

urth-urth.net Digest, Vol 4, Issue 19

The Urth list — 24 messages, 10 voices, 08 Dec 2004

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4277>

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turin — 08 Dec 2004, 16:53

I was baiting everyone with the question of magic in TBOTNS. Magic doesn't really exist for Wolfe or Tolkien in the sense that it is "unnatural" or "supernatural". The idea of the supernatural is actually a Protestant view which almost corresponds to the scientific revolution. One of the things I think Wolfe is saying about the bios and the chems is that there is no fundamental difference between the natural and the artificial. Mechanical life is life, even if it is not "ensouled". If you notice American commercials always talk about natural and artificial ingredients, and Reagen passed the "designer" drug legislation when he created the ATF. Just because something is created by human design doesn't mean it is unnatural. In academia, we've cut up not only the sciences and the humanities but philosophy and literature from psychology and history. It's true there is specialization and one person like Da Vinci can't write the encyclopedia galatica now, but that doesn't mean we should stop communication between systems of knowledge. In this very general sense of I don't know if it makes sense to talk about genre in the sense of science fiction, fantasy, horror and "literature" etc. However, I would categorize most books with scifi/fantasy content, romances. Novels in literary theory at least the definition of the novel is very limited. Besides, Wolfe, H.G. Wells also called his books science romances. Also, in Italy they still call books romanze rather than novelli, this is important, I think, because the novel is both a Protestant and Enlightenment construction. I don't know, then, if any Catholic scifi book can be a novel.

Stanislaus launched a preemptive strike with wave functions before me, and did it with Tolkien. One thing I will say about Gandalf's power is that he is an incarnate being rather than one with an assumed body like Tom Bombadil, which has its advantages and disadvantages and is not an issue in order of complexity. Reality in middle-earth in the third age as opposed to Aman is more inflexible. Part of the winding down of the universe is the rigidity and low probability of drastic change.

However, the advantage of being human in Ea over anything else is that the permutations of life available to you are more numerous than any other kind of person, especially the Valar. For Tolkien I think power is a kind of black box technology which operates on a level of base secondary reality, which is what he calls creation. This corresponds to Bohr's ideas about assignment in quantum mechanics, so I think it is a good metaphor, but I think the concept of probability is a little bit misleading in that Tolkien's implication is the process is more casually efficacious and direct than quantum mechanics and of course happens at a macroscopic level. It is, I think, conceptually more extreme than Wolfe's idea of the power of the heirodoles, even if there are less manipulations of form that is perceived by humans. Tolkien has a kind of modesty about him. At the same time Namo Mandos is not so much an oracle as a statistician or to use Asimov's idea of psyhohistory. He is practically blind when it comes to humans. This is why humans are able to maintain incarnation in a rigid world whereas elves cannot. That is a secret post-facto impetus for leaving middle-earth, the prison of disembodiment, which for the elves, is not the desirable or default mode of being.

I don't think Wolfe solve the soul, mind problem, his rejection of Descartes but not A.I. was refreshing and that's why I wanted to talk about it. Even material monists like Seale or Penrose don't think A.I. is possible, and I think that's silly. Medieval europe had not concept of the liberal human subject, and I don't know if the humanities' view of the liberal subject is very helpful.

Notice the Catholics accepted evolution and thermodynamics while the Protestants do not, besides the fact Catholics don't deracinate Christianity. I think this has a lot to do with the Catholic culture's ideas about animals and the natural world which extends to ideas about nonhuman persons. The idea of the nonhuman person is an old one which the Enlightenment eliminated with the liberal subject and which seems to be remanifesting in the last hundred years. I think that's all we can really come away from the Catholic scifi A.I. debate with. I don't think Protestantism is a problem, I just think it has facilitated the growth of spooky cultural problems, especially in America, and I think our atavism towards "artificial" life is a good example of a good cross section of the neurosis of the last three hundred years
EOT;

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 09 Dec 2004, 10:06 · in reply to turin

Again, just riffing on something Turin said ...

