

*Introducing set number 5001 - Tolkien and the Lord of the Rings - a BCRecordings copyrighted presentation by Stephen Hoeller, entitled "J.R.R. Tolkien's gnosis for our day"*

# TOLKIEN'S GNOSIS FOR OUR DAY

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Being of increasingly advanced age and therefore given to more and more reminiscences, I recall something that impressed me quite a number of years ago. In fact, I think it was in 1975, in the Jung Anniversary Year, when a very interesting and very dear man, professor *David Rodier* of American University in Washington DC, was here with us: a noted scholar of Gnosticism and personal disciple of Kendrick Grobel, one of the early translators and so forth. I remember him starting one of his lectures on gnostic scriptures by saying that there are three great books of gnostic literature that he would recommend: they're the *Nag Hammadi Library*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *the Lord of the Rings*.

Now, that deeply impressed me. And, of course, within that statement is the message that gnosis, often of a very, very direct character, is to be found in works other than officially and academically denoted as Gnostic. And that is certainly true of some of the important works of the world literature, but especially those in which the element of the creative imagination is particularly active. Active in a particular manner, as I will soon indicate to you; and that is certainly the case in the earlier period of *Alice in Wonderland*, and in our own age and our own century by way of Tolkien.

And so, it is in that manner that we will address ourselves to the contribution of Professor Tolkien this evening. On September 2, 1973, there passed from this - what in medieval times was beautifully called the *sub-lunar sphere* - one of the greatest enchanters of all times. A man who in all likelihood has brought more grace and transfiguring blessing into the world of the 20th century than the majority of preachers and evangelists, and certainly the political messiahs of the last hundred or two hundred years.

Even as *Homer* in the Ancient World was the teller of the two greatest tales of enchantment, and as in India *Valmiki* and the other unknown sacred poets were the magical creators of the glories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabarata*, so from John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's pen sprang as from a sorcerer's wand the great myths of the 20th century: the saga of Middle Earth, known as the *Lord of the Rings*. It was my illustrious countryman Kárl Kerényi, the great Hungarian scholar of mythology, who, recognising the limits of scholarships, said about myths (and this is very applicable, I think, to Tolkien):

*What is music? What is poetry? What is mythology? All questions on which no opinion is possible unless one already has real feeling for such things. Only the greatest creations of mythology could hope to make clear to modern man that here is face to face with a phenomenon, which, in profundity, permanence and universality is comparable only with Nature itself. If we want to promote real knowledge of mythology, we must not at the outset appeal to theoretical considerations and judgements. Neither should we talk over-much of*

*sources. The water must be fetched and drunk fresh from the spring, if it is to flow through us, and quicken our mythological talents.*

Kerényi wrote this in the two essays on the science of mythology which he co-authored with C.G. Jung. And probably truer words were never uttered, and it is indeed a matter of great and never failing regret that more members of the scholarly community cannot really bring themselves to think in this manner. Tolkien's approach to his chosen field - to the fantasy tale or fairy-tale - was very similar to that of Kerényi. "*Scholarly evaluations and literary criticisms are not the best approach to this genre of literature*", said Tolkien. He was always an advocate of experience, of a sort of magical participation in the fairy story whether he was referring to his own or to others.

In his celebrated essay *On Fairy-stories*, he formulated most clearly his philosophy of the literary genre in which he worked. And this is of considerable importance. Not only from a technical point of view, but from a much deeper point of view, from the point of view of gnosis as we shall soon see. Tolkien wrote in his essay *On Fairy-stories*:

*It is the mark of a good fairy-story of the higher or more complete kind that, however wild its events, however fantastic or terrible the adventures, it can give to child and man that hears it, when the turn comes, a catch of the breath; a beat and lifting of the heart near to or indeed accompanied by tears as keen as that given by any form of literary art and having a peculiar quality.*

Not only was Tolkien a master second to none in the art of conveying this peculiar quality, but he had conscious knowledge of its true magical and gnostic nature. Although a believing and practicing Roman Catholic, going to mass several times each week (not only on Sunday) and whose son was (and I believe he's still alive) is a priest, Tolkien did not hesitate to identify, for instance the Gospels as fairy stories of a sublime kind. Because to him, that was a compliment. Neither did he hesitate in identifying the hermetic or gnostic character of the fairy story, where in his above mentioned essay he quoted an old English poem. It has three verses, and each of these three verses describes a certain kind of reality. It goes like this:

*O see ye not yon narrow road  
So thick beset wi' thorns and briers?  
That is the path of righteousness  
Though after it but few enquires.*

*And see ye not that braid braid road  
That lies across yon lillie leven?  
That is the path of wickedness  
Though some call it the road to heaven.*

*And see ye not that bonny road  
Which winds about the fernie brae?  
That is the road to fair Elfland  
Where you and I this night maun gae.*

- where *maun gae* means *may go*. So here are the three realities: the *Path of righteousness*, which is the road of conventional, orthodox religious righteousness; the second: the wicked, deceptive way which one finds in the world; and the third is the way of the imagination and the secondary creation: that of Fair Elfland.

