Eucatastrophe and the *Gift of Ilúvatar* in Middle-earth

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The critic Brian Rosebury feels that the development and implementation of the concept of *eucatastrophe*, i.e. "a happy ending, against the odds, which has emotional intensity and moral fittingness," (Rosebury, 1992, p. 95 see also p. 64) was instrumental in promoting the artistic strength of Tolkien's mature work. Rosebury argues convincingly enough that eucatastrophe was employed primarily from *The Hobbit* on, and most effectively in *The Lord of the Rings*.

I would claim that to the extent that this is correct, it places the author in the Western tradition of accepting the principle of eudemonism, i.e. the pursuit of happiness as a valid ethical goal. However, I shall also argue that "eucatastrophe" is never complete in any major work by Tolkien. Or at least it is countered by the importance of "Ilúvatar's Gift to Men," in other words death as a theme for the author. Moreover, despite - or perhaps because of - the writer's Christian faith, Tolkien did not wish to offer any easy consolation in his treatment of death.

Eudemonism itself has had a varied career in Western tradition. Most ancient philosophers accepted it in one form or another. Christian moralists such as Augustine and Aquinas interpreted it in a slightly different fashion. To the extent that personal happiness plays an important part in Western culture and is rarely considered morally repugnant we might argue that it is one of the philosophical principles that has affected us most profoundly.

However, there remains an interesting question, what is the position of eudemonism in contemporary art? Although the matter requires study, one may perhaps say that happiness is not highly regarded in the literature of today. It might be claimed that Kant's conviction that morals and happiness come into different categories is fairly pervasive in fiction.

It should first of all be accepted that "happy endings" are no less real than sad ones; it depends on how far the events leading up to them are plausible, or, in fantasy, convincing. The fact that the one may occur more frequently than the other in life does not mean that either is more realistic than the other. The element of eucatastrophe that relates it most clearly with eudemonism, however, especially in the Christian tradition closest to Tolkien, is the necessary "moral fittingness" of the happy ending. Happiness in such an ethical system is obtained by directing your actions toward the greatest Good, i.e., God. From an existential perspective this is neatly summarized by Tomasz Węcławski, according to whom...

> Whoever is faithful to God is in this way that which he or she really wants to be in the depths of their hearts--and that is the source of their joy; whoever is not faithful to God, is that which he or she really does not want to be--and that is the source of their sorrow.
> (Węcławski, 1992, p. 98)

How is this manifested in Tolkien's fiction? Of course there is little overt indication of faith, unless we look at some of the versions of the *Silmarillion* (i.e. in the *History of Middle-earth*). Yet one can note in such an existentialist orientation of the greatest good, that becoming oneself to the fullest extent is a movement in the right direction; it is also, in a sense, becoming faithful to God[1].

Nor does ethical behaviour depend to any great extent on the expectation of external reward. As has been noted, Frodo carries out his perilous mission without any evident belief in life after death; although there may well be the influence of Nordic mythology present with its insistence on courage, which Tolkien is known to have admired. This, however, does not preclude a more personalist theistic attitude, which values the good deed in itself without its being directed towards a reward.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas every conscious and free act has as its goal some good end (see Olejnik, p. 1285). And such acts, it might be added, albeit indirectly at times, lead one to the greatest good. In the *Lord of the Rings*, the more conscious the characters, the more inclined they are to good deeds. Characters such as Saruman believe themselves to be conscious and free, but they are mistaken, and it eventually becomes obvious how they are fooling themselves. Richard Purtill observes

[1] St. Irenaeus, a second century bishop, stated that "the glory of God is Man fully alive."

that even the most powerful evil being - Sauron himself - can be called a slave of "his own fear and hate." (1984, p.57).

Why do we behave in a good manner? Tolkien had some interesting insights. The answer is partly found in the "strange gift of Ilúvatar," who willed...

> that the hearts of Men should seek beyond this world and should find no rest therein; but they should have a virtue to shape their life, amid the powers of the world, beyond the Music of the Ainur, which is as fate to all things else. (Tolkien, 1977, p. 41).

