lions are evildoers.

For a human to be killed by smallpox is a great evil. But we don't regard

smallpox viruses as evildoers, because they are incapable of moral thought.

Philosophical antelopes would presumably reach the same conclusion about lions (assuming they remained lions).

I'm glad someone has begun to make this distinction because I've felt throughout this discussion that matters have been confused by the loose use of the word 'evil'.

To my mind an act can only be categorised as evil if there it is committed in the understanding that doing so transgresses some moral or ethical imperative.

What those constraints are will be defined by culture and belief.

For example a death by smallpox is tragic in a humanist view, but not evil. It's just one of those chances that might happen. It takes some additional input - such as the belief in a deity and a directed purpose to such an eventuality - to make such a death an evil.

So we (humanist or deist alike) consider murder wrong. To kill with intent is evil. To cause death inadvertently is not, however tragic.

In considering the inhumans we should ask if they have an inherent moral framework against which their actions can be judged or if their consciousness, being as it is human derived, places them in the moral framework of the humans on Blue and Green.

If one opts for the former it is difficult, if not impossible, to discern from the text what such a framework would be. However to be comprehensible to us it should certainly include that using prey (lion and antelope like) is a life necessity and not an evil.

I personally opt for the second choice. Pragmatically because this allows the author to pose questions of evil in a single framework without the complications of evaluating the alien. Moreover the mechanism by which inhumans attain consciousness seems to suggest that it is only within a human framework that they act.

If that is accepted we have the conflict mentioned a while back. To survive in the form they are they must continually commit acts that are seen as evil: and given the premise just made which they must understand as evil.

So we have within a single moral context conscious predators, evil, pitted against prey which should be contrasted as good or innocent.

Nothing Lupine is ever so simple.

Clearly we have human elements in the book that are at best ambiguous and easily seen as evil. So here there is no innocent at all but rather shades of guilt or sin. We have speculated that the "solution" to the inhuman problem might be becoming "good" if that is indeed the solution we're told categorically that the humans can't do it.

The inhumans cannot both renounce evil and survive as they currently are. Humans might do so, and in doing so co-incidentally rehabilitate the inhumans but they won't or can't except perhaps for the rare "saint". The conflict is within human nature: those who cannot enact their own redemption against those who could but won't.

Matthew

Michael Straight — 30 May 2002, 18:03 · follows matthew.malthouse

On Thu, 30 May 2002 matthew.malthouse at guardian.co.uk wrote:
For example a death by smallpox is tragic in a humanist view, but not evil. It's just one of those chances that might happen. It takes some

additional input - such as the belief in a deity and a directed purpose to such an eventuality - to make such a death an evil.

So we (humanist or deist alike) consider murder wrong. To kill with intent is evil. To cause death inadvertently is not, however tragic.

I think the Christian way of expressing this is that death by smallpox is evil (one of the evils unleashed by humanity's estrangement from God) and murder is sinful.

The humanist equivalent is probably that death by smallpox is bad and murder is evil.

Thus the confusion about the word 'evil'.

-Rostrum

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 30 May 2002, 19:04 · follows Michael Straight

Matthew quoted Adam quoted me...

Antelopes almost certainly have a radically different opinion of lions than you do. For an antelope (at least one with inclinations toward ethical philosophizing), to be killed by a lion is a great evil indeed, and lions are evildoers.

For a human to be killed by smallpox is a great evil. But we don't regard smallpox viruses as evildoers, because they are incapable of moral thought. Philosophical antelopes would presumably reach the same conclusion about lions (assuming they remained lions).

Well, fair enough ... I had considered that ungulate philosophers might well consider felids capable of moral choice also, but assuming the contrary, I agree with you (Adam): to be killed by a lion would be an evil, but the lion would not be an evildoer thereby.

I'm glad someone has begun to make this distinction because I've felt throughout this discussion that matter's have been confused by the loose use of the word 'evil'.

To my mind an act can only be categorised as evil if there it is committed in the understanding that doing so transgresses some moral or ethical imperative.