I don't know if it makes sense to talk about genre in the sense of science fiction, fantasy, horror and "literature" etc.

It does, but only if you recognize that "genres" of this sort are not categories, that is nouns, pigeonholes, but adjectives. Thus one of my semi-secret vices is Nora Roberts' "Eve Dallas" books, a series of science fiction - "romance" - police procedural murder mysteries, all three of which genre labels accurately but insufficiently _describe_ the "kind" of books these are.

However, I would categorize most books with scifi/fantasy content, romances.

Agreed. One of the reasons Stephen R. Donaldson is loved and loathed by different readers is that he brought the true novelistic tradition into the "genre" of High Fantasy, and many readers didn't want that.

--Dan'l

www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer

Freedom has no barcode.

--J.G. Ballard

Nathan Spears — 09 Dec 2004, 10:15 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

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The reason I loathe Donaldson is because I felt like I was going to be sick fifty pages into the first book in the gap series. I rarely stop reading a book, because I don't think it's fair to form an opinion of a work without being fully aware of it, but I put that book down pretty quickly. I felt like I was reading loathsome fan fiction, and I wouldn't really want to read anything that he wrote.

Also the Gap book titles are sooooo bad.

James Wynn — 09 Dec 2004, 13:58 · in reply to turin

So much has gone on since my last post I'm hesitant reference quotes precisely so I'll just sum up.

Civit's delineation between a simple and complex soul is astute. For convenience sake I think one should call the "simple" version a "soul" and the complex version the "psyche".

Roy's reference to Sidero is a pertinent one. But there are some weaknesses: a) Sidero does not question his existence. The conversation between Severian and Sidero only touches on how men were formed from less complex and how Sidero's "people" did as well. That men and autonomous robots are complex and independent and slowly evolved from less forms does mean that Sidero (or even Severian, for that matter) has a soul.

b) That Sidero apologizes for his past does not mean he has a soul or is even sentient. Sidero was made to work among and with men and, originally at least, for men. Now one presumes he works for mankind. Social graces would be necessary for such a task and would logically be programmed in.

c) That Sidero felt pleasure in hitting Severian does not mean that he has a soul or is even sentient. Chems in LS take pleasure in good smells because they need to to cook well. Consequently, it would not be unreasonable for Chems to wear perfume or for Sidero be inclined to take "pleasure" in whatever task he is programmed to do. My dog seems to take pleasure in so many things, but despite what Martin Luther may say (and what Able implies in The Wizard), my dog (as opposed to Gylf) does not have a soul. Note that Sidero does not apologize for striking Severian. In that

d) The fact that Sidero repents does not require that he believes in God. Any atheist would tell you that I'm sure.

Does sentiency (which, I guess, falls under the realm of the psyche) presume a soul? I don't see why it should. Wolfe provides an example of psyche not co-existing with a soul in a recent work. So may argue that it is not reasonable to draw parallels between a work of fantasy and a work of science fiction. I disagree, because the consideration of the soul spans science fiction and fantasy and 2) the Sun cycle decimates any strict genre guidelines between the two anyway.

Here examples of the "soul" experiments Wolfe offers that I can think of: A) The Machine Analogies: Mr. Million, The Fox, Sidero, Chems, The Whorl Gods, The Short Sun (SS) Mother.

B) Animals With Souls

Scylla-in-Oreb, Mani-with-his-Elemental-Soul, Gylf, the Inhum, Babbie (remember we see his soul during dream travel)

(other talking animals include Oreb in his natural state and Tick the Catachrest, do they have souls? -- btw how did Echidna summon all those snakes?)

The Possessions:

Thecla in Sev, the line of Autarchs in Sev, Lemur in the chem, Rose-In-Marble, the Whorl Gods in Humans, Mucor-in-People (IMO: Mamelta-in-Marble, Molybdenum-in-Marble, Pas-in-Hammerstone,)

Memory experiments:

Latro (who can't remember anything for more than 18 hours) and the Whorl Sleepers who can't remember their lives on Urth and seems to have been implanted with false memories)

Pot Pouri:

Typhon and Piaton, Dream-Travel, Mucor's travel (which may not count since apparently involves remotely imprinting her image on the minds of other people), The Neighbors; Question: When Severian rides in Sidero does that constitute another soul in the same way that Mani and

his elemental constitute a temporary soul?