No rest in this world indicates a hunger for the transcendent. This is a key factor in human nature, according to Tolkien, whether we are cognizant of it or not. It contributes to our freedom, since with it, in time, comes the sense that we are actually incomplete and can thus "shape our life". Shaping our life is a great responsibility, however, and there is no guarantee of a positive outcome. In fact, many seem to move in the opposite direction. In Middle-earth the characters range from spiteful hobbits to haughty rulers (e.g. Denethor), not to mention ring wraiths, who at one point at least were free beings, etc.

Such restlessness implies that the prime motivation for humans is the search for meaning in life. Tolkien's major characters thus fall into line with the psychology of Viktor E. Frankl.[2] A protagonist who lifts him or herself "beyond the Music of the Ainur" can be said to be moving in the direction of self-transcendence. According to Frankl this means "that a man is a responsible creature and must actualize the potential meaning of his life." (Frankl, 1973, p. 175). This potential is never completely fulfilled, or rather, it expands with the person. Frankl does not discuss what the opposite direction would be, but self-degradation seems to be the logical conclusion. Gollum's career, for instance can be said to illustrate evil as being "live" spelled backwards. Egoism, therefore, is the greatest prison and freedom can be looked upon as a movement away from the ego.

Various topics and their relationship to human consciousness might be discussed here: the conscience, values, the cognitive power of love, and so on. Even geography can be said to be based on consciousness. In *The Hobbit*, along with its residents, Tolkien discovered the Shire, the archetypical small homeland, a geographical unit that characterizes the entire free Middle-earth of the Third Age. The geographical distances of the created world may be reminiscent of Europe (see Fonstad, 1992, p. x), but the social geography is based on what the Germans call *heimat*, the small homeland. Large as the kingdom of Gondor is, it actually constitutes a federation of relatively small states rather than a uniform one. The only large state can be said to be Mordor, which is centralist, to say the least.

Tolkien's focus on the small homeland is quite appropriate in the context of our discussion. For some, the *heimat* is considered to be an antidote for the alienation of today's society: Czesław Miłosz writes that in comparison with the state "the homeland is organic, rooted in the past, always small, it warms the heart, it is as close as one's own body." (Miłosz, 1983, p. 27). While in reference to the small state, Leopold Kohr points out two of the qualities it fosters: individuality and democracy; the latter because of the state's physical inability to overwhelm the citizen (see Kohr, 1957, p. 98).

The Shire most definitely qualifies as a state where the powers that be have no practical ability to overwhelm the citizen, as can be seen when the Shirriff's deputies "ask" Frodo and his companions to come with them. More interesting for us, however, is the small homeland as a human geography that fosters individuality, even in small details. The small homeland enhances the grounded individuality with a sense of place, not alienation, The healthy individual has values and convictions; witness the earnestness of the heroes of which Rosebury speaks.

The jocular nature of the inhabitants of the small homeland is one of the qualities Rosebury mentions. It indicates that life is a gift. For Bakhtin, this "gift" of life is a task. The *Lord of the Rings* has been called a quest or even an anti-quest story by Rosebury: an anti-quest is nevertheless a task. This brings us back to the question of self-transcendence; while working towards it the characters quite naturally orient themselves toward Simone Weil's good. For the French philosopher true "good" is fascinating and diverse (see Weil, 1968, pp. 60-61). We see this in Tolkien in the example of the small homeland; different homelands introduce genuine diversity, while the large state, whether benign or threatening, imposes uniformity.

Not that the small homeland is without faults. A well known one is the all too familiar division of "us

[2] Admittedly characters of a more fantastic nature form a separate category.

and them", where those who are from outside the community are the unwanted "them," to be treated with suspicion, sometimes with hostility. Hobbits, for instance, are rather disinclined to travel and suspicious of outsiders. Sam Gamgee is the most realistic of the major hobbit character in this sense. Much of the conflict between elves and dwarves arises in this way.

