

# Perspectives on reality

## in *The Lord of the Rings*

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*Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky  
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone  
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,  
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne  
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.  
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,  
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them  
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.*

### Tolkien's universe

'There was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Iluvatar; and he made first the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made. And he spoke to them, propounding to them themes of music; and they sang before him and he was glad' (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 15). These words represent the kernel of *The Lord of the Rings*. J. R. R. Tolkien was a writer of imaginary history; and therefore a writer of myths.

*The Lord of the Rings* is like a musical theme emerging from *The Silmarillion*; and to deeply understand and appreciate the former it is essential to know the latter. After reading both books one realizes that *LOR* takes place in a universe and world already defined by the imaginary mythology and legends of *The Silmarillion*; a place which is not constructed to fit the events of *LOR*. On the contrary, *LOR* is permeated with the elements of this already existing universe.

This constructed cosmos helps to make the *LOR* a polyphonic work in the sense that Elves, Dwarves, Humans, and thus each specific Order of Being created by the author has its own perspective on reality. Each of these beings was not created in order to fit the plot of *LOR*; each already possessed a distinct, personal perspective of reality. It is their differences, however, that give the text a feeling of depth, a past. Elves in Middle-earth, for example, have a deep yearning for an elven Paradise, a peaceful and beautiful place that will not fade. They dream of Valinor - which is also part of the West, or the Undying Lands, where the Ainur, called the Valar, founded their abode, without any 'corruption or sickness in anything that lived; for the very stones and waters were hallowed' (*Silmarillion* 38). That is why Galadriel says: 'Lothlorien will fade, and the tides of Time will sweep it away' (Tolkien, *LOR*-I 472). She knows the Undying Lands will never fade, and she would like the same for Lothlorien. This is not just a wish to keep something that is beautiful; she regrets that Middle-earth, and therefore her forest, will change while other places will not. However, it is in *The Silmarillion* that the author depicts the Elves' relation to Valinor. Though this text will not be studied here, it is essential to remember its relation with *LOR*.

Tolkien's cosmos is the construction of one human being; his own ideas and beliefs permeate the work. These include his attitude towards nature and machinery, his ideas about a 'primary

world' and a 'secondary world', as well as his Catholicism and his appreciation of some elements of pagan belief. But first of all, Tolkien's opinion of his own work is that 'Middle-earth is not an imaginary world. . . . The theatre of my tale is this earth, the one in which we now live, but the historical period is imaginary' (Tolkien, Letters 239). And an imaginary history needs a mythology. However, Tolkien constructed his own mythology because he wanted 'to restore to the English an epic tradition and present them with a mythology of their own' (231).

The only way a mythology can affect reality is if it reflects the truths, or at least the beliefs, of the real world. Tolkien's work must be judged like the work of other mythological writers. He argues that his mythology is as valid as any other. Even when the author's works present imaginary deeds, we must understand that they are talking about veracities which have affected human nature - death, power, nature, beauty. These fundamental bases of experience have always been present in the history of humanity - though, when Tolkien deals with them, he does it in his own unique style.

Tolkien wanted to create language of his own. When he wrote *LOR* he realized that 'a language requires a suitable habitation, and a history in which it can develop' (375). He goes 'back to fundamental dynamics, to the creative power of language itself, in that the myths and legends of the elves came after his construction of a language and orthography for them' (Knight 129). As post-structuralism says - language shapes thought because signification is unstable. Tolkien creates a coherent mythology because he had already created a coherent language for it. Concepts in Tolkien's world are dependent on the connotations or meanings of English, as modified by Tolkien's own created languages.

Tolkien's concern's about 'truth' are everywhere evident: 'I think that fairy story has its own mode of reflecting "truth"' (Letters 233). *LOR* 'is a fairy-story, but one written . . . for adults' (232-33). His invented languages and his mythology - which implies the need of a history - drove Tolkien to become a story-teller on the grand scale. They are the foundation of his work.

### One 'voice' or many?

When Tolkien is dealing with different races, places or situations, all of them are of course subject to the central truths that the author imposes on the text. This does not mean uniform beliefs throughout, but that the text must 'within its own imagined world be accorded (literary) belief' (233). This accorded literary belief stands for what in the real world would be labelled as 'reality'. Tolkien, regardless of a character's own perception of reality, works with some truths he considers fundamental, such as the Christian fusion of free will and fate, the Christian idea of the fall of humanity, his own view of magic and enchantment and the Catholic perception of good and evil.

## Mallorn XLII

However, the differences among Levels of Being in *LOR* should not be compared to the differences between different peoples in the real world, what Tolkien called the 'primary world'. As he says, the polyphony within the text works according to its own necessities: 'there must be some relevance to the human situation (of all periods). So something of the storyteller's own reflections and values will inevitably get worked in' (233). *LOR*'s polyphony (ie single voice) is based on Tolkien's way of setting and resolving situations according to his own 'inklings of truths in the primary world' and his secondary world's own structured truths.

In his essay *On Fairy-stories* Tolkien states that each author is a sub-creator and what he builds, through art, is a secondary world. The real world is the primary world and - in the myths of the Judeo-Christian world - God has created it. He explains it as this: a good writer 'makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again' (Tolkien, *Fairy* 132).