It is interesting to me that Wolfe never chose to take Marble on a dream-travel trip. It would help in this discussion if he had.

All this does not influence my conviction that Wolfe has betrayed a belief in a *soul* instead of merely a *psyche* but he seems deliberately obscure regarding where the dividing line is between them and as I said, I could definitely understand someone seeing it the opposite way.

Notice the Catholics accepted evolution and thermodynamics while the Protestants do not, besides the fact Catholics don't deracinate Christianity

I was not aware of the former, and I'm sure I could make a case that Catholics have deracinated as much as anyone with even more vigor. Some Catholics believe in evolution and some don't. Just like Protestants, and both are bothered by the idea that the universe material universe is a closed cycle in which only chemical and physical operations apply.

Also, one of the Pope's primary reasons for coming out against human cloning and contraception is a rejection of making humanity a human creation.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 09 Dec 2004, 14:56 · in reply to James Wynn

On Thu, 9 Dec 2004 16:58:40 -0500, James Wynn <thewynns at earthlink.net> wrote:
Notice the Catholics accepted evolution and thermodynamics while the Protestants do not, besides the fact Catholics don't deracinate Christianity

I was not aware of the former,

Though the scientific model of the universe, including the Big Bang and evolution, is not "accepted" in the sense of being something the Catholic church teaches as doctrine, it is, believe it or not, heretical to deny it on the basis of the first bit of Genesis. The argument is a bit subtle, but basically, the ideas is that Genesis teaches that God created the world, but to insist that He had to do it _that way_ because the book says so is to limit God's freedom to create however He chooses.

This is not to say that Catholics can't believe in seven-day creation if they choose. They just have to have better evidence, or at least they can't deny that God might have done it the other way if He wanted to.

--Dan'l

www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer
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--J.G. Ballard

James Wynn — 09 Dec 2004, 15:02 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

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I wasn't aware of that, but I still repudiate the generalization and I've never met a Protestant that denied the laws of Thermodynamics.

~ Crush

maru — 09 Dec 2004, 17:01 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Wow. That is... the most bizaare religious teaching I've ever seen. So, does that mean that we can honestly and non-heretically beleive that Jesus was never crucified? Cause to insist that he had to be crucified obviously limits Gods ability to do whatever ve wishes to. ~Maru

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:

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This is not to say that Catholics can't believe in seven-day creation if they choose. They just have to have better evidence, or at least they can't deny that God might have done it the other way if He wanted to.

--Dan'l

Iorwerth Thomas — 10 Dec 2004, 05:06 · in reply to James Wynn

Notice the Catholics accepted evolution and thermodynamics while the Protestants do not, besides the fact Catholics don't deracinate Christianity

That should probably be modified to _some_ (perhaps a minority) Protestants, as myself and the Reverend Professor John Polkinghorne would be in deep trouble if, as scientists, we believed in neither evolution nor thermodynamics.

In fact, apart from Ian Paisley, I can't actually think of any high-profile Creationist Protestants in the UK; it's more of a US thing.

Iorwerth Thomas

Iorwerth Thomas — 10 Dec 2004, 09:17 · in reply to Iorwerth Thomas

Oops, sorry if that came across a bit snarky; haven't been getting enough sleep recently.

And in the interests of interdenominational harmony, I can't think of ANY Creationist Catholics.