And more about that now.

Even today, in the age of Joseph Campbell and the sort of modest mythic revival that we have experienced there is a reluctance by many regarding the kind of mythology that borders on the fairy-tale. The very term *fairy-tale* is used often in a pejorative sense, denoting a piece of useless fantasy, a story without true content., something to amuse small children.

Tolkien, an Oxford professor of much learning, not only did not share this view, but he developed an entire theory about the nature and value of what might be called the *best*, the *avant-garde* of the fairy story. Tolkien, in his famous essay *on Fairy-stories*, developed a theory of two creations. He said that there is a primary creation which consists of the given, external, so-called *objective* world; and then there is a secondary creation or *sub-creation* which occurs at least in part by way of the human mind, or more precisely, the human imagination.

This concept of Primary Creation is somewhat similar to the one that I often call the *Prefabricated Universe*. We come into this world and we find ourselves in a reality that is not of our making, and that is sort of *prefabricated*. It is there. Like a house: you go into it, you have to live in it.

You didn't build it, you didn't even decorate it; maybe you can't afford even put a piece of furniture into into it - you're just *there*. But there is another kind of creation, and each and everyone of us have within ourselves what it takes to gain entry to that creation.

Now here we have to be a little careful! And the reason why we have to be careful is that I think that in many ways our thinking - even, or maybe particularly of those who, let's say, have a long-lasting interest in the *unusual*, in the *borderline*, in what our fundamentalist friends like to call with great shudders and gnashing of teeth *the Occult* - we inherited really from the 19th century.

The 19th century had a kind of exaggerated view of science and of the world of facts; and so anything that was *real* was *factual*. There was no understanding of something that can be *very true* and yet *not factual*, that there are truths and there are realities which are not factual.

You can't prove them.

This is a very important reality, and it was something that was discarded by the Victorian mind and I think is still discarded by most people who have come to associate their own world view really with that kind of late 19th century Victorian outlook.

Yet when you look beyond that you find that in most ancient spiritual traditions, especially in the ones that are sort of the alternative nature; the mystical nature (not so much the mainstream) there was always the understanding of what Henri Corbain and some other modern scholars, especially of the Sufi traditions, have called the *imaginal world*.

Now, that is not the same as *imaginary*. But rather, let's say the Sufi mystics were of course nominally ecclesiast muslims: they tended to explain that that here is the world within which we live: the created world, then there is God - Allah - but in between that is an imaginal world to which one gains entry by way of ones imagination. Many of these ideas they have really assimilated from the Neoplatonists and other early sources.

And it is hard for us to deal with these ideas because to us, something is either **true** or it **isn't true**. It is either factually true or it doesn't exist. And yet: think of it a little bit. Ever since the 1840's or so, with the beginning of spiritualism, people have tried to prove the factuality, let us say, of life after death. Or the factuality of spirits.

They haven't. Why? *Because it may be true, but it isn't a fact.* These things you cannot approach in the same way in which you approach the - I don't know - the content of your refrigerator. It has to be approached with a different kind of faculty. And this is the sort of thing that Tolkien was talking about when he said "*look, if you use certain functions within your own mind, within your own psyche, then you gain entry into this imaginal reality*". And it can be of very great value and of very great use to you.

It is not as yet, say, the ultimate reality which the great mystics enter when they come to the mystical union with the Divine, but it is between the factual and that. It is what in gnostic terminology often would be referred to as "the world of the Aeons" which approaches and merges into the fullness of the pleroma. You see: we tend to discard that what is between the opposites. It's either one opposite or the other. But how do you get from one to the other? There has to be an intermediary realm, there has to be an intermediary agency of mind. And we have within ourselves the ability to deal with that. We have within ourselves the ability to travel in that.