### The influence of religious ideals

Tolkien builds his secondary world according to his own personal attunement to reality and his ideology influenced his work. Good, for Tolkien, as a Roman Catholic accords with the Commandments 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole soul and thy whole mind... And the second, its like, is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments all the law and the prophets depend' (Matthew 22:37-40). This is the basis of goodness. To 'inherit eternal life' (Luke 10:25), the sign of having done good, it is necessary to follow these commandments and their implications.

To love others as we love ourselves is the best way to define goodness in human terms - God's goodness is perfect while human's goodness can be affected by the subjective views of each person. To do evil, in these terms, is to treat others in a way in which we do not like to be treated. Evil, then, is the corruption of good and cannot exist by itself - it needs, first, the existence of goodness so that it will be able to corrupt it. Satan was first an angel 'created naturally good by God' (Catechism 88), but he and the other demons who followed him 'became evil by their own doing' (88). Satan brought evil into the existence, but the only way to do it was by corrupting what existed already. As Tolkien puts it in *LOR*, evil cannot create, it can only corrupt. Frodo explains it to Sam when he talks about Orcs: 'The shadow that bred them can only mock. It cannot make: not real new things of its own. I do not think it gave life to the Orcs, it only ruined them and twisted them' (*LOR*-III 233).

Orcs are not a creation of Eru but a corruption of Elves, perpetrated by Melkor - the Ainur who represents the Devil in Tolkien's mythology. All the Elves 'who came in the hands of Melkor . . . were put there in prison, and by slow arts of cruelty were corrupted and enslaved; and thus Melkor bred the hideous race of the Orcs in envy and mockery of the Elves' (*Silmarillion* 50). Orcs are therefore evil because they are the corruption of Elves. In a similar way, Trolls are counterfeits of Ents. (*Letters* 190-91) Thus, the tragedy of Orcs and Trolls is that they do not possess free will; they cannot choose between being good or evil; 'they cannot know good. They are mindless and committed to an evil course through no choice of their own' (Harvey 56). On the other hand, Melkor and Saruman still have the choice of doing good, even if they never opt for it.

So evil enslaves while good bestows freedom, even the freedom to reject good and do evil. Tolkien presents a Middle-earth that was created by one god, Eru or Iluvatar. There are 'angels', which take shape as divine entities such as the Ainur or wizards: 'It appears finally that they were as one might say the near equivalent in the mode of these tales of Angels, guardian Angels' (*Letters*, footnote 159). Nevertheless, there are pagan elements that get worked into *LOR*. There 'is much evidence of an active animism . . . 'the mountain Caradhras shows his displeasure by snowing heavily to block the company's way' (Curry 110), and Legolas hears the rocks when the party is nearing Caradhras: 'Only I hear the stones lament them: deep they delved us, fair they wrought us, high they builded us; but they are gone' (*LOR*-I 371).

Catholicism and paganism blend together in a harmonic balance. Eru is God, and God created the Ainur and together they created music, which was directed, planned and controlled by Eru. This music gave origin to Middle-earth. The pagan element comes into Tolkien's mythology when Dwarves are created. Even when Eru planned to be the only creator of people, such as Elves and Humans, Aule, one of the lesser deities, created the Dwarves, as if he would be God. Aule, however, never pretends to match Eru (*Silmarillion* 43).

Eru controls everything. The Ainur are also creators, but everything they create turns out to be according to Eru's plan. All this is said in *The Silmarillion*, but it has repercussions in *LOR*. All those at the Council of Elrond agree that there is a Higher Will that brought them all together: 'You have come and are here met, in this very nick of time, by chance as it may seem. Yet it is not so. Believe rather that it is so ordered' (*LOR*-I 318). Nobody doubts these words. All believe that they are fulfilling a greater plan of God even though they never say it. This silence is referred to obliquely by Tolkien in what he says about religion in *LOR*: 'I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like religion, to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism' (*Letters* 172).

Another Christian element which works as a truth that cannot be denied, from which nobody can escape, because it exists in the imaginary world of Tolkien is the blend of fate and free will. Despite someone's unbelief in these elements, they nevertheless exist. But the wise know that both are real, that they are part of the truth of the universe. Gandalf explains to Frodo 'that Bilbo was meant to find the Ring' (*LOR*-I 88). Catholicism teaches that all humans are free but it speaks about God's will too. The world is following an already established plan by God. This is called Divine Providence: 'The universe was created in a state of journeying (*in statu viae*) toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it' (Catechism 73). In *LOR*, the suggestion is that plan of 'some higher will is for Bilbo to find the ring - but he had the choice of taking it or not.

People are free within their own limits. They cannot fly, or breathe under water. God's plan is that people are beings who live on the earth and take oxygen from the air, but they can throw themselves from a cliff if they want to. They can choose their friends and where they go, but they cannot decide where they will be born or if it will rain or not. So, their actions are the result of their use of this freedom, but at the same time God's will intervenes in the affairs of people: 'God is sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' cooperation'. (74).