Another artistic expression of self-transcendence is the theme of life as a journey; a journey develops, or at least requires, openness and brings with it the risk of change. Yet the journey, in a way, often leads from one *heimat* to another. Other *heimats* enshrine values that often challenge the cherished beliefs of the traveller. An inn can be considered as the archetypical meeting place of the small homeland and the world. The "Prancing Pony" is a place of meeting and dialogue. Elrond's Rivendell is an elevated version of an inn.

Indeed, dialogue is one of the keys to overcoming the "us and them" dichotomy. In *The Lord of the Rings* dialogue is a precondition for the survival of the free peoples who must overcome their isolation if they are to deal with the danger facing them adequately.

Coercion threatens individuality. Violence is present in its most blatant form in *The Lord of the Rings*. An aspect of this evil, evident in Tolkien's writing is its destruction of identity. This is true at a physical level as well: in the siege of Minis Tirith the orcs catapult disfigured heads over walls with the resultant disfigurement. The Orcs of Morgoth and later, of Sauron, even when they have names are practically clones of each other. People who come under the sway of the malevolent sorcerer likewise lose their individuality, for instance the Black Númenórean at the Gates of Mordor, who simply presents himself as the "Mouth of Sauron".[3]

Although Tolkien has met with the criticism that, in *The Lord of the Rings*, the "evil" is not interesting enough, it might be counterclaimed that the evil in his works is quite realistic in Weil's sense (Weil, 1968), according to which real evil is actually monotonous and drab. Note that Sauron or any other evil character is never attractive as such. Gollum, Rosebury notes, might gain our pity, but "the state into which he degenerates (...) is genuinely frightening". This is no mean literary feat, as the critic concludes:

> [I]t is one of the triumphs of Tolkien's literary judgment in *The Lord of the Rings* that fully accomplished evil is represented by states of personality (or unpersonality) which no sane reader could envy.
> (Rosebury, 1992, p. 41)

Happiness in the sense of joy is transitory in the *Lord of the Rings*, but it nonetheless points to the lasting happiness which resides in the transcendent. Consciousness even in a limited way would be unlikely without the transcendent, and it is this strong feeling of purpose in Middle-earth, the sense that the journey of life is worthwhile, that points beyond the borders of fantasy to our own world. Frankl, (1973), indicates in accordance with common sense, that moments of joy, rare though they might be, are high points of existence that cannot be taken away from us.

Aside from the eucatastrophe accomplished in Tolkien's later work, it seems to me that one can also detect in the vision of Middle-earth indications of a higher order of eucatastrophe, a kind of "cosmic eucatastrophe".

In a sense she speaks for historical humanity as a whole, when, asked by Finrod, the High Elf about "Arda Marred" (roughly, the world corrupted) Andreth, the wise woman of "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth," replies:

> ...even the Wise among us have given too little thought to Arda itself, or to other things that dwell here. We have thought most of ourselves; of how our *hröar* (body) and *fear* (soul) should have dwelt together for ever in joy, and of the darkness impenetrable that now awaits us.
> (Tolkien, 1993, p. 318).

For a start, let us explore some aspects of the problems of cosmology implied in Andreth's statement. Tolkien pointed out that his creation story differs from Biblical myth, which he calls his primary belief. Yet it may be suggested that the difference need not be considered particularly radical in the light of contemporary Christian thought concerning divine revelation. The Holy Spirit is thought to inspire a human author, who in turn makes use of his literary traditions and knowledge of the world to impart revelation.[4] Tolkien seemed to share such a view by referring to parts of revelation as Biblical myth.

[3] This point was first made in Rosebury, 1992, p. 40.

[4] This view was officially accepted by Catholicism, for instance, in 1943 in the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu*.

From a religious perspective it is tempting in such a context to imagine how the Holy Spirit might inspire a contemporary religious author to write scripture. Moreover, as we shall subsequently see, Tolkien's art seems to embrace certain difficulties including relating "revelation" in a historical sense, with a modern world-view. Tolkien's handling of one leading instance of "Arda Marred", the cruelty of nature (related in its turn to evil in matter) is important and relevant in this connection.

