

just in case anyone was wondering

The Urth list — 9 messages, 6 voices, 01 Dec 2004

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turin — 01 Dec 2004, 22:02

just in case anyone was wondering

My favorite Lewis is Till We Have Faces. After that it is That Hideous Strength. Crush gave a good critique of the book, but I just wanted to point out that Lewis was a member of the Order of the Golden Dawn for a while and denounced it but used the idea of Planetary Intelligences for his Greek God/Angel Ossyra or however you spell them. I mean it's inherently Cabbalistic. Does anyone consider the Sun series one novel? I mean, it's one history, but is it one novel? I definitely agree with everyone's ideas about gnosticism, but the idea of secret knowledge is a strange contradiction in Christian mythology on the part of the Church. If there is something you don't know, of course it's secret. If God is unknown or unknowable, of course he's secret too. Really, what the Chruch is saying is that we have it all here, the manual for the universe with this Bible and this catachism, you're set, just believe in Christ and go to confession, never mind spiritual growth We don't even need revelation or prophecy anymore. And then people wonder why Evangelicism started in America, born out of Protestantism which was as mechanistic as Newton's physics. This is also why Eastern religions are now popular in america. People want to undergo transformed. All the Church offers the Christian is the transformations of death and the resurrection but none for the life between now and death. It seems with the advent of modern psychology Christian churches at least in America have changed their tune to a certain degree, there is a 12 step self help program for everything, but for a long time Protestantism was admit your a sinner, believe in Christ, and before that, not even those simple coercions were a gurantee. The moment you remove ritual, culture, and history is the moment you lose relevance.

I want to throw out some questions we've been talking about but turn them on Wolfe. I usually read books without thinking of what the author believes, but in the case of Wolfe and Tolkien, it's kind of neccesary, and also I want to know what Wolfe thinks as a reader of his own work not as an author trying to communicate a specific message.

I wonder what Wolfe actually thinks about the gnosticism in his novels? Do you think Wolfe believes Silke's enlightenment could happen? Do you think he believes personalities can be copied, like Hans Moravec or Kurzweil, scanned into a computer, does he equate the mind with the soul like Descrates? And does he think the chems, Maytera Marble, Hammerstone, or Counselor Loris, Lemur, etc are people (Even if the bodies of counsel have died)? Do the inhum have souls or are they in the process of gaining souls? Would that mean for Wolfe that Jonas had a soul? The elves in the Wizard Knight don't have souls, but he implies that they will could recieve souls, but this is a convention of faerie stories, the soulless elves. He also talks about Baby and Seawrack both becoming people. Does language consittute personhood for Wolfe? Do you need to be a person to have a soul?

James Wynn — 01 Dec 2004, 22:37 · in reply to turin

Really, what the Chruch is saying is that we have it all here, the manual for the universe with this Bible and this catachism, you're set, just believe in Christ and go to confession, never mind spiritual growth.

I don't think the New Testament, the Eastern Orthodox, the RCC, or any Protestant demononation teaches that. It is no easy lifelong task to "die daily" or to "put on the whole armor of God". One might as well say that the purpose of a wedding is to set aside the work of a marriage.

We don't even need revelation or prophecy anymore.

The Charismatic segments of Christianity (most are Evangelical) hold contemporary revelation as very central to their worship experience and are very open to prophecy (in the sense of revelation of the future). All Christian traditions hold prophecy in the sense of "professing God's Word" to be key to their worship. However, to my knowledge, only the LDS believe that contemporary revelation/prophecy can overwrite the Scriptural canon.

And then people wonder why Evangelicism started in America, born out of Protestantism which was as mechanistic as Newton's physics. This is also why Eastern religions are now popular in america. People want to undergo transform[ation]. All the Church offers the Christian is the transformations of death and the resurrection but none for the life between now and death.

Christian conversion is expected to be transformative.

Ask any convict who was "saved" in prison.

It seems with the advent of modern psychology Christian churches at least in America have changed their tune to a certain degree, there is a 12 step self help program for everything, but for a long time Protestantism was admit your a sinner, believe in Christ, and before that, not even those simple coercions were a gurantee. The moment you remove ritual, culture, and history is the moment you lose relevance.

I think it was the 12 step program that adopted the conventions of Christianity (with it's emphasis on 'giving your testimony'). I'm not certain what Luther would say about "falling from Grace" but obviously Calvin's teaching declared the very idea absurd.

~ Crush

James Wynn — 01 Dec 2004, 23:29 · in reply to turin

My favorite Lewis is Till We Have Faces. After that it is That Hideous Strength.