This influence is evident in the Council of Elrond where



*The Lonely Mountain*

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everyone goes because they have decided to, though there is a Higher Will at work that is unfolding a plan of its own and wants the fellowship of the ring to be formed. This is not pre-destination. Moreover, as Patrick Curry says: 'there is no question of 'luck' or 'chance' interfering with the exercise of free will' (107). This free will can be used for good or evil. The fact that people live in a fallen world makes everything more complicated.

Tolkien believed that the fall from a state of grace into a lower state is a truth for all human beings, that it exists everywhere and is not only a Christian idea or interpretation of reality: 'After all I believe that legends and myths are largely made of 'truth', and indeed present aspects of it that can only be received in this mode; and long ago certain truths and modes of this kind were discovered and must always reappear. There cannot be any story without a fall - all stories are ultimately about the fall' (*Letters* 147).

The Christian idea is that because of the fall of humanity from Paradise it is easier to do evil acts than to follow a life of virtue, and this influences *LOR*. It implies that the 'essence of a fallen world is that the best cannot be attained by free enjoyment, or by what is called 'self-realization' . . . but by denial, by suffering' (51). It is difficult to suffer willingly, however, even if it is for a final good. In order to enjoy an unpolluted Shire, the Hobbits have to sacrifice the commodity that the exploitation of the machine would have provided them with.

#### **The machine vs art and nature**

The machine is the enemy of nature and because of the fallen

state of the world it work against those who try to use it. *LOR* takes place in a world where nature reigns and can display its unpolluted beauty. There are cities, such as Minas Tirith, but these are not like Mordor. Mordor is the only polluted and ugly 'city'. The Shire would have become like an industrialised city, with ugly mills and excessive rules, but it was prevented from falling to this lower state. Hobbits keep their pastoral machinery. They destroy the new mills and reconstruct their old ones that produce neither as much nor as fast as the new and improved mills. On the other hand, Sauron takes all the advantages that the machine can provide him with and, as a consequence, destroys the beauty of the land, pollutes it and turns it into a nightmare. Besides, the machine is an extension of what Tolkien calls magic. He says that the machine 'attempts to actualize desire, and so to create power in this World' (*Letters* 87), and that magic 'produces, or pretends to produce, an alteration in the Primary World. . . . it is not an art but a technique; its desire is power in this world, domination of things and wills' (*Fairy* 143). Both are closely related because both can shape the 'primary world'.

On the contrary, enchantment and art alter only the 'secondary world'. However, art is for humans and the other races; enchantment is for Elves. Tolkien defines art as: 'the human process that produces by the way (it is not its only or ultimate object) Secondary Belief' (142-43). The 'elvish craft', which is more potent, is called enchantment (143), and it 'produces a secondary world in which both designer and spectator can enter, to the satisfaction of their senses while they are inside; but in its purity it is artistic in desire and purpose' (143). The better art works the more it approaches enchantment (143). There is no

## Mallorn XLII

enchantment that alters the primary world and because of this the Elves cannot keep Rivendell or Lothlorien. Their powers cannot change their primary world - Tolkien's secondary world.

Finally, we arrive at Tolkien's position with regard to the already mentioned fundamental basis of experience. Tolkien's love for nature is evident as is his dislike for machinery: 'The savage sound of the electric saw is never silent wherever trees are still found growing' (*Letters* 420). Nature is a fundamental basis of experience that the author has tasted. Having lived through industrialisation and drastic changes in mechanisation in his own lifetime, he had a benevolent attitude towards the natural world. He liked nature, wild, pastoral or tamed, as in gardens. Trees were special to him. He appreciated nature not only for its beauty but also for its presence. It is a creation of God, a living being. When Frodo places his hand on the trunk of a mallorn he feels 'the delight of the living tree itself' (*LOR-I* 455). However, nature is under the threat of industrialisation and the machine. Tolkien's favoured world was vanishing quickly. For example, the apotheosis of the horse was from 1815 to 1914, but after that year car numbers began to increase and 'the lorry or truck began to take over from the ox-wagon, the bullock-cart, the horse and cart, and, in the end, the railway as a means of carrying merchandise' (Thomas 358-59).

While Tolkien was writing *LOR*, aeroplanes and cars were part of the scenery of daily life. During the Second World War, technology had already taken over agriculture too, using tractors, pesticides and chemical fertilizers (401-406). In contrast, Tolkien spent his childhood in 'Sarehole . . . in the English countryside' (Carpenter 20) submerged in a rural ambiance, for four years that were the most formative part of his life (24). During those years and later, in his youth, he lived without the technology that surrounded him during the Second World War. He could see the drastic change that the land had suffered. Nature was being polluted by the machine, and after both World Wars it was clear that humans could inflict serious damage to nature. Tolkien detested this: 'How real, how startlingly alive is a factory chimney compared with an elm tree: poor obsolete thing, insubstantial dream of an escapist!' (*Fairy* 149).