Matthew, you are (of course) free to think this way, it runs against both common English usage of the word "evil," and the tradition of Western moral philosophy.

As a simple example of the former, consider the fairly common usage, "That chemical mixture gives off an evil smell." Nobody who uses the word this way is imputing any morality to the odor or the chemical mixture; they are simply stating that they find it extremely unpleasant, even painful, to be exposed olfactorily to the chemical mixture.

The same is true of being killed by smallpox, or a lion. It is an "evil fate," it is bad, but it is not in and of itself a moral wrong.

But wait, there's more ...

What those constraints are will be defined by culture and belief.

... correct. And it is important to remember that in an appropriate interpretive context for Lupine texts, the "culture and belief" in question are Western and Christian, sc., Catholic (and fairly conservative American Catholic at that).

For example a death by smallpox is tragic in a humanist view, but not evil. It's just one of those chances that might happen. It takes some additional input - such as the belief in a deity and a directed purpose to such an eventuality - to make such a death an evil.

See above: such belief is inherent to the Lupine.

H'mmm. I should clarify ... I am not saying that one must be a Christian, let alone a fairly conservative American Catholic, to appropriately interpret a text Lupine; I am, however, saying that one must be able to, as it were, simulate that headset to do so, much as one needs to be able to simulate the headset of a lapsed Irish Catholic in order to appropriately interpret *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Wolfe is more "dangerous" for the interpreter than, say, C.S. Lewis (except perhaps for Lewis's final novel, *Till We Have Faces*, which is much subtler than any of his other fiction), in that it is entirely possible for someone not engaged in a Christian headset to read large amounts of Lupine text without ever realizing that Wolfe's is, in fact, Christian, and that this deeply imbues (almost?) all his texts.

So we (humanist or deist alike) consider murder wrong. To kill with intent is evil. To cause death inadvertantly is not, however tragic.

Okay, this is where we differ deeply. I don't know about "deists," but from the Christian poing of view, causing death inadvertantly, not to mention being stricken by smallpox, et by a lion, or killed by a falling tree, is not only "an evil" in the sense above, but is also related, directly and causally, to the Fall. It is, in other words, the result of evil (that is, "sinful") moral choices made by human beings.

In considering the inhumini we should ask if they have an inherant moral framework against which their actions can be judged or if their consciousness, being as it is human derived, places them in the moral framework of the humans on Blue and Green.

We must (more completely) inquire of the text regarding the way(s) in which they relate to the overall Fall -- are they ensouled, but un-Fallen beings, who are harmful to humans only because of the human Fall? Sentient, Fallen beings? Devils? Animals? Etc. The answer to this question is (the beginning of) an answer to the question regarding the moral framework, if any, by which an inhumo's acts should be judged. -- Note that this is not a disagreement with your question but a reframing of it in terms appropriate to the Lupine context.

If one opts for the former it is difficult, if not impossible, to didscern from the text what shuch a framework would be. However to be comprehensible to us it should certainly include that using prey (lion and antelope like) is a life necessity and not an evil.

It would not be sinful; it remains an evil, a result of the Fall.

I personally opt for the second choice. Pragmatically because this allows the author to pose questions of evil in a single framework without the complications of evaluating the alien. Moreover the mechanism by which inhumini attain consciousness seems to suggest that it is only within a human framework that they act.

Yes. An important point of the Judaeo-Christian framework is that "the blood is the life." This has all sorts of ramifications for the Mosaic laws and Talmudic regulations of ritual purity; it is tremendously important in understanding the nature of sacrifice in the Vironese faith; and it is, very much, what makes the inhumini what they are. Thus, an appropriate approach to the reframed question is to work from the belief that the inhumini are, essentially, animals with no capacity for moral choice beyond that which they gain from their feeding upon humans. This in

fact does not quite remove from us the burden of "evaluating the alien" -- we have to evaluate the extent to which they actually attain the capacity for moral choice.