Iorwerth

From: "Iorwerth Thomas" <iorweththomas at hotmail.com>
Reply-To: The Urth Mailing List <urth-urth.net at lists.urth.net>
To: urth-urth.net at lists.urth.net
Subject: Re: (urth) Re: urth-urth.net Digest, Vol 4, Issue 19
Date: Fri, 10 Dec 2004 13:05:41 +0000

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James Wynn — 10 Dec 2004, 11:00 · in reply to Iorwerth Thomas

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I'm sure I could find some easily among the nuns a many a parochial school (increasingly easily depending on the definition of "Creationist"). I don't consider this a put down (although I recognize that many think it is, Catholic or not). I know many educated intelligent Creationists of various stripes.

~ Crush

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 10 Dec 2004, 11:03 · in reply to Iorwerth Thomas

Iorwerth,

Third-world Catholics are frequently Creationists.

On Fri, 10 Dec 2004 17:16:57 +0000, Iorwerth Thomas
<iorwerththomas at hotmail.com> wrote:

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Matthew Malthouse — 10 Dec 2004, 14:11 · in reply to Nathan Spears

At 18:15 09/12/2004, Nathan Spears wrote:

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Did you ever pick it up again? Or tried other of Donaldson's works?

"The Real Story" is a very disturbing book and I think an unfortunate introduction to the series. Perhaps it might have been better done amalgamated into the second volume which at least would have given the reader some idea of why TRS is so utterly black.

But for all its darkness the redemptions of Morn, Angus and others wouldn't be possible without that beginning.

I was about to write that "Mordant's Need" (which I happen to have just re-read) is entirely different. Well it is, but there is a congruence between Terisa's sometime vacancy and what brings her out of it and some of the reactions Morn has.

Matthew

Chris — 10 Dec 2004, 15:14 · in reply to James Wynn

As a preliminary note, I've found the posts laying out the specific examples of Wolfe's thought problems to be interesting, although I disagree with the project of dropping them into categories as such. I think it would be more effective, actually, to define an axis or two and then place the specific examples within the overall framework, which may point out which examples can most fruitfully be compared (and point out some examples that aren't really so comparable as they appear). For example, the biological/mechanical distinction would be one axis. Memory might be another. Etc, etc. To the cases worth looking at which have already been mentioned I would add another that was brought up to me by another reader of this list: the case of Dr. Talos, as a creation of Baldanders.

The main thing I'm going to be concerned with in this post, though, is taking a look at Silkhorn from various different perspectives, in a format (inappropriately, perhaps) similar to Kierkegaard's "Attunement" when he started examining Abraham. I'm going to use James Wynn's terms, "soul" and "psyche", which I think are appropriate, with the small qualification that the complex view actually allows two outlooks - one in which there is no such thing as a "soul", and another in which there is, but the "soul" is nothing other than the "psyche" itself. Whereas in the simple view there is always a soul, and it is always distinct from psyche. And on

we go...

From the complex (C) view:

As he lays dying, Horn's psyche is transferred to Silk's body. Silk effectively ceases to exist and Horn takes his place; he self-identifies as Horn, has continuity of memory with Horn, and has his inclinations, desires, and life projects. Bits of Silk's psyche might be considered to linger, in the form of certain mannerisms which *might* indicate that, on a deeper level, elements of Silk's psyche remains.

(C1) Over time, these submerged elements of Silk's psyche begin to play a larger and larger part and "Horn" slowly starts to become "Silk", until finally the elements of psyche most distinctly identified with Horn are almost entirely suppressed [leaving aside the question of whether Horn's psyche ended up being transferred elsewhere, etc]. In the end this neo-Silk realizes that he is no longer Horn, and mourns the death of his "former self".

(C2) Over time, Horn's attempts to imitate Silk, strengthened by the remnants of whatever remnant of Silk's inclinations biologically remain within his body, succeed in the self-transformation he has strived for - he becomes more and more like Silk, til the point where his psyche resembles the original Silk more than it does Horn, and he can be said to have "become" Silk. When he comes to terms with the transformation that has taken place, this new Silk mourns the death of his former self, which he in a sense deliberately caused.