Having read just about everything Lewis wrote, I can confidently assert that his *fiction* is the most compelling. Even "Pilgrim's Regress". That moment where the protagonists discovers "well, maybe there is no Landlord, but there definitely is a Pit because I'm in it!" was really stirring to me. I didn't know anything about the Order of the Golden Dawn. I'll have to check it out.

Does anyone consider the Sun series one novel?

I mean, it's one history, but is it one novel?

There are certain portions of "The Long Sun" that I don't think are comprehensible until you've read "The Short Sun". The inhumi are obviously one aspect, but IMO Pike's ghost is another. Wolfe's choice in making Horn the primary narrator of the LS and his mimicking Silk are a couple others.

I wonder what Wolfe actually thinks about the gnosticism in his novels?

Do you think Wolfe believes Silke's enlightenment could happen?

Silk's enlightenment with the world freezing in time is a recreation of Joseph's experience in the apocraphal Gospel of James at the moment of Jesus' birth. Do I think Wolfe believes God talks to

people? absolutely.

I wonder what Wolfe actually thinks about the gnosticism in his novels?

Good question. Based on his other apparent beliefs, he's no Gnostic. But he sure dips his characters and stories in the Gnostic river pretty frequently

Do you think he believes personalities can be copied, like Hans Moravec or Kurzweil, scanned into a computer, does he equate the mind with the soul like Descartes?

I almost sent a post about this today to something someone said, but I decided not to. Well....

I once asked him about the fact that Identity is a frequent subject of his novels and he said:

"I think that identity and memory are the fascinating themes of life. That and our relationship with God. These are the major, major themes through[out] fiction and myth. I'm sure if we could trace back far enough we'd find they are inherent in the human condition. It would be interesting to know if they are equally important to an alien race. We can speculate but we can't answer that."

At the time I took that to mean that Wolfe considered memory and identity to be something of the same thing. And there is a sense in which Wolfe seems to be a Christian Rationalist and has reason to doubt whether Wolfe thinks he *himself* will go to Heaven or whether his memories and personality will be *uploaded* there or perhaps that he thinks the idea of a body and soul being separated is inconceivable. I don't think he believes the latter two and I'll tell you why:

1) Rose-as-Marble says that "now I'm one of those gold doo-dads on those cards, but I'm still a person because I always was". This tells me that Wolfe considers a soul to be transcendent over matter. Rose is a person in Marble because she was a person originally. Conversely, if you could reconstruct a soul from scratch, identical in every way to a model, it would still only be a facsimile of a soul rather than an actual one because a soul is God-made. Humans can't make a soul from scratch.

2) The Short Sun Narrator tells that story of a man who leaves a house and compares it to the soul leaving a body. He says, "the body doesn't die because the soul leaves. The soul leaves because the body dies and is no longer useful to it." (paraphrasing) Once again, this shows an opinion that the soul is transcendent to the body.

3) In The Wizard, Able differentiates between Gylf whose soul is part of his nature and Mani whose soul is an elemental being. Mani's identity is a mixture of the cat and the elemental. When the cat dies and the elemental leaves, Mani will cease to exist although the elemental will live on. Gylf's soul is of another nature and the only I model I can think of that is the classical body and soul.

And does he think the chems, Maytera Marble, Hammerstone, or Counselor Loris, Lemur, etc are people (Even if the bodies of counsel have died)?

For purposes of the story, I think it is clear they are. For how this can be considering all I just said, I have an explanation. I've said it here before but here goes:

The reason the Ayuntamiento could so easily rig chems to receive their personalities was because chems were designed to do just that. Chems were downloaded with the scans of real live people. A single person could ensoul any number of chems in this way. I believe that possibly all the female chems were ensouled by Kypris and all the male chems were ensouled by Pas/Typhon. But it is possible that there are other people behind those faceplates. Considering what Rose-in-Marble says, that is the only way I can justify the chems being

persons. Granted not everyone (or anyone) agrees with me on this.

Do the inhumani have souls or are they in the process of gaining souls?

They have souls. And look here! Here's another example of souls being split off from a donor.

Would that mean for Wolfe that Jonas had a soul?

How else could he be in Miles?

The elves in the Wizard Knight don't have souls, but he implies that they will could receive souls, but

this is a convention of faerie stories, the soulless elves.

No comment.

He also talks about Babbie and Seawrack both becoming people.

If only we understood more about Seawrack.