All of the above aspects of Tolkien's own beliefs and perceptions inform his book. Does this mean *LOR* is simply an allegorical picture of the modern world? *LOR* is not allegorical: 'The darkness of the present days has had some effect on it. Though it is not an 'allegory' (*Letters* 41). Tolkien saw how much nature can be injured and he protested against this. It is not a coincidence that in *LOR* beautiful places are always close to nature. Tolkien connects beauty with a healthy nature, purity and deep knowledge. In the *LOR* beauty is a consequence of goodness. He based his notion of beauty on the Virgin Mary: 'Our Lady, upon which all my own small perception of beauty both in majesty and simplicity is founded. *The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work' (172).

Evil may disguise itself and appear to be beautiful, but eventually its masquerade must be exposed, as Saruman was. In *Smith of Wootton Major* Tolkien depicts beauty as the result of a gift from fairy-land: a place where, even though evil lurks, knowledge and goodness abide. The smith has a beautiful voice and makes wonderful metalwork because he has received this gift from the good fairy king. And Elves, who become Tolkien's symbol for beauty and goodness, are so beautiful because they are purer than humans: 'elves are early men, not yet fallen entirely from a paradisaical condition, hence their great beauty and supreme skill in arts and crafts' (Knight 114). The Virgin Mary's influence is overriding. She is beautiful because she is pure.

The attitude of Tolkien towards power can be summed up in his letter to his son Christopher on the 29 of November 1943. There he says that he likes anarchy 'philosophically understood, meaning abolition of control' (*Letters* 63) and that the desire for power should not be fulfilled, that those who are not interested in exercising power should be those who must be given power. This is the only way we can escape from the ruler's desire to control. Compare with Gandalf, who possesses enormous power but whose chief concern is the well-being of Middle-earth, ruled by its own people. Humans live in a fallen world, therefore power, according to the Christian ethos, will tend to become a tool of oppression rather than an instrument to do good. Power must be given only to those who can control it.

### Immortality

Tolkien portrayed death not as something negative but as a gift, the end of suffering, the ability to throw away the burdens of life, and for a Catholic, a way to Heaven. Despite the Christian idea that death can be a consequence of sin, Tolkien says that a 'divine punishment is also a divine gift, if accepted, since its object is ultimate blessing, and the supreme inventiveness of the Creator will make punishments (that is changes of design) produce a good not otherwise to be attained' (286).

Nevertheless, Tolkien admits the human desire to be immortal. He calls it 'the oldest and deepest desire, the Great Escape: the Escape from Death' (*Fairy* 153). However he adds that trying to fool death is absurd: 'Death is not an Enemy! I said, or meant to say, that the 'message' was the hideous peril of confusing true immortality with limitless serial longevity. Freedom from Time, and clinging to Time' (*Letters* 267). Even 'an attempt to halt time' (267) is a mistake, it does not grant freedom from Time.

### Reality and Power

Each Level of Being has a different perspective on reality, but what is reality? When Tolkien speaks about a primary world and a secondary world he is implying that there is an outside world that all beings perceive. The philosopher George Berkeley's well known argument is that only our sense-impressions and our ideas are real (Hospers 64); all things immediately perceived are ideas, and ideas cannot exist without the mind; their existence therefore consists in being perceived (Yolton 150).

Berkeley's view about reality does agree with that of Tolkien who believed that the world exists even if nobody perceives it. John Locke's approach applies better to *LOR*. Locke believed that physical objects have what he called primary qualities and secondary qualities (Hospers 90). The former are qualities that exist in the object 'such as are utterly inseparable from the body, in what state soever it be; and such as in all the alterations and changes it suffers (qtd. in Hospers 90). The latter are 'such qualities which in truth are nothing in the objects themselves but powers to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities' (qtd. in Hospers 90).

The primary qualities are in the object even if no one perceives them. The secondary qualities depend on the perceiver, but there is also a power inherent in the object that can 'produce certain sense-experiences under certain conditions (conditions of the organism, and of the perceptual environment)' (Hospers 90). So, fire causes pain only if there is someone who puts his/her hand in it. The idea of pain is in the person who touches the flame, but the quality of heat is in the fire. But even if no one is there to perceive it, fire always generates heat. The primary qualities exist in the objects themselves even if we can never be sure of how they are because our senses, being the channels through



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which we perceive the world, can deceive us.

No matter how subjective our senses, the 'power' inherent in objects that affect perceivers make everyone identify the same objects in the same way: for example, water is always a liquid substance that can be drunk. A modern psychologist who agrees with Locke's realism is James J. Gibson. He says that the quality of an object belongs to the object and the sensation does not. The sensation is subjective and belongs to the person perceiving it (Yolton 25). In *LOR*, when the fellowship of the ring arrives to Lothlorien it enters into a different world, which Frodo perceives in the following way: 'As soon as he set foot upon the far bank of Silverlode a strange feeling had come upon him, and it deepened as he walked on into the Naith: it seemed to him that he had stepped over a bridge of time into a corner of the Elder Days, and was now walking in a world that was no more' (*LOR-I* 452-53).