Tolkien has stated that the wonder of the present world has inspired his Middle-earth (see Fonstad, 1992, p. ix); it is likewise evident in his art that its suffering has not left him unmoved. Much as the Biblical author has done, in the *Silmarillion* Tolkien also depicts a brief golden age, known as the Spring of Arda, at which time there are likewise no predators (See *Genesis* 1,30).

Golden Ages of this sort can be said to have a function similar to art in some aspects. One might say at this point that theology and art intersect in their use of desire. Both Golden Ages, for instance, contrasting as they do with known reality, might have been intended to evoke longing for a deeper cosmic harmony, in other words, to promote our dissatisfaction with the questionable "balance of nature." This all might be connected with evoking the longing for the transcendent discussed above.

But long before the Children of Ilúvatar come on the scene, the forces of destruction spoil the Spring of Arda. Herein lies the crux of the matter: Tolkien, unlike the ancient author, cannot evade the cruelty of nature or treat it as not existing until a stage of creation after the fall of man. His knowledge of evolution, which only the radical minority deny, informs him that nature was cruel long before the arrival of human beings on the scene. How then does he avoid a Manichean creation story, in other words, one in which creation itself is intrinsically evil?

Inevitably in Tolkien's case his cosmology moves closer to the Yahwist version[5] in which evil, in the form of the serpent in Eden, is already present in creation. Significantly, Ilúvatar does not reject Melkor's corruptive contribution to the Music of the Ainur, and decides to work it into his creative scheme.

On the whole this agrees with the Christian doctrine of evil being subverted good.[6] After all, Melkor was created "good". The important point here is that Ilúvatar, by allowing him to maintain his freedom; permits the Vala's course, and thereby evil, or the possibility of it, enters creation[7]. Albeit there is the promise that in the end this will be converted to the end of ultimate "good", and that too is significant. This "good end" may indeed be seen at times in the balance of nature's violent forces, as well as in the sense of wonder evoked by them.

Evil is thus present in the very fabric of creation, but it does not erase the sign of God's presence. This is manifest in one of the most effective prose passages of the book:

> Yet it is told among the Eldar that the Valar endeavoured ever, in despite of Melkor, to rule the Earth and to prepare it for the coming of the Firstborn (...). And yet their labour was not in vain; and though nowhere or in no work was their will or purpose wholly fulfilled, and all things were in hue and shape other than the Valar had first intended, slowly nonetheless the Earth was fashioned and made firm.
> (Tolkien, 1977, p. 22)

This passage is on the verge of being dualistic as the forces of good and evil struggle within creation - it represents, in fact, a qualified dualism. But it cannot be said that either good or evil is supreme in any one sphere. Manichism seems to be overcome, since matter itself, although marked by evil, is fundamentally good. Creation is life-sustaining, awe inspiring, and displays a host of other qualities. Perhaps, in such a reading of *Genesis*, Tolkien approaches the ultimate meaning of the original revelation of creation as "good": not denial of the evil intrinsic in it and plain on the surface, but the evidence of the work of a good Creator still present within it. Such a revelation implies the existence of evil within creation, otherwise it would be redundant; revelation does not need to state the obvious.[8]

Tolkien's cosmology apart, this vision of the universe as a suffering organism is also reflected in

[5] In *Genesis* there are two creation stories stemming from different literary sources, i.e. the so called Priestly and Yahwist versions.

[6] C.S. Lewis, in his preface to chapter 10 of *Paradise Lost* wrote: "God created all things good without exception. (...) What we call bad things are good things perverted." Quoted from Shippey, 1992, p. 209.

[7] This could be seen as an expansion St. Augustine's suggestion that the violence of nature and the resultant evil might be an expression of the freedom of Satan; see Sweetman, 1995, p. 26.