Simple view, variant 1 (S1):

The Neighbor transfers Horn's soul and psyche into Silk, and Silk's soul departs (along with most, but possibly not all, of his psyche). Over time, Silk's psyche re-asserts itself because it is powerfully attached to the body Horn inhabits (S1a), or else Horn's imitation of Silk succeeds in transforming his psyche to be much like Silk's (S1b), as above. At this point Horn becomes overwhelmed, not only by his changed psyche but also by the insistence of everyone else, and despite his continuing inner conviction that he is Horn, finally becomes confused enough about his own identity that he accepts identification as Silk. "In a way" he can be said to have become Silk, in the same way that a demon imitating a god can be said to have become that god, but he is still, irreducibly, Horn - albeit a Horn that has "lost himself".

Simple view, variant 2 (S2):

The Neighbor transfers Horn's soul and psyche into Silk, but Silk's soul and psyche both remain as well. Silk's soul and psyche do not assert themselves at first, because they were on the brink of complete withdrawal and suicide when Horn arrived. Over time they recover, and are perhaps strengthened by Horn's attempt to imitate Silk. They reassert their claim on the body, which is more strongly tied to Silk than it is to Horn, and perhaps their psyches blend to an extent leaving a psyche which is a combination of Silk and Horn's imitation of Silk. Horn's soul eventually departs for parts unknown. When Silk realizes that Horn is gone for good, he mourns his friend.

Simple view, variant 3 (S3):

The Neighbor transfers Horn's psyche, but not his soul (which is moving to the great beyond) into Silk's body. Silk's soul remains present, but his psyche, which was despairing, is displaced by Horn's, which "takes care of him" and keeps him alive and moving. It is Silk the whole time, but a Silk who looks through the eyes and memories of Horn, and who self-identifies as Horn, while his original psyche deals with its grief. Silk's psyche gradually recovers and reasserts himself, but it takes additional time for Silk, who has gotten into the habit of self-identifying as Horn, to come to the realization of who he is and to face the pain that comes along with that realization.

One or none of these stories may be the one Wolfe was trying to tell; I think they all have some merit and would make a good story in their own right. The question I am interested in is, given the rest of the novels, are any of these stories particularly incompatible with Wolfe's overall

theme, and if so what makes them so? Or alternately, do any of the above Silkhorns fail to live up to the Silkhorn in BotSS, and if so, can we identify what it is that they lack?

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(other talking animals include Oreb in his natural state and Tick the

Catachrest, do they have souls? -- btw how did Echidna summon all those snakes?)

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Also, one of the Pope's primary reasons for coming out against human cloning and contraception is a rejection of making humanity a human creation.

James Wynn — 11 Dec 2004, 10:39 · in reply to Chris

From the complex (C) view:

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The question I am interested in is, given the rest of the novels, are any of these stories particularly incompatible with Wolfe's overall theme, and if so what makes them so? Or alternately, do any of the above Silkhorns

fail to live up to the Silkhorn in BotSS, and if so, can we identify what it is that they lack?

I don't have any reason disbelieve that Wolfe might have told any one of these variants. However, I don't think any of them fully explains what is going on. I am ready to elaborate on my explanation of what is going on there based consideration of matter previously and on this recent discussion. The truth, I believe, involves the complex and simple variants in equal measure:

Horn on the ruinous island sees a Neighbor in the form of a greenbuck. He chases after it, falls in a pit, breaks his neck and dies. The reason I say he breaks his neck (aside from being a likely way to die instantaneously in that circumstance) is that Babbie and Seawrack see him in that pit and know he is dead without having to go down there. The Neighbor feels guilt at having caused Horn's death (in a sense).

This is the guilt that haunts our Narrator throughout the story, and this guilt is the reason that he is adamant on being Horn instead of Silk....if he declares himself Silk or neither Horn nor Silk, it would mean that he had killed Horn and that there was no way to truly repair it.

At the end of the story, he is reported to say:

RTTW (HB) pg 411

"We will sail tonight...Would you be willing to make my farewells to Hoof and Hide?...I've been dreading it--in a sense, I have killed their father, though the Outsider surely knows that I never meant him the least harm. I don't want to have to face his sons..."