This is clearly a notion of reality closer to that of Locke. Frodo experiences a new world, distinct from what he has known before. If reality were confined to Frodo's inner world, his ideas, why would he perceive the world, in this case the trees, suddenly in a different way? He already has his ideas about trees, but out of the blue he realises that 'never before had he been so suddenly and so keenly aware of the feel and texture of a tree's skin and of the life within it. He felt . . . the delight of the living tree itself' (455). He is aware of a new reality because it existed independently from his. Even when Frodo experiences Lothlorien according to his senses, the primary qualities of that place are such that Frodo perceives them, through the power inherent in that spot, as different from other places.

We can now attempt to analyze how each Order of Being has

a different perspective on reality, and we will begin with Power. First of all, power is a truth that exists and according to Descartes, the possibility of objective truth is not cancelled just because each person has a personal truth. To think and to be are truths, which are not personal but universal, and they do exist. Power is a fundamental basis of experience that each Level of Being has to face, having a different perspective about it. It is a truth because it does exist and each Order of Being has to deal with it, whether it wants to or not.

Foucault defines power as follows: 'Power in the substantive sense, ... does not exist. ... In reality power means relations, a more-or-less organised, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations' (*Confession* 198). It can be an instrument for repression or production (*Truth* 119), and it is strong 'because . . . it produces effects at the levels of desire and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it' (*Body* 59). This knowledge can be on personal level or non-personal, which means that power can be given to something, for example: the machine - or Sauron's ring: 'And much of the strength and will of Sauron passed into that One Ring' (*Silmarillion* 287).

Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon is a clear example of how the machine can hold power. The Panopticon is the prison where all prisoners are watched at all times but they cannot see the person watching them. It has the power to control those in the cells by exposing them at all times. Even when the watcher may be the one punishing prisoners, he does not have the power to expose them; he becomes an instrument of the machine. Sauron's eye is like the Panopticon. It is difficult to escape its gaze and nobody can see him. The difference is that in Sauron is both watchman

## Mallorn XLII

and Panopticon. At Mount Doom he is able to see Frodo as soon as he puts on the ring: the 'Dark Lord was suddenly aware of him, and his Eye piercing all shadows looked across the plain to the door that he had made' (*LOR-III* 275).

The Ring is part of Sauron's Panopticon and part of Sauron. Sauron's watcher is the Panopticon itself: Sauron himself. And in the relation Frodo-Sauron, the latter is stronger. As Foucault says, 'power means relations'. So, why does power mean relations? Peter Morriss says that power is 'a concept referring to an ability, capacity or dispositional property' (13). Someone who has power can influence someone or something - a sculpture is the marble influenced by the artist's capacity to sculpt - but that does not mean that he or she will be able to influence everybody or everything. That person will exercise influence only in the kind of relation where his or her power will have an effect.

Power is the union of these three qualities: capacity, influence and relations. A capacity is the cause or enablement of power, the influence that power has over something or someone is its effect, and it manifests itself in relations. 'Following Max Weber . . . a relationship is at base the existence of a substantial probability of interaction between two persons' (McCall 4). We can extend this definition to the interaction between a person and an object. So, the relation between someone and an object is the point where power manifests itself. Even if power exists, it needs to interact with others in order to be noticed, to exercise its qualities.

### Individual power

When Saruman, Gandalf and Sauron - spirits on the same Level of Being - exercise power they do it through a relationship with others. Their perspective on power is that it is a way to control others' wills, or a tool to obtain their desires by controlling or influencing the free will of others. As Tolkien says, each person has his or her own free will and nobody should control it. However, these Spirits can oblige someone to do whatever they want. For Saruman and Sauron this is an advantage that they use only for themselves, for Gandalf it is always a temptation that he has to control.

On the other hand the Hobbit perspective on power is that it is a tool to obtain private comfort, not through exercising control over someone's free will but through personal satisfaction. Sauron's view of power is so strongly based on a desire to control the free will of people that he is unable to think that his enemies would plan to destroy the One Ring - which will help its user to control others: 'But the only measure that he knows is desire, desire for power; and so he judges all hearts. Into his heart the thought will not enter that any will refuse it, that having the Ring we may seek to destroy it' (*LOR-III* 353). Moorcock and Leiber's accusation that Tolkien 'does not explore the mind of the villains' is mistaken. Sauron's mind works as the council says and the proof of it is that the Ring is destroyed. In fact, we know Sauron's main drive: his desire to conquer all places and become the master of all those who are under his power.

Tolkien condemns this desire as the desire to become God. Aule creates the Dwarves and Eru tells him: 'the creatures of thy hand and mind can live only by that [your] being, moving when thou thinkest to move them, and if thy thought be elsewhere, standing idle. Is that thy desire? / Then Aule answered: 'I did not desire such lordship. I desired things other than I am, to love and to teach them' (*Silmarillion* 43). Eru allows Dwarves to exist because Aule does not pretend to become God or to command the Dwarves' free will. This reminds us of Satan, who in his vanity thought he could match God and who seeks to enslave people's free will through sin (*Catechism* 371). Curiously enough, Sauron's

perspective on power makes him do exactly that which Eru condemns: Sauron is the owner of the free will of his minions.