Does language constitute personhood for Wolfe?

What makes you ask that?

Do you need to be a person to have a soul?

I presume. As in what?

This makes me think of the vision of the island the protagonist has in "Pilgrims Regress" where he sees Nierads "wise as gods, but soulless like beasts"

~ Crush

Chris — 02 Dec 2004, 18:43 · in reply to James Wynn

Crush said:

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Well, before going further I tend to think that attempts to look for Wolfe's personal beliefs on these particular subjects through the books are doomed to failure. The questions Wolfe is raising are difficult - many would say impossible - to answer rationally. (There is always faith, but faith can't be communicated). Wolfe knows this, and I think he understands that any attempt to actually *answer* them in his books would fatally flaw the text. I think that Wolfe's goal is not to answer these questions but to put them in front of you in a vivid way and force you to confront the inherent paradoxes.

If this is the case then I would expect him to be especially careful in laying out the problem so that it's not skewed by his own bias. He doesn't want the reader to just follow him along for the ride, so if anything I'd expect a bias *against* his own point of view in the text... but, that said, I haven't seen such a bias.

1) Rose-as-Marble says that "now I'm one of those gold doo-dads on those cards, but I'm still a person because I always was". This tells me that Wolfe considers a soul to be transcendent over matter. Rose is a person in Marble because she was a person originally.

But, going beyond the surface of the words, you're still left with a problem here - are the words the product of a soul/person perceiving its own nature, or are they the product of a program, a "simulation" of sorts? On the one hand you can compare it to Searle's "Chinese Room" (in which case language comes into play, peripherally, again) - as an outside observer you can't tell if the words you're seeing "mean" what they think they do, or whether they "mean" anything at all as opposed to being the product of a mere mechanical process.

On a more personal level looking at it from the assumed perspective of Rose, the "gold doo-dads on those cards" believe themselves to be a person - can they believe otherwise? - but the only answer available as to why is "because I always was". When it comes down to it do we have any better reason ourselves? You could just as easily argue that Wolfe is implying that there are no souls, either for Rose-in-Marble or for ourselves. I won't make that argument, because I don't think he was actually arguing for either point of view.

I also find the situation complicated, because personally I was never sure that Rose was really in there any more than I could be sure that Thecla was "really" in Severian. The two are actually pretty close to the same case.

2) The Short Sun Narrator tells that story of a man who leaves a house and compares it to the soul leaving a body. He says, "the body doesn't die because the soul leaves. The soul leaves because the body dies and is no longer useful to it." (paraphrasing)

Once again, this shows an opinion that the soul is transcendent to the body.

But whose opinion? Silk and Horn have opinions that are distinct from Wolfe, and we often learn that Wolfe's narrators aren't always right - nor are they mouthpieces for Wolfe's own opinion.

And does he think the chems, Maytera Marble, Hammerstone, or Counselor Loris, Lemur, etc are people (Even if the bodies of counsel have died)?

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Granted not everyone (or anyone) agrees with me on this.

I agree with you that part of the original design of the chems *must* have been to accept the imprint of personalities. Possibly to give Pas & co. a set of convenient (and strong) receptacles at need. I am not sure about your conclusion, though - what about chem reproduction? This could be a serious theological problem from Wolfe's perspective. (Bonus question: is natural reproduction really any less of a theological problem, and if so or if not, what does this say about the nature of the soul?)

An interesting side thread to that entire issue is the theme which recurs repeatedly about imitation. Someone asks Silk what would happen if a demon tried to impersonate a god. A parallel question would then be, what if an AI tries to impersonate a soul? Does Silk's answer to that question hold up for either case?

Do the inhumans have souls or are they in the process of gaining souls?

They have souls. And look here! Here's another example of souls being split off from a donor.

There is something peculiar about inhuman souls, however. They seem to have only half of what they need, and the half they have is passive/impressionable/reactive, what some might call the "animal soul". The souls of the inhumans, and the Neighbors, present one of the biggest puzzles of the BotSS I think.

Chris (Civet)

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 03 Dec 2004, 08:30 · in reply to Chris

In something of a hurry but to reply to one part of Chris's and James's discussion - yes, only the Increate can make a soul or ensoul a being, but this does not mean that an artificial being is necessarily soulless - if we were to create a device capable of serving as the embodiment of a soul, there is no particular reason to suppose that the Increate would _not_ ensoul it. This is a bit of a slippery slope argument that begins with normal births and identical twins, moves to clones, from there to genetically manipulated embryos, and so on; there seems to be no single particular line you can draw and say with certainty, "God will grant _this_ a soul, but not _that_," where "this" and "that" are two consecutive stages on the slope. (Well, I suppose an argument could be made for "the point at which there is no neurobiological component at all.")