The Neighbor revives Horn by inhabiting his body as his soul and repairing the damage. It takes three days to do that. Now the "new Horn" is Horn's psyche with the Neighbor's soul or perhaps more accurately with the Neighbor

as his soul. He-Pen-Sheep and She-Pick-Berry seem to have a lot of discourse with the Neighbors and recognize on sight Horn's dual nature, calling him "Neighbor-man" OBW (HB) pg 261&262

Later our Narrator meets with Neighbors who give him a ring and the deed to Blue as a representative of his people. They choose him because he is a mixture of Neighbor and human. One of the Neighbors shakes Horn's hand and they "share blood".

On Blue's Waters (HB) pg 272

"My name is Horn." I offered him my hand.

He took it, and this time I felt his hand and remembered hard, and seemed to be covered with

short, stiff hairs. Beyond that I will not say. "My name is Horn also, " he told me. I felt that I was being paid an immense compliment, and did not know how to reply.

The "short, stiff hairs" Horn remembers are those that covered his body when he was a greenbuck. Now I don't know if the Neighbor he clasped hands with was his spiritual self or if the Neighbors are a communal intelligence or what. But when he shares blood with this Neighbor who afterward calls himself "Horn", the Narrator has access to some of his former psyche or that of the Neighbor. But it is clear that "Horn" has ceased to be merely that boy who arrived from the Whorl.

The Narrator says a few pages earlier that he does not remember this event merely in fairly accurate terms, but precisely as it occurred. This is because he remembers it simultaneously from two separate points of view: himself and the Neighbor with whom he clasped hands. This suggests that the Neighbors might have a loosely communal consciousness.

Later on Green, as the Narrator lays dying he uses his ring to summon help to heal him again.

IGJ (HB) pg127

"Through the ring a Neighbor saw him, and she came to him in his agony. He told her what was in his heart; and when he had finished, she said, "I cannot make you well again, and if I could you would still be in this place. I can do this for you, however, if you desire it. I can send your spirit into someone else, into someone whose own spirit is dying. If you wish, I will find someone in the whorl in which you were born. Then there will be one whole man there, instead of two dying men, one here and another there."

From what she says, the Narrator's agony is not just in that he is dying but in that he is going to fail his mission. The Neighbor's solution solves both those problems: giving him a workable body and putting him on the Whorl. She complicates matters in some ways by choosing the object of the Narrator's mission. Her reference to a "spirit that is dying" suggests, possibly, the psyche since one presumes the soul is immortal. But I think it means that Silk's soul has lost its will to remain with the body much longer and he will soon die by his will or by self-inflicted violence.

She sends the Neighbor-in-Horn (and here is the weakest part of my explanation) along with Horn's psyche that he has assumed into Silk. Possibly since Silk did not have to be brought back to life, but only his soul released, the Neighbor-in-Horn can retain his further identity. Or perhaps this was a special detail performed by the rescuing Neighbor since otherwise the mission could not be completed. But the Narrator definitely asserts:

IGJ (HB) pg 122

"Was this you for real Incanto? Were you on Green? By Echidna's babies, I think you were!"

I shook my head and told him it had been someone else, a man whose name I have forgotten, a man who wore a ring with a white stone. My own name is Horn, no matter what Oreb may say.

So by the time he starts writing the Book of the Short Sun, the Narrator is Horn's psyche and Silk's psyche and a Neighbor's soul and by the end of his story he ultimately realizes that he is neither most truly Horn nor Silk, but the soul inside or, perhaps, something entirely different from all three.

~ Crush

Iorwerth Thomas — 11 Dec 2004, 11:03 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Fair enough. Same probably goes for third world Protestants - I should have ended that statement with an 'in my rather limited' experience. Mea culpa.

Iorwerth

From: Dan'I Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com>
Reply-To: Dan'I Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com>,The Urth Mailing List
<urth-urth.net at lists.urth.net>
To: The Urth Mailing List <urth-urth.net at lists.urth.net>
Subject: Re: (urth) Re: urth-urth.net Digest, Vol 4, Issue 19
Date: Fri, 10 Dec 2004 11:01:43 -0800

Iorweth,

Third-world Catholics are frequently Creationists.