[8] John Habgood points out that for the ancient inspired author to write "God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good" "required a high degree of faith in a world where much was mysterious, painful and threatening"; see Hapgood, 1983, p. 129.

his developed Middle-earth. Although the hobbits encounter with Old Man Willow is frightening, Tom Bombadil tries to help them understand the tree being's pain. Likewise in the *Silmarillion* Yavanna tries to defend her trees from the abuse of the Children of Ilúvatar. The theme of vegetarian heroes, such as Beren becomes, is also significant.

Within Ilúvatar's love of the Earth lies its hope. This introduces an important theme; is "Arda Marred" to be "healed" or "remade"? Manwë is convinced that Eru will heal Arda, and that it shall be "greater and more fair than the first" (Tolkien, 1993, p. 245). A clue of what this might entail can be found in Andreth's words: "Many of the Wise hold that in their true nature no living things would die." (Tolkien, 1993, p. 314) She imagines nature as being freed from its Darwinian struggle. Andreth's words, although she is actually referring to Arda's origins, relate its fate to that of the Children of Ilúvatar. Moreover, her idea resembles the theological one of "apocatastasis", or universal salvation, which operates both on a cosmic and on a personal level. The cosmic level, which is less open to theological debate, concerns the ultimate renewal of creation by God at the end of time.

Hence, if Arda is marred, what about Man marred? Sin is present in Middle-earth in elves and men and is a substantial component of their "self-degradation." Of course Arda Marred, or nature spoiled, does not necessarily lead to sin, which is a matter of free will, but it does provide the natural habitat of sin. Where there is sin, or self-degradation, there is the possibility of salvation.

Gollum represents an interesting case of the limits of salvation. One of the most touching scenes in *Lord of the Rings* is where the degenerate hobbit comes upon Frodo and Sam sleeping on the stairs of Cirith Ungol in *The Two Towers*. Was Sam to blame for this lost chance of Gollum's conversion? Yes and no: it was not Sam who placed the idea of betrayal in his antagonist's head; the events that led up to Gollum's death are his own fault. Yet the question arises of what the ultimate fate for such a pitiable villain might be. Can it in some way be connected with our discussion of Arda Marred and Arda Healed?

As mentioned above, apocatastasis has both a cosmic and personal aspect. The Polish theologian Waclaw Hryniewicz writes: "An eternal hell (...) would be the consummation of a frightful dualism of the entire creation, it would constitute an eternal sign of discord, internal disharmony and alienation; an incompleteness of the act of creation itself. (...) An eternal hell would likewise be a hell for God, a hell for divine love, and a cruel condemnation for God himself." (Hryniewicz, 1990, p. 103). Furthermore hell, although the doctrine of its existence is upheld, is not eternal and ultimately represents a purgative experience.

Ilúvatar says of the Aftercomers, or Men, and their misuse of his gifts: "These too in their time shall find that all that they do redounds at the end only to the glory of my work." (Tolkien, 1977, p. 42). Gollum has no such awareness at the point he leaves the story, although his action inadvertently helps in attaining a good end.

The passage echoes an earlier one with Melkor in the first Music of the Ainur; Melkor "shall see" and men "shall find" the truth of Ilúvatar's plan. Admittedly, this can be understood as meaning that they may be forced to "see" when it has become too late for such illumination. This, however, I believe would ring false to Tolkien's vision. Finrod's reasoning may be cited here: "If we are indeed the *Eruhin*, the Children of the One, then He will not suffer Himself to be deprived of His own, not by any Enemy, not even by ourselves." (Tolkien, 1993, p. 320).

The last words "not even by ourselves" whether or not they are so intended, can easily be applied to counter the free will argument of the existence of Hell. According to this line of thinking the existence of Hell is one of the ultimate symbols of our freedom: the freedom to deny God completely. In this view in our heart of hearts we either accept God, or deny Him, to our ultimate shame, and in the latter choice condemn ourselves. One could so interpret the scene in Tolkien's fellow Inkling C.S.Lewis' *The Last Battle* (from the Chronicles of Narnia) where the condemned animals simply cannot look the godhead figure, Aslan, in the eyes and turn away from paradise as if on their own.