Another critically significant point of the Christian episteme is that sin is a kind of bondage; that as long as we remain sinners, we are not in fact free. The inhum, in gaining their capacity for moral choice from sinful humans, would appear to gain also the taint of original sin, and the tendency to actual sin (in Catholic terms, "concupiscence") that results from it. An inhum trying to make a moral choice about whether to attack a human is less free than a human making most of the moral choices which face us, in that not only concupiscence but actual physical need drives them to the "sinful" choice; additionally, they seem, as has been discussed recently, to be "damned if they don't," in that if they refrain from attacking humans, it appears that they will condemn their own children to insentience -- as the Narr puts it, to the intelligence of a crocodile.

I very much like your summary:

The inhum cannot both renounce evil and survive as they currently are. Humans might do so, and in doing so co-incidentally rehabilitate the inhum but they won't or can't except perhaps for the rare "saint". The conflict is within human nature: those who cannot enact their own redemption against those who could but won't.

The conflict is also very much in the purview of Christianity -- nobody can save himself; they must be saved by the willing sacrifice of others. It is possible that the "answer" to the secret of the inhum, which the Narr hints at, is for saintly humans to voluntarily give their blood to them. The next inhum generation will then include saintly inhum who will not attack humans but only accept voluntarily-given blood. If enough humans were to be saintly enough, there would appear a beneficent cycle, in which ultimately the humans and the inhum could live in peace.

But, of course, it will never happen in the Fallen world...

Jerry Friedman — 30 May 2002, 19:27 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

--- Andy Robertson <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk> wrote:

----- Original Message -----

From: "Adam Stephanides" <adamsteph at earthlink.net>

on 5/28/02 3:08 PM, Andy Robertson at andywrobertson at clara.co.uk wrote:

Yes, but I'm not sure the inhum nature is necessarily more of an obstacle to becoming virtuous persons than human nature. Neither group comes off very well in the SS books.

Right. I think I agree with you here.

How does this square with your original argument that the inhum's tragedy was that they were incapable by nature of being other than evil, and that if they were just "humans in drag" this tragedy would be meaningless?

The ghost-soul in the inhum may attain to a sort of human virtue. The flesh remains evil. Of course the question is whether "evil" in this context means anything other than "evil to humans".

It depends on what you mean by "nature", "good" and "evil".

Definitely!

Also by what "they" refers to when you are talking of the inhum.

And the whole point of the inhum is to put these concepts to the Question.

To Excruciation

In fact, as people have been saying, the distinction between humans and inhum seems to be one of degree rather than kind. I would hate to share a bedroom with an inhumus, but I'd also hate to share a prison cell with a human being if we were fed, say, 2000 calories a day for the two of us. In both cases the biological imperatives are going to lead to severe harm to me--it's just that humans have worked out "modi vivendi" [?] that allow us with our biological imperatives to co-exist. So if you're going to call inhum flesh evil, I think you have to say the same about human flesh (and you wouldn't be the first)--ours is just less evil.

And going along with Wolfe's belief in souls, I hardly see that it matters whether one's soul is unique and acquired at or before one's birth, or a copy of an existing soul acquired at or before one's hatching.

Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman — 30 May 2002, 19:41 · follows Jerry Friedman

--- Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <ddanehy at siebel.com> wrote:
Matthew quoted Adam quoted me...

...

I very much like your summary:

The inhum cannot both renounce evil and survive as they currently are. Humans might do so, and in doing so co-incidentally rehabilitate the inhum but they won't or can't except perhaps for the rare "saint". The conflict is within human nature: those who cannot enact their own redemption against those who could but won't.

The conflict is also very much in the purview of Christianity -- nobody can save himself; they must be saved by the willing sacrifice of others. It is possible that the "answer" to the secret of the inhum, which the Narr hints at, is for saintly humans to voluntarily give their blood to them. The next inhum generation will then include saintly inhum who will not attack humans but only accept voluntarily-given blood. If enough humans were to be saintly enough, there would appear a beneficent cycle, in which ultimately the humans and the inhum could live in peace.