On Fri, 10 Dec 2004 17:16:57 +0000, Iorwerth Thomas
<iorweththomas at hotmail.com> wrote:

Oops, sorry if that came across a bit snarky; haven't been getting
enough
sleep recently.

And in the interests of interdenominational harmony, I can't think of
ANY
Creationist Catholics.

Iorwerth

From: "Iorwerth Thomas" <iorweththomas at hotmail.com>
Reply-To: The Urth Mailing List <urth-urth.net at lists.urth.net>
To: urth-urth.net at lists.urth.net
Subject: Re: (urth) Re: urth-urth.net Digest, Vol 4, Issue 19
Date: Fri, 10 Dec 2004 13:05:41 +0000

Notice the Catholics accepted evolution and thermodynamics while the
Protestants do not, besides the fact Catholics don't deracinate
Christianity

That should probably be modified to _some_ (perhaps a minority)
Protestants, as myself and the Reverend Professor John Polkinghorne
would
be in deep trouble if, as scientists, we believed in neither evolution
nor
thermodynamics.

In fact, apart from Ian Paisley, I can't actually think of any
high-profile Creationist Protestants in the UK; it's more of a US
thing.

Iorwerth Thomas

Iorwerth Thomas — 11 Dec 2004, 11:33 · in reply to James Wynn

I'm sure I could find some easily among the nuns a many a parochial school (increasingly easily depending on the definition of "Creationist").

On reflection, the same is probably true of many an Anglican Sunday school teacher...

I don't consider this a put down (although I recognize that many think it is, Catholic or not). I know many educated intelligent Creationists of various stripes.

A friend of mine was (and is, as far as I'm aware) a Creationist Mormon - and he was one of the best educated and intelligent people I've met. I still think that he's wrong, though :) (And he was prepared to admit that the evidence was against him, which is fair enough.) But there's no logical link between being a Creationist and being stupid; it may just be difficult to be one and an evolutionary biologist...

I think that what originally got my goat was the suggestion that attempting to harmonise one's scientific and religious beliefs was not something that Protestants did, which is false - it also appeared to illegitimately generalise over all the thousands of Protestant groups, which is a bit risky, since as well as Creationists, these various denominations and schools of thought include Anglicans (who don't agree on anything [1]) and liberal Protestant process philosophers (eg. David Ray Griffin), for whom evolutionary thought is an important part of their theology.

Iorwerth

[1] This is an empirical observation made by myself, as an Anglican.

Don Doggett — 11 Dec 2004, 23:22 · in reply to James Wynn

On Saturday, December 11, 2004, at 10:39 AM, James Wynn wrote:

So by the time he starts writing the Book of the Short Sun, the Narrator is Horn's psyche and Silk's psyche and a Neighbor's soul and by the end of his story he ultimately realizes that he is neither most truly Horn nor Silk, but the soul inside or, perhaps, something entirely different from all three.

I believe he is at long last, the Silk of LS (or "The Book of Silk" if you will), a character who never truly existed until Horn made him.

Don

James Wynn — 13 Dec 2004, 06:10 · in reply to James Wynn

So by the time he starts writing the Book of the Short Sun, the Narrator is Horn's psyche and Silk's psyche and a Neighbor's soul and by the end of his story he ultimately realizes that he is neither most truly Horn nor Silk, but the soul inside or, perhaps, something entirely different from all three.

Incidentally - for those might ask "what is the thematic import of this?" - I say this makes the Narrator simultaneously a "father, son, and (holy) spirit" although I'll wait for an opportune moment to come around before I prove that. (No, I don't think Horn is Silk's son)

There is a discussion in "Return To The Whorl" about how a certain god can be the son of a human and a son of Pas at the same time. I think an important part of what Wolfe is doing in the "Short Sun" is rationalizing/apologizing for the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation

~ Crush

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 13 Dec 2004, 08:38 · in reply to lorwerth Thomas

lorwerth -

If I gave the impression that I had no respect for Protestant intellect, or that I don't think any Protestants have struggled to make their faith work in the light of modern scientific data, please accept my apology. I certainly intended no such thing.