Sauron is evil because he loves himself but not Eru. If he loved Eru he would accept his goodness and respect the free will of others. At Mount Doom Sauron directs all his will towards Frodo and Sam, and - as a reminder of Eru's words - his minions seem unable to move without his will: 'From all his policies and webs of fear and treachery, from all his stratagems and wars his mind shook free; and throughout his realm a tremor ran, his slaves quailed, and his armies halted, and his captains suddenly steerless, bereft of will, wavered and despaired' (*LOR-III* 275). For Sauron power means total control of others' free will.

Saruman wants the same kind of control, but he is not as powerful as Sauron. When assailed in Orthanc, Saruman's intention is to take over the free will of his enemies: for those 'who listened unwarily . . . it was a delight to hear the voice speaking, all that it said seemed wise and reasonable, and desire awoke in them by swift agreement to seem wise themselves' (*LOR-II* 228). Nevertheless, Gandalf is there and does not allow Saruman to take control of those listening to his charm, as he has done with Theoden and Grima Wormtongue.

In the relationship between Saruman and Gandalf, Saruman's power cannot influence Gandalf. Saruman does not lack power; but the event shows that it is in a relationship that the nature and capacity of power becomes apparent. Saruman has too much conceit in his own abilities and uses power to show how mighty he is. Therefore, when he is defeated he goes to the Shire to hurt the Hobbits, even when there is no real gain for him: 'I have already done much that you will find it hard to mend or undo in your lives. And it will be pleasant to think of that and set it against my injuries' (*LOR-III* 368). Saruman could have gathered new strength but he seems to despair.

When Sauron uses power he does it to obtain a benefit other than the mere pleasure of confusing his enemies' lives and is an example of how the critics' accusations that Tolkien simplifies good and evil is mistaken. There is polyphony even between the two principal villains of *LOR*. Saruman wastes his remaining power in a childish whim, but Sauron vanishes and even when he is 'reduced to a shadow, a mere memory of malicious will' (*Letters* 153), Gandalf's warning remind us that perhaps Sauron will acquire new power to do evil: 'As Gandalf repeatedly stresses, all one can do is combat evil when and where one is, and there is no permanent solution' to be reached in this world (Curry 101).

This is not the first time Sauron has been defeated. The Necromancer of *The Hobbit* 'is Sauron *redivivus*, growing swiftly to visible shape and power again' (*Letters*, footnote 158). In contrast, Saruman becomes a beggarly vagabond who rules the Shire for a while just to revenge himself on Hobbits. We never 'see' or know Sauron as well as we come to know Saruman. While Tolkien shows us Saruman, he wants Sauron to remain as a shadow that we cannot fully know. H. P. Lovecraft argues that in the

true weird tale . . . [a] certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain - a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space. (349-50)

Tolkien wants Sauron to remain a mystery. Sauron's power

# Perspectives on reality

is like that of the Panopticon. He has to remain unseen in order to exercise his power and influence people. He uses fear as a way to control them, and as Lovecraft says, what remains unknown is more terrible than what can be named. To name something is to explain it. The more terrible people imagine Sauron to be, the more power he has. To argue that Sauron does not show himself because he is just a bodiless spirit does not work. Even when Sauron has no body his spirit abides in Mordor, where only his minions can see him. One cannot expect to know more about Sauron. He is a mystery meant to be almost unknown, except as a ruthless ruler.

## The power of the Ring

Gandalf's temptation to control others' free will reminds us of Tolkien's opinion that the ability to boss people must not be given to those looking for it (*Letters* 64). In the same way Gandalf tries to avoid governing others. His role is to be a guide for them, without obliging them to act in one or another way. Even when he does not want to control others he does want Middle-earth to be safe from evil. He knows his desire and that is why he remains a guide but not a ruler, (c.f. Aragorn), and that is why he rejects the ring so vehemently when Frodo offers it to him: 'No!' cried Gandalf, springing to his feet. . . . 'Do not tempt me! For I do not wish to become like the Dark Lord himself. Yet the way of the Ring to my heart is by pity, pity for weakness and the desire of strength to do good. Do not tempt me!' (*LOR-I* 95).

Gandalf can oblige Bilbo to give him the Ring, but he would not do it. However, he knows how important it is to destroy it. Therefore, he almost forces Bilbo to deliver it: 'Gandalf's eyes flashed. 'It will be my turn to get angry soon,' he said. 'If you say that again, I shall. Then you will see Gandalf the Grey uncloned.' He took a step towards the hobbit, and he seemed to grow tall and menacing; his shadow filled the little room' (60). He has the capacity to influence Bilbo so much that he could control Bilbo's free will, but he does not; he is almost threatening him but this relationship in which power manifests is not based on the element of force but of attachment. As McCall says, a relationship based on ascription is one that focuses on social positions and a relationship based on attachment focuses on role-identities (6-8). So, Gandalf is not only a powerful wizard but a friend too. Bilbo is a friend, not only a simple hobbit.