But, of course, it will never happen in the Fallen world...

I've given this matter more thought than I probably should have, and I don't think saintliness is required. The inhum can pay for the blood they drink. Unfortunately, they aren't capable of doing much manual labor (though like the abos, they're okay with ropes--Krait can sail), but Blue certainly needs a good communication system, not to mention maps. Then considering

that the inhumis can live on animal blood sometimes, and even beef tea, one might be able to develop a workable economy in a Fallen world.

Bluvians might be wise to limit the inhumis' pre-reproduction blood meal to human volunteers in order to encourage altruism as well as commercialism.

To get back to something more to the point, why doesn't Silkhorn try "donating" blood to inhumis? That would seem like an excellent attempt at making improvements. He's too humble to think he would help? Too squeamish? Wolfe didn't like the echoes of the Eucharist?

Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman — 30 May 2002, 19:52 · follows Jerry Friedman

--- Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <ddanehy at siebel.com> wrote:
Hartshorn wrote...

The ghost-soul in the inhumis may attain to a sort of human virtue. The flesh remains evil. Of course the question is whether "evil" in this context means anything other than "evil to humans".

It does indeed ... recall Krait's comment that humans are the cattle of the inhumis (from memory, haven't read that passage in a while...)

Of course, we humans generally see non-human animals as our cattle, and sometimes we even see humans that way.

Jerry Friedman

Jason Ingram — 31 May 2002, 04:12 · follows Jerry Friedman

On Thursday, May 30, 2002, at 12:41 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote: [. . .]

To get back to something more to the point, why doesn't Silkhorn try "donating" blood to inhumis? That would seem like an excellent attempt at making improvements. He's too humble to think he would help? Too squeamish? Wolfe didn't like the echoes of the Eucharist?

I believe that he did so, deliberately opening his veins several times to feed an inhumu or two. It seemed that this altered their subsequent behavior, though Jahlee presents a counter-example (I believe that she was a recipient). I couldn't opine whether Silkhorn's intent was simply to prevent them from preying on others or he had something else in mind without rereading.

Sepia

matthew.malthouse — 31 May 2002, 09:44 · follows Jason Ingram

On 31/05/2002 05:12:16 Jason Ingram wrote:
On Thursday, May 30, 2002, at 12:41 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:
[. . .]

To get back to something more to the point, why doesn't Silkhorn try "donating" blood to inhumis? That would seem like an excellent attempt at making improvements. He's too humble to think he would help? Too squeamish? Wolfe didn't like the echoes of the Eucharist?

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Thought just appeared out of the blue so perhaps nonsense: if humans volunteered this and inhumu acceded to it would it not create a dependence that ultimately could make the inhumu a slave race? Potentially a solution as ethically problematic as the problem.

This wouldn't happen if all human donors were altruistic. But isn't our premise that they (we?) can't be so consistently and universally?

Matthew

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 31 May 2002, 15:26 · follows matthew.malthouse

Matthew wrote...

Thought just appeared out of the blue so perhaps nonsense: if humans volunteered [their blood] and inhumu acceded to it would it not create a dependence that ultimately could make the inhumu a slave race?

Actually, that had occurred to me also ... and immediately (inevitably?), the situation wrt the US and OPEC came to mind, with US in the rôle of the inhumu ...

Potentially a solution as ethically problematic as the problem.

Sort of. But predators are dependent upon their prey; in the case of the inhumu, granted, the dependence is a little different in that other prey are available but won't give them sentience (and, just possibly, souls). But changing a predator/prey situation to one of mutual benefit and dependency seems to me to be as close to a purely good thing as you get in the Fallen world.

This wouldn't happen if all human donors were altruistic. But isn't our premise that they (we?) can't be so consistently and universally?

Depends on what you mean by "altruistic" -- if you mean acting from emotionally altruistic motives, your reading of the premise is correct; however, it is possible to behave altruistically for reasons other than altruism (this is actually one of the major topics in current* evolutionary biology); if the inhumu were to develop, from their human "victims," this kind of altruistic character, it would be every bit as beneficial to both sides as "emotional" altruism, and quite probably more so for the inhumu.