Hurriedly,

--Dan'l

On Fri, 03 Dec 2004 02:42:21 +0000, Chris <rasputin_ at hotmail.com> wrote:
Crush said:

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Well, before going further I tend to think that attempts to look for Wolfe's personal beliefs on these particular subjects through the books are doomed to failure. The questions Wolfe is raising are difficult - many would say impossible - to answer rationally. (There is always faith, but faith can't be communicated). Wolfe knows this, and I think he understands that any attempt to actually *answer* them in his books would fatally flaw the text. I think that Wolfe's goal is not to answer these questions but to put them in front of you in a vivid way and force you to confront the inherent paradoxes.

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Marble because she was a person originally.

But, going beyond the surface of the words, you're still left with a problem here - are the words the product of a soul/person perceiving its own nature, or are they the product of a program, a "simulation" of sorts? On the one hand you can compare it to Searle's "Chinese Room" (in which case language comes into play, peripherally, again) - as an outside observer you can't tell if the words you're seeing "mean" what they think they do, or whether they "mean" anything at all as opposed to being the product of a mere mechanical process.

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But whose opinion? Silk and Horn have opinions that are distinct from Wolfe, and we often learn that Wolfe's narrators aren't always right - nor are they mouthpieces for Wolfe's own opinion.

And does he think the chems, Maytera Marble, Hammerstone, or Counselor Loris, Lemur, etc are people (Even if the bodies of counsel have died)?

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considering all I just said, I have an explanation. I've said it here before

but here goes:

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what does this say about the nature of the soul?)

An interesting side thread to that entire issue is the theme which recurs repeatedly about imitation. Someone asks Silk what would happen if a demon tried to impersonate a god. A parallel question would then be, what if an AI tries to impersonate a soul? Does Silk's answer to that question hold up for either case?

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They have souls. And look here! Here's another example of souls being split off from a donor.

There is something peculiar about inhumis souls, however. They seem to have only half of what they need, and the half they have is passive/impressionable/reactive, what some might call the "animal soul". The souls of the inhumis, and the Neighbors, present one of the biggest puzzles of the BotSS I think.

Chris (Civet)

James Wynn — 03 Dec 2004, 17:59 · in reply to Chris

Phrases marked ">>" were mine.

Civit said:

Well, before going further I tend to think that attempts to look for Wolfe's personal beliefs on these particular subjects through the books are doomed to failure. The questions Wolfe is raising are difficult - many would say impossible - to answer rationally. (There is always faith, but faith can't be communicated). Wolfe knows this, and I think he understands that any attempt to actually *answer* them in his books would fatally flaw the text.

I think that Wolfe's goal is not to answer these questions but to put them in front of you in a vivid way and force you to confront the inherent paradoxes.

Maybe. But I would be very surprised to learn that the argument that Silk gives for not disarming Viron does not map to Wolfe's own opinions regarding gun-control?

By the same token, Wolfe has Rose-in-Marble explain why she is a person and not a machine-generated anomaly. Note that soul in the original Rose has "gone to Mainframe" or Heaven or wherever souls "really" go in the Long Sun universe. It seems likely to me that Wolfe has put into her mouth an argument that he sees as valid...in this case.

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Yes but is Rose's soul absent or present. If for Wolfe, the soul is an object either

inside or outside of time. If it is merely Rose's personality, than a person is cognition of sufficient complexity and self recursion, with or without a soul.
Yes, but Wolfe is saying you can copy/reconstruct a persona, a mind, not a soul.
It doesn't make sense to say an exact copy of a piece of information is a fascimile.
Information is not a material object. If the soul is an energetic entity as opposed to an informational one, then that is different, but I don't know if he says that anywhere.

A physicist will tell you different. The piece of paper is far more intricately detailed information than the words written on it but it is information as well. It seems to me that Rose is not just talking about her feelings. She seems to have been considering the matter and believes she is a person based logic. Granted: based on logic that is based on premises that one can accept or reject. Still, it seems to me that those premises are being leaked by the author. I know Wolfe frequently has very wise characters say things he believes and even shows to be false. This seems different.

Civit replied

But, going beyond the surface of the words, you're still left with a problem here - are the words the product of a soul/person perceiving its own nature, or are they the product of a program, a "simulation" of sorts?