Because Bilbo and Gandalf are friends, it is easier for Gandalf to be a guide rather than a ruler; he is able to persuade Bilbo to leave the Ring and to overcome his own temptation of ruling others' free will in order to obtain what he wants. In fact, Hobbits are not interested in ruling others' free will. For them, power is something personal. They receive pleasure when they do things for themselves, not when someone does everything for them. The Ring tempts Sam with power and glory, but he sees power as a way to provide him with happiness in a personal way:

he saw Samwise the Strong, Hero of the Age, striding with a flaming sword across the darkened land, and armies flocking to his call as he marched to the overthrow of Barad-Dur. . . . but also deep down in him lived still unconquered his plain hobbit-sense: he knew in the core of his heart that he was not large enough to bear such a burden, even if such visions were not a mere cheat to betray him. The one small garden of a free gardener was all his need and due, not a garden swollen to a realm; his own hands to use, not the hands

of others to command. (*LOR-III* 216)

Sam wants power to use 'his own hands' not 'the hands of others to command'. And as Tolkien says, Sam is 'the genuine hobbit' (*Letters* 105). Sam speaks for all Hobbits, their perception of power. He has been among other Orders of Beings and has been influenced by their views about reality; as Frodo has been influenced too. That is perhaps the reason for Sam's thoughts about glory and commanding power. Nevertheless, he is able to remain the 'genuine hobbit'. If he had had the Ring before he was influenced by other views of power, he would perhaps have done what Bilbo and Gollum did when they possessed the Ring: use it for themselves, affecting only themselves.

Gollum uses the Ring 'to find out secrets' (*LOR-I* 85) by himself, not through others. At the Misty Mountains he thinks that he will find out 'great secrets buried there which have not been discovered since the beginning' (85). Therefore, he goes there himself; he never tries to send someone to do it, (cf Sauron sending the Nazgul to find the Ring). Bilbo uses the Ring when he does not want to be molested, as when he avoids the Sackville-Bagginses (149), instead of obliging others to go away. In short: they are Hobbits.

Nevertheless, Frodo cannot resist temptation and he briefly loses his Hobbit-view of power. Frodo is able to resist temptation as long as he has his own free will, but there comes a moment when the Ring strips him of his free will and controls him, forcing him to put the Ring on his finger. But Gollum bites off his finger and falls into the Crack of Doom and the Ring is destroyed. This is a moment where we can see the influence of Christianity in *LOR*, how it blends free will and fate. Even when Frodo, Gollum and Sam act according to their own free wills, Fate seemed to decide that the One Ring will be destroyed. Although Frodo, at the last on Mount Doom, did not have any free will left, at the first he freely took on the task of destroying the Ring, and he freely decided to let Gollum live. So, Eru's plan is fulfilled through the free will of his creations.

The Ring was created by Sauron; therefore, it works under the same view of power that Sauron has. The Ring's power is 'the power to dominate other wills, to enslave others. Even if the power were supposedly exercised for the good of others, its use would be evil: one cannot make others good by dominating their wills' (Purtill 60). Evil cannot be used to fight evil. This does not provide a desirable result or a desirable process to fight evil. Gandalf and Galadriel reject the Ring because they know its power, which cannot bring real good. As evil is the corruption of good, domination is the corruption of free will. The Ring and Sauron's power are evil because they corrupt free will; they dominate it. While having the Ring, the desire of Bilbo and Gollum to dominate, exercise control over something, increases. Bilbo wants to preserve his privacy so much that he risks the secret of the Ring by using it on a road only to avoid the Sackville-Bagginses (*LOR-I* 149). Gollum tries to satisfy his own ends even if it means living in a dark cavern deep in the mountains.

## The choices of the Good

Contrary to the desire to command others' free will, Elves - who see power as a tool to heal, and to create and preserve beauty - are well known for their respect for others' free will: 'And it is also said,' answered Frodo: 'Go not to the Elves for counsel, for

## Mallorn XLII

they will say both no and yes' (*LOR-I* 123). Gildor is reluctant to advise Frodo, and he does it only out of friendship. However, he knows that 'advice is a dangerous gift, even from the wise to the wise, and all courses may run ill' (123). Galadriel too respects Frodo's free will. She does not advise him even when he looks into her Mirror (470). Nevertheless, Galadriel is tempted to take the Ring. How can this be? If in *LOR* all heroes, as Aldiss says, are good, and without evil, why are they tempted by evil?

In Roman Catholic belief the Virgin Mary was never tempted by evil because she did not have any evil within herself that could be called by an outer evil tempting her; she was, according to Pope Pius IX, 'from the first moment of her conception . . . preserved immune from all stain of original sin' (qtd. in *Catechism* 108). Then, those who are tempted by evil have the inner seed of evil within them that an outer evil can water and make grow, what the Catholic Church calls: original sin and concupiscence. Original sin affects 'the human nature . . . It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind' (*Catechism* 91). Baptism erases this original sin but human nature is left with 'an inclination to evil that is called concupiscence' (91). Then, even heroes suffer temptation and are able to do evil deeds: Boromir wants to take the Ring from Bilbo, Legolas and Gimli engage 'in a kind of bloodthirsty competition' (Otty 173), Treebeard and the Ents slay Saruman's minions 'without a flicker of remorse or pity' (173). Saruman was once the head of the Council; Theoden had become a tyrant of sorts and Denethor himself becomes one.