--Dan'l

www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer

Freedom has no barcode.

--J.G. Ballard

James Wynn — 13 Dec 2004, 09:19 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

If I gave the impression that I had no respect for Protestant intellect, or that I don't think any Protestants have struggled to make their faith work in the light of modern scientific data, please accept my apology. I certainly intended no such thing.

--Dan'l

I don't think you did that, Blattid, nor did I get the idea it was really you lorwerth was responding to.

lorwerth Thomas — 13 Dec 2004, 10:17 · in reply to James Wynn

I think I owe Blattid an apology - I should have tracked back and checked who made the remark I was responding to in the first place... My bad. Sorry for any upset caused.

Moving on... When I first read the BotNS, I was rather struck by the similarity between the Pancreator/Increate duality and the 'dipolar-opposite' theories of the nature of God in process theology.

A quick explanation: in process thought, God is thought of as having an eternal, metaphysically necessary and transcendent component to his nature, and a temporal, contingent, changing and immanent component (exact implementations vary with the process thinker: Chales Harsthorne has a different interpretation from his mentor, A N Whitehead, with most who are interested in the area following Harsthorne).

A better explanation: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/process-theism/>

The similarity is rather superficial (I don't know if Wolfe has heard of Whitehead et. al., and I doubt he'd approve of some of their more heterodox beliefs, eg. the rejection of traditional formulations of omnipotence in favour of divine persuasion) but I wonder if he may be drinking from similar metaphysical wells... Or maybe it has more to do with the incorporation of Hindu categories of thought into the future theology of Urth.

Any thoughts? (I'm probably talking utter drivel.)

Iorwerth

From: "James Wynn" <thewynns at earthlink.net>

James Wynn — 13 Dec 2004, 10:42 · in reply to Iorwerth Thomas

When I first read the BotNS, I was rather struck by the similarity between the Pancreator/Increate duality and the 'dipolar-opposite' theories of the nature of God in process theology.

A quick explanation: in process thought, God is thought of as having an eternal, metaphysically necessary and transcendent component to his nature, and a temporal, contingent, changing and immanent component (exact implementations vary with the process thinker: Chales Harsthorne has a different interpretation from his mentor, A N Whitehead, with most who are interested in the area following Harsthorne).

A better explanation: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/process-theism/>

Interesting. This theory (that God is mutable) seems very similar to "Open Theism" (the theory that God does not know the future) which has made quite a stir in recently certain Evangelical colleges. I didn't know it had an earlier iteration.

Can you give more detail in how you think Process Theism is exemplified in the Sun cycle?

~ Crush

Charles Reed — 16 Dec 2004, 12:59 · in reply to Don Doggett

Nothing to add, really. Just thought I'd say that this is a lovely, lovely thought. I've ruminated on it for some time now, and still find it pleasing to think about. Thanks, Don.

Charles

Don Doggett wrote:

I believe he is at long last, the Silk of LS (or "The Book of Silk" if you will), a character who never truly existed until Horn made him.

Don

Iorwerth Thomas — 20 Dec 2004, 05:13 · in reply to James Wynn

Interesting. This theory (that God is mutable) seems very similar to "Open Theism" (the theory that God does not know the future) which has made quite a stir in recently certain Evangelical colleges. I didn't know it had an earlier iteration.

Yeah, I think it probably had some influence on it - if only because it shows that alternative ways of thinking of God can be valid

Can you give more detail in how you think Process Theism is exemplified in the Sun cycle?

I'll give it a shot over Christmas - I'll actually have the books with me once I'm home for the holidays!

Mind you, I'm not convinced that any examples I find will be that convincing; I'm prone to rather extreme extrapolations from limited evidence...

Iorwerth