And those of you who have some familiarity with the great myths of the Lord of the Rings: I think that to some extent this is symbolised by going out beyond the borders of the Shire. Going through the hedges and entering the great forest. Now you are outside of the ordinary. And isn't that to a major extent what we all want? Isn't that to a major extent why we are here, at least in this room? I know I'm here for that reason. Oh, we can have all kinds of highfaluting justifications for our interest: *Oh, we want to discover Truth! We want to serve Humanity!* In a more recent lingo: *We want to Heal the Earth* - as if there is some kind of big sickness there; I think the sickness is more within ourselves - but you know all of these things.

But you know what we really want?

We want **wonder**. We want **excitement**. We want that vision and the experience which makes us feel intensely, wonderfully, terribly, eternally alive. **That's** what we want!

Because that's what we are about here in this place. That's what I tried to present. Everything else is a sickness of the mind. This is what leads to the real, to the ultimate real. Look into the writings of all the great mystics, the greatest ones, you know. Anibenarah (?) Beorah (?) Saint John of the Cross, Saint Theresa and so forth - and what do you see in them? You see in them the joy, the excitement, their heart that has grown wings - which has been one of the symbols for the Sufi's, for instance.

How do you grow wings? *By trying to measure the weight or the electrical charge of a ghost - which is what the psychical researchers were trying to do in the 19th century?* And of course they found nothing! Because they were going about it with the wrong methods. So don't be ashamed of looking for excitement, you know, of that sort. Don't be ashamed of seeking wonder. Why? Because - what is characterised by wonder? That, which is wonderful. And there is nothing wrong with seeking that which is wonderful. OK, now let me quit preaching about that and come back to our friend Tolkien.

This theory of creation as well as of many of his ideas; in spite of, or maybe to some degree because of his profound involvement with the deeper aspects of his Catholic faith, have really a great similarity with the gnostic image of reality. I cannot go into some of these details; it would become too pedantic and also too long but most of you are probably aware that since his death his son Christopher Tolkien has been editing and publishing all the previously unpublished papers of his father. And there are volumes and volumes of them. One of the latest of these which came out within the last couple of years - I think it's volume 11 - for instance, contains an alternative version, the one that he did not publish, a more profound and more complex version of the *Silmarillion*, his great mythic work which was - a sort of explanatory work which was published after the *Lord of the Rings*; and in it you find that the account of the creation of the world, the coming of the Valar and the fall of the demiurge Morgoth is **pure** gnosticism and even more of a Manichaean variety than any other.

So, wherever professor Tolkien's inspiration came from, it was very, very close to the gnostic realm of reality. He said in effect that the flawed and fallen creation can be improved, or even can be brought to a kind of fulfilment by way of the human imagination. And this improvement, of fulfilment, is the secondary creation or sub-creation. The human imagination creates a new world, superimposed as it were on the old one - a second reality standing on the first one. And this second creation is not only more pleasant than the first, but in it the first finds remedy and a completion.

So we are, in a sense, the new creators, the fulfillers of the old creation - if we only utilise our creative imagination. Of course, we once again run up against the semantically based prejudice against the idea of imagination. "*Oh, you are just imagining that*", "*That exists only in your imagination*" and the one that we have all been told probably when we were children and thereby probably have been maimed and stifled more than by anything else: "*Oh, stop imagining things!*" The worst thing that can happen to a human being: stop imagining things. Now, these are admonitions that we have received and that often really did not (read ?) down to our benefit. So we don't trust our imagination and we feel that it conjures up on realities. Tolkien was certainly aware of the shortcomings of imagination - its occasional neurotic action, its destructive functioning.

By the same token he also held that these activities are the aberrations of the imagination rather than its proper use. Let me just use a quick example: let's say if I imagine, for instance, as the result of some neurosis, that water is harmful to my skin and body. And I convince myself that water contains too much chlorine, or too much radio activity, or something; and therefore I stop washing and I become filthy and smelly and I live like that. Well, in that case I have used my imagination to a very bad purpose, haven't I. But that is an abuse of the imagination. So, this then is the great and important thesis. I don't need to go into it anymore. That is kind of the theoretical foundation, and justification of the sort of literature that Tolkien has given us. Let us now look at Tolkien's great sub-creation, his trilogy ***The Lord of the Rings***, as augmented by the volume introducing it ***The Hobbit***, and also by his strictly mythological non-narrative work ***The Silmarillion***. Given though - I am sure there are quite a few of us here who are very familiar with the *Lord of the Rings* - it is necessary for us now to very, very quickly give a paragraph or so of synopsis of the work.