That's what I'm trying to say. Wolfe's general story-telling from Fifth Head, Latro, and the Sun cycle could legitimately lead one to think that Wolfe sees the soul as pure information. But a few key statements in LS and SS and now The Wizard Knight lead me to believe that Wolfe probably

actually considers the soul to be *somehow* transcendent* of matter. If the soul were not transcendent to the medium then the soul would not typically "leave the body" when it was no longer useful as the Narrator of the SS says it does.

Nor would Gylf's death be significantly different from Mani's in that Mani's soul would die when the cat does (because Mani is the merger of the elemental and the cat) but the elemental spirit would live on. It seems to me that Able was saying that "Gylf's soul" would not die with him because it was ultimately created by the Most High God.

Wolfe seems to me to have rejected Turing's standard for a "self-conscious" machine and accepted Searle's Chinese Room argument.

But if anyone were to apply the model of "soul = information" he could hardly be blamed. That model works for most that happens in a Wolfe novel.

Civit says

You could just as easily argue that Wolfe is implying that there are no souls, either for Rose-in-Marble or for ourselves. I won't make that argument, because I don't think he was actually arguing for either point of view.

I don't either, of course, and frankly I don't think that would be a very accurate reading even if we didn't have extra-textual reason to doubt it.

for Wolfe, a mind is memory and that is the persona or identity. this doesn't say what Wolfe thinks of the soul, and the way he treats the reinscription of Severian, not that he believes this, but the way he treats Severian's multiple copies it is as if he is equating the soul with the information of the persona. In other words, I'm baffled, I do not know what Wolfe is trying to tell us about the relationship between the soul and how that relates to the mind-body problem if anything.

I think Wolfe has a personal theory regarding the soul - that it is transcendent of matter and time. He is deliberately constructing stories that assault that theory to see if it continues to stand up.

Civit asks

But [regarding the SS Narator] whose opinion? Silk and Horn have opinions that are distinct from Wolfe, and we often learn that Wolfe's narrators aren't always right - nor are they mouthpieces for Wolfe's own opinion.

I agree. Obviously, I consider this one to be distinct from other opinions for reasons that might not be impervious to critique. This, and Rose-in-Marble's statement feel different to me.

Chris says

I agree with you that part of the original design of the chems *must* have been to accept the imprint of personalities. Possibly to give Pas & co. a set of convenient (and strong) receptacles at need. I am not sure about your conclusion, though - what about chem reproduction? This could be a serious theological problem from Wolfe's perspective. (Bonus question: is natural reproduction really any less of a theological problem, and if so or if not, what does this say about the nature of the soul?)

You see, you've anticipated my response. I don't think chem reproduction is a problem. An interesting question? Very. But not directly relevant. New chem personalities are an amalgum of their parents'.

Turin asks

When you say [made to be ensouled] does that mean a downloaded personality prompts God to endow the organism supporting the persona a soul or that it shares a soul with the organism with the original personality, Kypris or Pas. In other words, is Hammerstone Pas? Does the soul constitute the identity even if the personae are identical?

Yes. I believe that Hamerstone is Typhon (Pas is a similar but different matter) without his memories. You see? Memories don't equal the soul, or else what of the soul of the sleepers in the Whorl? Are they different persons after that? Frankly, I don't think it is coincidental that the female chems looked like Mamelta. And IMO this is the explanation of Silk realizing that he and Sand are "brothers".

But a soul is related to memory. Hammerstone becomes (it seems) a very different person from the fellow Severian met in the mountain.

Turin originally said:

The elves in the Wizard Knight don't have souls, but he implies that they will could receive souls, but this is a convention of faerie stories, the soulless elves.

No comment.

and Turin responded

This does relate to the A.I. debate only in that they have personalities and not souls, but as I have said before I don't trust the Wizard >Knight to inform the questions raised by the Sun books.

I neglected to answer your original question because I felt to go far into it was a spoiler (and we've decided to discuss The Wizard Knight until after the New Year. However, a dog (normal ones, not like Gylf) have personalities but (according to the book of Ecclesiastes?) has no soul. So, yes, a soul I presume *could* be seen as separate from the personality which we can agree changes over time anyway (i.e. a personality is mutable, a soul is not).

Civit asks

An interesting side thread to that entire issue is the theme which recurs repeatedly about imitation. Someone asks Silk what would happen if a demon tried to impersonate a god. A parallel question would then be, what if an AI tries to impersonate a soul? Does Silk's answer to that question hold up for either case?