All these heroes have a concupiscence within themselves that enables them to do evil acts. Free will is also the capacity, allowed by God, to do evil (*Catechism* 74-75). So Tolkien's world is not divided into unambiguous evil and unambiguous good. Sam does not treat Gollum nicely, but Frodo does, and when Faramir has his men ready to shoot him for having come to the pool Sam wishes they would kill him (*LOR-II* 366). Even the Wild Men, or Woses, behave in an ambiguous manner. They help Sauron's enemies pass through their land but, as Treebeard does, they seem to do it because it will benefit them if Sauron is defeated, because if not he will conquer them in time. The Wild Men do not help Theoden because they share his views on the conflict. They help him because it suits their interests, merely.

Even Elves can be tempted to do evil and their interests can be ambiguous. *The Silmarillion* recounts how because of the Silmarils Elves slay each other (*Silmarillion* 87). The Elves of Mirkwood wanted part of the dragon Smaug's treasure, (*The Hobbit*), and are ready to fight for their claim. Similarly, the Elves of Lothlorien threaten to kill Gimli if he does not acquiesce to their desire to blindfold him: 'You cannot cross the rivers again, and behind you there are now secret sentinels that you cannot pass. You would be slain before you saw them' (*LOR-I* 450). They do not hinder the Company's entrance into their territory, because Legolas is with them (444). A non-elven stranger would not have had the warm welcome that the Company had. Gimli, a Dwarf, is not treated as the rest of the Company is. Elves - despite their benevolence - did not want him to pass into Lothlorien. Only when it is agreed that Legolas and Aragorn will guard him do they allow him to continue with the rest of the Fellowship (445). However, we remember that Tolkien refers to Elves as 'early men, not yet fallen entirely from a paradisaical condition, hence their great beauty and supreme skill in arts and crafts' (Knight 114). This Order of Being is special, and so is its view of power. This may be a reason they respect others' free will: they are closer to God. Although, through their concupis-

cence, elves too can be tempted towards evil.

The Elves' closeness to God can be seen in their healing powers. When Frodo is in pain owing to the wound made by the Nazgul, Glorfindel's touch eases his pain (*LOR-I* 281). Aragorn is a healer, for 'it is said in old lore: The hands of the king are the hands of a healer. And so the rightful king could ever be known' (*LOR-III* 166) - words which remind us of King Arthur and the Grail - but not even Aragorn possesses the Elves' power to heal Frodo's wound. He admits it: 'there is some poison or evil at work that is beyond my skill to drive out' (*LOR-I* 272-73).

Nevertheless, Rivendell's Elves heal Frodo. They are the only people that can do so because their view of power as a tool to heal has made them direct their knowledge towards healing. Their closeness to God is not enough; they also need to have this view of power. Elrond cures Frodo, but not only through his touch; he has to apply his abilities, and it takes days to have effect. As Gandalf tells Frodo: 'he has tended you for days, ever since you were brought in. . . I suspected that there was some fragment of the blade still in the closed wound. But it could not be found until last night. Then Elrond removed a splinter. It was deeply buried' (292).

While Sauron wants to preserve his dominion over others' wills and Gandalf wants to preserve Middle-earth's freedom, Elves use power to heal, and to create and preserve beauty. Elves do not use power to dominate: for example they teach Ents to talk and set them free, without making them servants (*LOR-II* 84). Rivendell and Lothlorien are places that had been created through the elven view of power. Both are very beautiful, conveying a feeling of tranquillity and goodness. Frodo experiences Lorien as if

he had stepped through a high window that looked on a vanished world. A light was upon it for which his language had no name. All that he saw was shapely, but the shapes seemed at once clear cut, as if they had been first conceived and drawn at the uncovering of his eyes, and ancient as if they had endured for ever. . . . No blemish or sickness or deformity could be seen in anything that grew upon the earth. On the land of Lorien there was no stain (*LOR-I* 454-55).

Sam feels as if he is 'inside a song' (455). Using their knowledge, Elves created these places which are so beautiful. When the rings of power were created, the Elves 'made Three supremely beautiful and powerful rings, almost solely of their own imagination, and directed to the preservation of beauty' (*Letters* 152). Those 'who had them in their keeping could ward off the decays of time and postpone the weariness of the world' (*Silmarillion* 288). Lothlorien and Rivendell's characteristics are owing to the power of the rings that Elrond and Galadriel possess; each has one of the three elven rings. They use power to preserve these places: the beauty of them and all the knowledge that was necessary in order to make them.

As Elrond states: the elven rings 'were not made as weapons of war or conquest: that is not their power. Those who made them did not desire strength or domination or hoarded wealth, but understanding, making and healing, to preserve all things unstained' (*LOR-I* 352). Haldir's words at Cerin Amroth indicate that the Elves' perception of power has created Lothlorien and that only through that perception could it have been created, for when he shows Cerin Amroth to Frodo and Sam, its beauty overwhelms them: 'He smiled. You feel the power of the Lady of the Galadrim' (455). This is not simple beauty but a special kind of beauty, one that Tolkien's art enables the reader to comprehend.



# Perspectives on reality

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