The universalist reply implied in Finrod's words is that the God of love can find a way around our disastrous misuses of freedom without imposing any constraints on freedom itself. This is the radical freedom of God; the freedom of Ilúvatar is referred to a number of times in the mythology of Middle-earth. Apocatastasis is not explicit in Tolkien, but the hope of it seems to be strong. As the elves would say, the feeling that "something right or necessary is not present" (Tolkien, 1993, p. 343) is evoked. Perhaps it is significant that there is no indication in the brief

passage concerning the Second Music of the Ainur that anyone shall be excluded from participation. It is to be hoped that "*all*", whatever their past, however tragic or misguided they have turned out to be, "shall then understand fully [Ilúvatar's] intent in their part, and each shall know the comprehension of each," (Tolkien, 1977, p. 16 [my italics, C.G.])

The price of this understanding is not stated. The episode with the Dead Men of Dunharrow in *The Lord of the Rings* is a kind of parable of purgatory; in a sense Isildur's curse was necessary for the salvation of the oath breakers. One might surmise that the Last Judgment is omitted but understood in the "Ainulindalë" and is necessarily pedagogic in nature; full comprehension of God's intent for individuals and of all their fellows is gained. Moreover, what makes it a modern vision of paradise is its dynamic quality. Bliss is not considered a static state, but one in which sentient beings partake in perhaps the most exciting of divine activities, i.e. creation (or sub-creation?).

The kernel is already present in *The Book of Lost Tales* in the earliest version of the Music of the Ainur (see Tolkien, 1983, p. 53). It may be seen as the seed of "hope" which eventually bore fruit in the eucatastrophe of the *Lord of the Rings*. Certainly the major elements of a theistic eudemonism are implied here as well, in that people perform conscious and truly free acts in harmony towards a divine end.

Nonetheless, much as Christian theologians, for instance, argue for and against personal apocatastasis, (and it is far from established doctrine), cosmic eucatastrophe is a matter of hope. Death is the present reality – Morgoth may be defeated in the *Silmarillion*, but as yet he cannot "see." Moreover, "his lies live on."

Death is a theme of Tolkien's that has not escaped the critics' attention, I shall start by looking at its relationship to suffering. Few of the author's characters have suffered as Morwen, Túrin Turambar's mother has done, not only through the curse laid upon her and her children by Morgoth and the ultimate suicide of the latter, but also perhaps, through recognizing that her rashness and pride were not absent in the fulfilment of the curse. Tolkien seems to imply that her suffering was not in vain. He honours Morwen in a peculiar way. The very ground where Húrin had made a grave for her corpse survives the havoc of the wrath of the Valar as Tol Morwen, and stands "beyond the new coasts that were made" (Tolkien, 1977, p. 230): the sole monument to the First Age.

Before Morwen dies, she longs to discover how fate has permitted her children to meet so tragically. Her husband possesses this dreadful knowledge and in typical human fashion wishes to spare her further torment. And when she dies it seems to him "that the lines of grief and cruel hardship were smoothed away." (Tolkien, 1977, p. 229). Is she simply "unconquered"- as Húrin suggests - or "resting in peace."

Our answer, however, may be as pessimistic as Andreth's would be. For Andreth, death is both the swift hunter and "impenetrable" darkness. The reality of death proves the dualism of creation. Like classical dualists the wise woman uses the imagery of light and darkness, but whereas the former distinguished the immortal spirit from matter, which they disdained, Andreth sees life as light and death as darkness. This idea in part seems to stem from the Judeo-Christian body and soul linkage; since creation is ultimately "good," the body is not merely a prison to be discarded. Note that Andreth does not wish for the spirit to survive the body.

At one level Andreth's arguments are not effectively countered anywhere because it would seem that Tolkien views them as an accurate description of the human condition. Rather, in part, the author proposes the artistic construct of the elf beings themselves who demonstrate the shortcomings of deathlessness. Tom Shippey suggests that:

> The *Silmarillion* (...) seems to be trying to persuade us to see death as potentially a gift or reward (...). [Moreover,] the elvishness of the elves is meant to reflect back on the humanity of man.
> (Shippey, 1992, pp. 210-211).