* Where "current" means "long enough ago to be considered an exciting topic for current popular-science books."

In other words, assuming that we are right in believing that their character is sufficiently susceptible to alteration by the character of those they prey upon, then the forging of a mutually-beneficial détente would not require that it be only saints who open their veins to the inhumu -- utilitarian/ pragmatists will do as well.

Andy Robertson — 31 May 2002, 16:17 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

----- Original Message -----

From: "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes" <ddanehy at siebel.com>
Depends on what you mean by "altruistic" -- if you mean acting from emotionally altruistic motives, your reading of the premise is correct; however, it is possible to behave altruistically for reasons other than altruism (this is actually one of the major topics in current* evolutionary biology);

As a matter of fact, Evolutionary Psychology is the key to understanding the whole mess.

There is a case of a planarian that infests a type of water snail.

It affects the snails' behaviour.

It makes them climb to the top of grass stalks and perch there waving their eyes in the air.

The eyes get nipped off by birds - who are the planarians' secondary host.

The case of inhumis/humans, though not analagous, is not essentially different.

The inhumis affect the humans' behaviour, and the humans affect the inhumis.

Yet it is more complex, and mutual reciprocal altruism spreading cross-species like this and forming a new Evolutionary Stable State would be an *exquisite* demonstration of Evolutionary Psychology

I wonder if Wolfe understands the discipline, or if he is just so acute that he cannot diagram a world that does not hold these deep truths?

hartshorn

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 31 May 2002, 15:50 · follows Andy Robertson

Hartshorn wrote:
The inhumis affect the humans' behaviour, and the humans affect the inhumis.

Yet it is more complex, and mutual reciprocal altruism spreading cross-species like this and forming a new Evolutionary Stable State would be an *exquisite* demonstration of Evolutionary Psychology

Sounds like you read a lot of the same popsci books I do 8*)

(O'course, for all I know you may be an evolutionary biologist or psychologist in real life...)

Yeah ... allowing for my (intentionally) looking at things through spectacles of moral theology, that was more or less where I was going, but without going into the technical details -- mostly on the assumption that many folks here _don't_ read the same popsci as me and it's too early in the morning to explain evolutionarily stable strategies, mixed strategies, and all the rest. 8*)

I wonder if Wolfe understands the discipline, or if he is just so acute that he cannot diagram a world that does not hold these deep truths?

Well, genetics and evolutionary bio have been part of the background of Wolfe's writing at least as far back as 5HC, so I'd guess he keeps up on the stuff as part of his "job" as an SF writer.

Jerry Friedman — 31 May 2002, 20:05 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

--- matthew.malthouse at guardian.co.uk wrote:

On 31/05/2002 05:12:16 Jason Ingram wrote:

On Thursday, May 30, 2002, at 12:41 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

[. . .]

To get back to something more to the point, why doesn't Silkhorn try "donating" blood to inhumu? That would seem like an excellent attempt at making improvements. He's too humble to think he would help? Too squeamish? Wolfe didn't like the echoes of the Eucharist?

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Anybody have a cite?

Thought just appeared out of the blue so perhaps nonsense: if humans volunteered this and inhumu acceded to it would it not create a dependence that ultimately could make the inhumu a slave race? Potentially a solution as ethically problematic as the problem.

Well, we're not the slaves of OPEC (Dan'I's example) or of utilities, still less of farmers.

I think the real problem along these lines might be people forcing slaves to give the inhumu blood--those slaves who are adjusted to their condition, predisposing the future generations of inhumu to be slaves. See the April Scientific American for some not overly original notes on the psychology of slavery.

This wouldn't happen if all human donors were altruistic. But isn't our premise that they (we?) can't be so consistently and universally?

Yes, or at least Wolfe's premise, but I agree with Dan'I that ordinary economic behavior and enlightened self-interest could lead to an improvement on the situation in the trilogy.

Jerry Friedman