Tolkien's world, incidentally, the imaginal world, is called Middle Earth. One wonders whether this is influenced by the Sufi notion of a '*middle realm*' between the divine realm and the created, terrestrial world. Well, in this Middle Earth, unbeknown to the peaceful and insular

dweller therein, such as the small, comfort-loving, furry-footed hobbits, a terrible battle is shaping up between evil and the defenders of good. In a truly Jungian and gnostic fashion, Tolkien is not satisfied with a merely manifest and intellectually manageable form of evil. Oh yes, there is a being, the Dark Lord Sauron, who apparently at one time was human (\*) and had then sort of become ever more demonic in the course of his existence and embodiment, but Sauron is in turn influenced by other forces behind him who ultimately go back to Morgoth: one of the Valar, one of the creative, like great angels who had however turned against the one and had gone down into the depth of the Earth and basically governs from inside - especially all the malefic developments that take place there.

So Tolkien has a very keen idea of what Jung used to recall - I mean it's not Jung's invention, the term of course: the *Mysterium Inequitatis*; the mystery of iniquity, that somehow evil, even as good, is always connected to something beyond itself. These things have roots, and the roots go far, far off either into the realm of light or into the realm of darkness. But they have roots.

So from these roots that are constellated around the figure of the Dark Lord Sauron, a great danger, a great crisis is rising in Middle Earth. But the key to the battle, or indeed to the whole war, to the whole issue is an object: a magic ring. This ring is coveted by Sauron because of its power. The ring needs to be destroyed if it is not to fall into the hand of evil because by way of possessing it, it would truly gain a tremendous advantage and dominate the world. It must be destroyed at its source. This is also interesting. The ring has to be taken to where it came from, where it was made. Which is in the fire of the Earth; a volcano in the dark land.

Four races, four kinds of beings are involved, four kinds of peoples are involved in the fight against Sauron. Elves, who are, having bodies, somewhat angelic in nature; humans, who are essentially just like ourselves; dwarves, who are delvers into the earth; and finally a small people for whom we have no equivalent in our experience really. A people of small stature, not belonging to the other three groups: the hobbits. Professor Tolkien went on record himself that how he broke through, so to say, to the reality of a hobbit was (?) that a student turned in a completely blank paper at the exam. Whatever the reason was. As Tolkien was correcting the papers - you know, teaching in Oxford - he came up against the blank examination paper. And he sort of looked at it and began doodling and he wrote, rather unbeknownst to himself, he wrote this sentence: "*In a hole in the ground, there lived a Hobbit.*"

And he looked at that and he couldn't figure for the life of him what this is .. "*What is a Hobbit?*" So he started thinking about it and he says: "*after a while, I discovered what a hobbit was.*" Interesting how the imagination works. Now you may think that this is silly. You may think that - oh, I don't know - eating Brussels sprouts for 35 years without a mixture of any more palatable food, abstaining from alcohol and tobacco and maybe abstaining from breathing the Los Angeles air and doing all sorts of other exercises in order to project your astral body is a much better way of discovering reality.

But I don't think so. I would much rather find out why, in a hole in the ground, there lived a hobbit. And what it is, and what it has to tell us. So it is a hobbit, named Bilbo, who first re-discovers the ring. The ring, having been lost by a sort of accident, for a long time. Later on the nephew of Bilbo, the old hobbit: young Frodo, is the one to whom the task falls to return and destroy the ring. Of course, this quest is interwoven with innumerable adventures, frightful battles, vast journeys, frequent references to past events and myths, intrigues and activities of

other beings not belonging to the four mentioned groups of races. The story ends in a great denouement of the destruction of the ring by fire in the last work called *The Return of the King*, and at that time also the return of a previously exiled and secretly living descendant of the old royal family who remounts his throne and brings a peaceful and happy order to Middle Earth.

However, unlike other tales which have a happy ending, the very matter-of-fact statement is made that of course the defeat of the dark lord, the defeat of the darkness is bound to be temporary and that the time undoubtedly comes, although hopefully not very soon, when these forces will re-constellate themselves again and continue giving trouble to the inhabitants of Middle Earth. A very important thing for us to remember, and I'll come to that a little later, that when this fight and battle against the dark, against the evil takes place, the victory is always temporarily. And that therefore ultimately something else is needed; because if that something else, which I'll tell you towards the end, does not happen, then we are caught in an ongoing futile battle - more than one way. So much about the basic story.

