

urth-urth.net Digest, Vol 7, Issue 6

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 22 Mar 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4380>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Kieran Mullen — 22 Mar 2005, 09:43

This is reminiscent of Kierkegaard's [1] problem of Abraham in 'Fear and Trembling'.

The problem being:

- 1) Abraham is credited with being moral and the father of the faith.
- 2) He almost sacrificed his son because God told him to.
- 3) If I did that, I'd be regarded as slightly psychotic.
- 4) So why is 1) regarded as true?

My favorite answer to this was the one provided by Dan Simmons in the Hyperion novels. One of his characters claims that actually Abraham had to go through with this because he was testing God. That is, any God who would actually make you go through with such a demand was not worth worshiping. He had to carry it out to the end to see what would happen.

Message: 7

Date: Mon, 21 Mar 2005 17:48:50 -0600

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

Subject: Re: (urth) OT - Watchmen on trial

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth-urth.net at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <003601c52e70\$add1cd70\$60a3f63f@wynnhouse>

Content-Type: text/plain; format=flowed; charset="iso-8859-1";
reply-type=original

Blattid said

No. [The Watchmen is] not a "profoundly fascist" work. It is a profound
work_about_fascism. Gaaaaah.

I'd be interested in your explanation of how it was "about" fascism rather
than founded on it. I'm not sure how you can say Alan Moore did not
embrace the most fascistic elements of the comic book superhero
genre in
"The Watchmen". Are you suggesting Ozy is presented as anything but a
hero?

I never thought Ozymandias was a hero in The Watchmen. It seems odd to even contemplate! He's so clearly the proud, self-impressed villain. He's eeeeeevil. That's the point of the pirate comic - the protagonist acts so single-mindedly that he realizes in the end he's become as bad as the pirates he hated.

In a shameless rip-off of this theme, Moore has Mr. Manhattan justify Ozymandias' actions for exactly the same reasons that Com. Gordon justified

Batman's ("it's too big"). Then M.M. turns the only true common-man hero in the story (Rorschach) to a pile of dust to stop him from undermining O's scheme.

Hmmm.... I wouldn't call it shameless. It would be very odd if this argument were not made. We see it made all the time today, justifying all sorts of things.

Of course, we know that MM's action ultimately is a failure - Rorschach mailed out the journal to the newspapers. I think Watchmen is about the dehumanizing effect of power.

Iorwerth Thomas — 22 Mar 2005, 10:05 · in reply to Kieran Mullen

From: Kieran Mullen <kieran at ou.edu>

My favorite answer to this was the one provided by Dan Simmons in the Hyperion novels. One of his characters claims that actually Abraham had to go through with this because he was testing God. That is, any God who would actually make you go through with such a demand was not worth worshipping. He had to carry it out to the end to see what would happen.

It's one of my favorite answers too, and might even be what Kierkegaard thought [1]! Not sure if it really helps with Severian, though.

Iorwerth

[1] Or, it's at least as good as any other good interpretation.

maru — 22 Mar 2005, 16:34 · in reply to Kieran Mullen

Kieran Mullen wrote:

This is reminiscent of Kierkegaard's [1] problem of Abraham in 'Fear and Trembling'.

The problem being:

- 1) Abraham is credited with being moral and the father of the faith.
- 2) He almost sacrificed his son because God told him to.
- 3) If _I_ did that, I'd be regarded as slightly psychotic.
- 4) So why is 1) regarded as true?

My favorite answer to this was the one provided by Dan Simmons in the Hyperion novels. One of his characters claims that actually Abraham had to go through with this because /he was testing God./ That is, any God who would actually make you go through with such a demand was not worth worshipping. He had to carry it out to the end to see what would happen.

Another Hyperion fan! Excellent...

Simmons answer is rather ingenious, but also still flawed.

I mean, suppose he had tested Yaweh, and Yaweh turned out to

naught but another false god, that apparently abounded at the time of the Pentateuch's composition; Abraham would turn out to have been not just a sucker, but also a... whatever -cide applies to a guy who just killed his son in a rather nasty way.

~Maru