Hmmm...since I believe they have human souls, perhaps I'm not the one to take that on. But remember that the Outsider says demon who pretends to be a god will become a god ****in a way.***** Quetzal is a fiend who wants to bring the people of Viron to Green to provide food for his species. He is pretending to be a kindly old augur who is seeking the best for his people. He ends up dying trying to lead them safely through the tunnels. So I don't know about chems, but it sort of worked for Quetzal. And Horn mimicked Silk and eventually in a way became him.

Turin speculates:

As for language, Seawrack says that Horn has made Baby and her people and if they go back to their previous environments they will no longer be people. In this case, is personhood a kind of socialization or domestication?

Baby is learning how to communicate, and Seawrack is using whatever language Horn is speaking. If Horn makes Seawrack a person, but she knew the Mother's language beforehand, it doesn't seem as if language makes Seawrack a person. However, Baby did not know how to communicate before he met Horn, so is communication or rather conscious representation, the basis of personhood, and if Baby was not a person, did he have a soul?

Okay. First of all, I don't get Seawrack. It bugs me that Seawrack and Hyacinth are so key and so obscure. In the case of Babbie, remember when they all go Urth and Babbie looks like a guy with big arms and glasses? You probably were here when I came to the positive conclusion about who was in Babbie....it was Silk (the only character in the books with glasses and according to Remora "by far the huskiest student the schola produced that year"). I think Babbie has mental communication with the people he is around and...I don't know the words but he sort of becomes them over time. So it isn't language that "ensouls" Babbie. It is a processes similar to how Rose got into Marble and how Lemur became entrapped in a chem.

In case of Seawrack, her fear of not being a person is similar to Dorcas believing she is a ghost, just as Silk is a reinscribed Severian, so is Seawrack and Mamelta reinscriptions of Dorcas. I think

Wolfe believed that Seawrack was always a person, and I say that because I think Wolfe agrees with Severian that Dorcas is not a ghost, but that is more intuition than anything and a kind of guessing on Wolfe's sentiment towards Dorcas/Mamelta/Seawrack. I don't think he thinks language is necessary for personhood, but I am not sure about representation. This is a concept that cognitive science debates endlessly over, but one I think Wolfe is not unaware of or hasn't studied.

The question once again is "what does Wolfe consider a ghost?" According to the Narrator of the Short Sun they are all ghosts when they dream travel. Was Rose-in-Marble a ghost?

Turin asks:

Also, why is Oreb four feet tall in Horn's dreams?

Nathan answered this a bit, but Oreb at the time was the amalguma of Scylla and the bird, just as Mani is the amalgum of a cat and an elemental spirit.

Chris — 04 Dec 2004, 12:16 · in reply to James Wynn

Crush said:

Maybe. But I would be very surprised to learn that the argument that Silk gives for not disarming Viron does not map to Wolfe's own opinions regarding gun-control?

Quite possibly so. But the issue of gun control is also not so much a deep philosophical problem, and Silk's concerns are quite practical - you can map them to sets of applicable circumstances, I don't think they're meant as a universal law. I do see your point, though - I'll argue below that Wolfe did have a point with these stories, but that his point wasn't so much whether or not chems have souls, or whether we can know they have souls.

It seems to me that Rose is not just talking about her feelings. She seems to have been considering the matter and believes she is a person based logic.

Well, Descartes tried this as well. This entire class of arguments has logical problems that probably make them a dead end. But they do articulate one of our most basic intuitions on the subject.

My take on this is that it is to show that "Rose" at least appears to be reflective about her existence, in a simple way, which will be important for other reasons.

That's what I'm trying to say. Wolfe's general story-telling from Fifth Head, Latro, and the Sun cycle could legitimately lead one to think that Wolfe sees the soul as pure information. But a few key statements in LS and SS and now The Wizard Knight lead me to believe that Wolfe probably **actually** considers the soul to be **somehow** transcendent* of matter.

I'm going to diverge for a second to frame the dispute you've mentioned, because it's a real philosophical point of contention. I've seen it most clearly articulated in Parfit, but he seems to have been partially inspired by Proust (as was 5HoC, which you mentioned). Parfit says our intuitions waffle between two views on identity, and that these views of identity have different moral consequences, which tend to make our judgments somewhat inconsistent. He calls them the simple and the complex view - I don't think these names are apt, but I'll use them anyway.