We shall now look at certain themes from the story, and elucidate certain gnostic aspects of these themes. We will illustrate them primarily with poems taken from the trilogy, written by Tolkien, which convey the mood of the issues which we discuss. Now keep in mind, you of highfaluting literary taste - and I hope that some of you are of such disposition - that of course Tolkien's poems are not major poetry in the literary sense. They denote primarily songs, that are being intoned. Which is exactly the manner in which poetry is used, for instance, in the plays of Shakespeare. (full fathom five ?) thy father lies. and so, these are all sung by various people, in that case by *Ariel*, the spirit. But they tell a subtle story very well; the story that we are after. Now, first I'll look at the theme of the three, actually four, but the three major - the three normative groupings or races, as he calls them, in their possible relationship to the three soul types of the gnostics. Now, I need to quickly interject there that this typology of three soul types divides humans, let's say, into three groups.

There are, what (engrica?) called **Pneumatics**: "*people of spirit*" who have already moved so much into the realm of the spirit from the realm of the body and soul that they are really no longer "of this world" and they are on their way to another, greater spiritual state. Then there are the **Psychics**, which has nothing to with people whom we call psychics in our beloved Southern California, but which means "*people of mind*", "*people of soul*", of the mind-emotion complex.

And here, of course, we find to a major extent ourselves, perhaps the most of us; and then we have **Hyletics**, people who are primarily interested in, and attached to the physical world and to physical things.

Now, we have a similar situation in Tolkien. First we have the Elves. Now, you should not think, when you are within this mythos, of the sort of silly-looking pointy-nosed and sort of unpleasantly-voiced elves of Santa Claus. Not these kinds of funny little things. But rather, the ones that Tolkien depicts are tall, majestic beings of numinous appearance. They're exiles from their own land, elvenhome, the isle of the blessed. They are conscious of their exile and they are characterised by a great deal of nostalgia. Clearly they correspond to the Pneumatic gnostic, also called in some literature "the imperishable race" which is precisely what the elves of Tolkien are, for under ordinary circumstances, they are immortal.

In that respect I came across a little ditty which - it's a poem - by someone named Neil Rogin (?) and the poem it comes from is a poem called *Amnesia*. But this really doesn't matter, but it's a

wonderful little statement of the forgetfulness of the reality from whence we all come. It goes like this:

*In the beginning, you knew.  
Then you pretended to forget.  
Then you pretended to forget you forgot.  
Then you forgot you pretended.  
Remember?*

*That's the way it is!* And so, this is the *amnesia* of which we all suffer which is remedied by the *anamnesis* - as it is called in Greek - the remembering.

Now, let me give you a little, sort of poetic example of how this feels. Here is, for instance, a little poem which is sung by the elven queen Galadriel; one of the truly important high elves in this world who sort of created a lovely little kingdom for herself and her people but who remembers and still has the nostalgia for the blessed land to which, of course, she and her people eventually go.

*I sang of leaves, of leaves of gold, and leaves of gold there grew;  
Of wind I sang, a wind there came and in the branches blew.  
Beyond the Sun, beyond the Moon, the foam was on the Sea,  
And by the strand of Ilmarin there grew a golden Tree.  
Beneath the stars of Ever-eve in Eldamar it shone,  
In Eldamar beside the walls of elven Tirion.  
There long the golden leaves have grown upon the branching years,  
While here beyond the Sundering Seas now fall the elven-tears.  
O Lórien! The Winter comes, the bare and leafless Day;  
The leaves are falling in the stream, the River flows away.  
O Lórien! Too long I have dwelt upon this Hither Shore  
And in a fading crown have twined the golden elanor.  
But if of ships I now should sing, what ship would come to me,  
What ship would bear me ever back across so wide a Sea?*

- and, of course, we will see the ships later. Also, we have another example of a similar kind and this is sung by a far less distinguished elfin personage. Nevertheless, it tells of this nostalgia:

*To the Sea, to the Sea! The white gulls are crying,  
The wind is blowing, and the white foam is flying.  
West, west away, the round sun is falling.  
Grey ship, grey ship, do you hear them calling.  
The voices of my people that have gone before me?  
I will leave, I will leave the woods that bore me;  
For our days are ending and our years failing.  
I will pass the wide waters lonely sailing.  
Long are the waves on the Last Shore falling,  
Sweet are the voices in the Lost Isle calling,  
In Eressëa, in elvenhome that no man can discover,  
Where the leaves fall not, land of my people for ever!*

- because the blessed land is envisioned as in the uttermost West, beyond the sea; and one goes there by way of certain special magic ships.