This might partially be understood in the sense of death as a rest from a world full of suffering; ultimately does not offer a complete answer.

Yet in "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth" Tolkien adds another twist. Since the life span of the elves is linked to the duration of this world, the problem is simply shelved. In modern terms, Finrod's arguments can be summarized thus: "what's a life span of a few billion years in the face of eternity?" The problem of death thereby seems to be aggravated by deathlessness in this world.

Let us return to the problem of death as a gift, a gift of Ilúvatar to be precise. Before we discuss the gift, what can we say about the Giver? Ilúvatar is a

different concept from one modern idea, closely associated with Eliade, which replaces God with the concept of the "sacred" where good and evil are two sides of a great mystery (see, for instance, Moran, 1972, pp. 186-203). A significant clue is provided by Finrod when he talks about "Estel" or trust in relation to Ilúvatar. This dialogic ingredient of faith is given priority. Why is this important? Belief, the element barely mentioned, is cognitive: "you believe in something" with whatever combination of intellect and intuition you possess about the object of belief. Belief in this sense partially objectifies God. On the other hand, it is only possible to trust someone, and that implies a personal God.

Trust is paramount in the "gift". Tolkien gives a less conventional (but nonetheless orthodox) reading of *Genesis* in that the Fall is not the cause of death, which was already present before the Fall; the Fall is rather the inability to accept death - which can be understood as a lack of trust in God. This not only refers to a single moment of our history, but is constantly repeated, for instance, in the story of the downfall of Númenor.

What might the content of that trust be? Among other things, in "Laws and Customs" Manwë reminds us that this trust is founded on the belief that Ilúvatar "is good, and that his works shall all end in good." (Tolkien, 1993, p. 245).

When Frodo approaches the sacred shores of Aman at the conclusion of *The Lord of the Rings*, he sees light; back at the Grey Havens Sam only sees a deepening darkness. Night also closes round Húrin as he holds his dying spouse. One might say this darkness is symbolic of the darkness Andreth speaks of: it seems to be all that is given to human reason.

After meeting with such darkness it is possible, as Húrin does, to wander off in his personal darkness vengefully, and in the end aimlessly. In the case of the hapless hero this response is in some ways understandable. On the other hand, one may regain momentum, as Samwise, Peregrin and Meriadoc do when, after a period spent in darkness, they break out spontaneously in song; admittedly their darkness is of a different kind. One might even say they become enriched. This is the way of trust.

Perhaps in Morwen's expression is a sign that she has received the answer to her questions - and more - through her personal meeting with Ilúvatar. The words of Finrod quoted above, "If we are indeed the (...) Children of the One, then he will not suffer Himself to be deprived of His own," support such a hope. Implied here is an ultimate return to Ilúvatar.

This the readers must decide for themselves. If Morwen's questions are indeed answered, then her expression gives an idea of the light on which this trust is based; it is a different light than Frodo's since it is one that the readers on their part might share in. The "gift" of Ilúvatar in such a treatment is turning a necessary evil, death, into the opportunity to see the truth clearly, that which often we do not get a chance to do in life. Truth may even seem to be against us, as in the story of Húrin and Morwen and their children - nor would we obtain it fully through mere deathlessness, as is illustrated by the example of Tolkien's elves. An encounter with full truth is the key to true happiness, since truth is imparted by a God who is Love.

One might ask whether Tolkien says anything more directly about the key issue of immortality as such. The author deals with human immortality rather obliquely. It is said on the one hand that men "die indeed," yet on the other hand, they "take part in the Second Music of the Ainur"; to paraphrase the Gospel: the "dead" could not possibly take part in such an event. Thus immortality can be said to be taken for granted, the more interesting question for the artist is that of the healing or remaking of creation. As we have seen Tolkien's is not a static afterlife. If he is right we will have yet to understand our parts fully and each other as well to share in the effort of bringing about the final eucatastrophe.

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