The complex view is like what you mentioned about pure information. Our identity is the set of inclinations, aptitudes, goals, loves, and most importantly **memories** we have. The intuition

here is that if we lost all of the above, we could say quite seriously that the person we were is dead, just as Proust talks about a succession of selves; further, when we contemplate the future person we will become, who may care about significantly different things and may have forgotten some of our most cherished memories, etc, for us to wish to become that person seems a sort of suicidal impulse. So, with the complex view our identity is in a state of constant flux, usually a little at a time.

The simple view is probably more intuitive, at least to me, and that is that identity is really something outside all that, some essential connection which is continuous and makes you yourself even if you get some form of radical amnesia and start over from a blank slate. It is, as you say, "somehow transcendent of matter".

Like our intuitions, I think Wolfe presents us with some cases where the simple view seems more right somehow, and some where the complex seems correct. As a matter of fact you could probably take these cases and present them as a series of thought problems on the subject. I think, from other statements you've made, that you more or less agree on this point.

Wolfe seems to me to have rejected Turing's standard for a "self-conscious" machine and accepted Searle's Chinese Room argument.

I think on this one, though, you may have meant the opposite of what you said. I could be wrong, but I think if Wolfe accepted Searle's argument then he would say that no chems have souls, period. Searle argues (in variously stronger or weaker forms) against the very possibility of AI. Turing, on the other hand, to use Turin's terms, seems to give up on the "ontological" problem (whether AI's are "really" conscious or "really" have souls) and goes for the "epistemological", saying - if I interpret the quote correctly - that if it LOOKS conscious then I'm going to say it IS conscious, and since that's as close to the reality as we can get, let's say that we "know" it's conscious. This seems to go along somewhat with what you are saying about Wolfe's opinion.

I'm arguing that Wolfe doesn't seem to take a hard position on either of those; his opinion is moral, rather than ontological or epistemological. This ties in neatly with another thread of the conversation - Turin differentiated between having a soul and being a person at some point, I believe. I'm willing to expand on this at this point - "having a soul" is a possible property in reality, a statement about the real world. To know that something has a soul is to know something about what *is*. In the sense I'm talking about here (not the sense used in Rose's quote), personhood is a *moral status* - a statement about how someone/something *ought* to be treated. You can grant something personhood without granting it a soul, and (this is arguable, but not an argument we want to get into here) you can grant a soul without granting personhood.

Silk *treats* Rose-in-Marble as he would treat Rose, but this doesn't mean he somehow knows Rose is in there. He can't know. In fact he seems troubled by some doubts if I recall correctly. But regardless, he grants her personhood and treats her accordingly. This may seem just a sentimental streak in Wolfe, or non-controversial, but in a way it's a substantial position because it would grant moral rights to AI.

You see, you've anticipated my response. I don't think chem reproduction is a problem. An interesting question? Very. But not directly relevant. New chem personalities are an amalgum of their parents'.

Well, hold on. To say that chem "personalities" are from their parents says nothing about the "soul", unless you're taking the "complex view" I mentioned above. Actually I tend to agree with what you've said about Wolfe's views on the soul, which accord more with the "simple" view (it's just that I don't think he's really pushing that view through the book). So, if we're saying that the original chems got their "souls" (as distinct from mere personality) from people, then

the question of where the children get their souls is sticky. If it's just the characteristics of personality that got transferred to the original chems, then you have to either say that "souls" weren't really implanted into the chems, or else accept the complex view (personality = soul).

This might make the segment below worth re-examining:

Turin asks

When you say [made to be ensouled] does that mean a downloaded personality prompts God to endow the organism supporting the persona a soul or that it shares a soul with the organism with the original personality, Kypris or Pas. In other words, is Hammerstone Pas? Does the soul constitute the identity even if the personae are identical?

Yes. I believe that Hamerstone is Typhon (Pas is a similar but different matter) without his memories. You see? Memories don't equal the soul, or else what of the soul of the sleepers in the Whorl? Are they different persons after that? Frankly, I don't think it is coincidental that the female chems looked like Mamelta. And IMO this is the explanation of Silk realizing that he and Sand are "brothers".

But a soul is related to memory. Hammerstone becomes (it seems) a very different person from the fellow Severian met in the mountain.

I would very tentatively guess that a better expression would have been "a persona is related to memory". To say that a soul is related to memory implies that with different memories you have a different soul - thus you're back to the complex view.

Civit asks

An interesting side thread to that entire issue is the theme which recurs repeatedly about imitation. Someone asks Silk what would happen if a demon tried to impersonate a god. A parallel question would then be, what if an AI tries to impersonate a soul? Does Silk's answer to that question hold up for either case?

Here I think my own confusion with the word "soul" bit me, when I look at it now. An AI could imitate a human persona, but to impersonate a "soul" would imply that we have some way of actually perceiving souls in humans, and the only "soul" we really subjectively experience is our own. We just infer the presence of souls based on the personas we're presented with in other people. In any event, looking at it now it doesn't really make sense. Mea culpa.

know about chems, but it sort of worked for Quetzal. And Horn mimicked Silk and eventually in a way became him.

Come to think of it the simple/complex view problem does seem to bear on Silkhorn, with some interesting potential consequences depending on which view you believe. I'm going to have to think about this, because it does seem to suggest a way out of some problems that have always confused me with that subject...

Lisa Schaffer-Doggett — 05 Dec 2004, 12:33 · in reply to Chris

On Saturday, December 4, 2004, at 12:15 PM, Chris wrote:
Crush said:

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I think on this one, though, you may have meant the opposite of what you said. I could be wrong, but I think if Wolfe accepted Searle's argument then he would say that no chems have souls, period. Searle argues (in variously stronger or weaker forms) against the very possibility of AI. Turing, on the other hand, to use Turin's terms, seems to give up on the "ontological" problem (whether AI's are "really" conscious or "really" have souls) and goes for the "epistemological", saying - if I interpret the quote correctly - that if it LOOKS conscious then I'm going to say it IS conscious, and since that's as close to the reality as we can get, let's say that we "know" it's conscious. This seems to go along somewhat with what you are saying about Wolfe's opinion.

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At the risk of diving in over my head and, worse, adding nothing useful to this interesting discussion, I'd like to share an epiphany I had while reading above. In a universe that is "of God" (not simply, "by God", implying a separation that seems impossible to me) all creatures should have souls. That is, they are all a little bit of the divine impulse. The difference I think, is that humans have achieved a level of self awareness that has separated them from the divine (in a sense we're all little demiurges) So, the more "human" a chem or inhum becomes, the more its soul becomes a separate entity from the "godhead" and the more it becomes responsible for its own actions and morality becomes an issue. I hope this isn't ridiculous or off the point.

Don

Stanisław Bocian — 05 Dec 2004, 13:51 · in reply to James Wynn

Saturday, December 4, 2004, 2:59:45 AM, James Wynn wrote:

JW> That's what I'm trying to say. Wolfe's general story-telling from Fifth
JW> Head, Latro, and the Sun cycle could legitimately lead one to think that JW> Wolfe sees the soul as pure information. But a few key statements in LS and JW> SS and now The Wizard Knight lead me to believe that Wolfe probably JW> *actually* considers the soul to be *somehow* transcendent of matter. If JW> the soul were not transcendent to the medium then the soul would not JW> typically "leave the body" when it was no longer useful as the Narrator of JW> the SS says it does.

JW> Nor would Gylf's death be significantly different from Mani's in that Mani's JW> soul would die when the cat does (because Mani is the merger of the JW> elemental and the cat) but the elemental spirit would live on. It seems to JW> me that Able was saying that "Gylf's soul" would not die with him because it JW> was ultimately created by the Most High God.

JW> Wolfe seems to me to have rejected Turing's standard for a "self-conscious" JW> machine and accepted Searle's Chinese Room argument.

JW> But if anyone were to apply the model of "soul = information" he could
JW> hardly be blamed. That model works for most that happens in a Wolfe novel.

I think it would be relevant to mention, that in Eastern tradition, common for Jews, Zoroastrian Persians, Gnostics and early Christians, Man was not divided into two parts, but in three. Cartesius thinks that man consists of mind and body, but in the ancient tradition, man consists of body, soul, spirit (soma, psyche, pneuma.) Body is body, psyche is memory, psychic, reason (with reason it is more complicated), pneuma - spirit - is the spark of the fire of God which makes us men. The body and the psyche can be destroyed or damaged, or changed, so that I will remember something else, but the spirit - pneuma - remains.

It could also be compared with transcendental subject in phenomenology. When we try to reach the transcendental subject we must treat provisionally all outside experience as unproved and possibly illusional - including our memory.

The good example is a quite good and Gnostic film "Dark City" by Alex Proyas. In it some kind of aliens have set up an experimental city, and keep exchanging memories of men to try to discover, what makes their identity. The hero gets the memory of a multiple murderer.

<http://www.eskimo.com/~noir/ftitles/darkcity2/index.shtml>

Stanislaus Bocian

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