Then we have the other group of people, or creatures. These are the dwarves. Now here again, you don't have to envision a sort of real shrunken, grotesque kind of little manikins, but they are rather like traditional dwarves in the lore of many countries; they are earthbound, they are dwellers and workers in subterranean caverns; they are mining and forging metals, they are rather obsessed with gold and jewels. They send (sense?) some of the greater archetypal themes of life, such as the exile of the King - which means of course ultimately the exile of the true God from the world - and awaiting his return; but they view all of this generally in rather concrete terms.

Here is one of their poems, awaiting the return, the re-instalment of their own king:

*The King beneath the mountains,  
The King of carven stone,  
The lord of silver fountains  
Shall come into his own!*

*His crown shall be upholden,  
His harp shall be restrung,  
His halls shall echo golden  
To songs of yore resung.*

*The woods shall wave on mountains  
And grass beneath the sun;  
His wealth shall flow in fountains  
And the rivers golden run.*

*The streams shall run in gladness,  
The lakes shall shine and burn,  
And sorrow fail and sadness  
At the Mountain-king's return!*

Well, this could be - a little bet, maybe - the kind of song that the people were singing on Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey. "The King! The King! The son of David is going to come! He's going to re-establish the kingdom and there is going to be power and there is going to be riches and well be rid of our enemies" - and all this sort of thing. But somehow, that is always too material an interpretation. In some way or another - whether he says it or not - the Messiah always conveys the message "My kingdom is not of this world".

And so - this shows really the better side of the hyletic, let's say, but throughout the books one can see the greed of the dwarves; their proclivity(?) to rouse the deep dark things because they delve too deep for precious metals in the earth. That is how they stir up the Balrog, an old, terrible fire-spirit of Morgoth. In fact, when Gandalf is confronted with the- for those of you know the story, with (?) a Balrog, he says: "A Balrog has come! A Balrog of Morgoth." So he comes from the original evil (...?) a real servant of the demiurg. Needless to say, I don't need to go into a lot of detail, that hyleticism of one kind or the other, then, is the greater friction of our age; in the sense of materialism, greed, the worship of money, the desire for things.

And the answer to these afflictions is of course generally that people have to find out that ultimately they are going to be dissatisfied with merely material things. That is why, for myself, I am very much at ease with, and basically an advocate of capitalism because I think that it is necessary for people to first *have* something before they find out that what they have isn't really all that much worth having.

If you deprive them of having anything and of making any money than that desire is always there - probably life after life after life. But go ahead! Go ahead! Get it, you know! How many washing machines can you use? How many cars can you use? How many houses can you use? And eventually you'll find out these things are really of limited value. But if somebody is just there sitting on top of the government lecturing to you: "Ahh, these things are not important! You know, be idealistic!" You know what happens? That's the best way of turning somebody into a (larsenous ?) crook. And that's exactly what is happening in Russia. Seventy-five years of deprivation. So now, of course, in a very kind of childish and counterproductive manner people try to grab what they can. It's the same with other things, too. I don't want to go into a lot of details, but there's so much sexual scandal going on now and the (sorts?) that arise therefrom (in) the same way. You practice a lot of repression in those areas and then you'll have a sexual monkey sitting on your head flagellating you and occasionally making you do some really peculiar and silly things. There too, people have to experience the stuff. You can't just tell them forever that this is forbidden. Because the more forbidden it is, the more they want it.

Experience it, see what it is. and eventually you're gonna find it's not all that it's cracked up to be - and it's ok, up to a point, sure, but this is not something to really forever and ever write home about, so to say. It isn't: it's just another thing, another something. But if you forbid people as so many religions always do, that's a great way of keeping people chained to that which is forbidden. It won't work. Go ahead, experience it, taste it, and you'll find out that there are a lot better things than that. That eventually, the spirit tastes a lot better than anything this earth can offer; but first you'll have to taste it.

These are the kind of the hyletic problems of the world and the bearded dwarves are kind of the expressions of that. The humans, like ourselves or as Tolkien, using the idiom of the pre-feminist and pre-politically correct era calls them, *Men*; these are for the most part what we would call the *Psychics* or the in-between the Hyletic and the Pneumatic. This kind of consciousness can go either way. Some humans are on the side of good in Tolkien's world. Others are serving the Dark Lord. Some of the higher types are in close friendship with the Elves, that is, with Pneumatics. Some in part even descend from Elves and thus - in terms of lineage - and thus are partially from the fair race. The holy race of Seth, as the gnostics would call it.

But we always have to remember that the Psychic, like Tolkien's human, is governed by the mind-emotion complex that spins its wheels incessantly and distorts reality. Ambition. Power. Prestige. Self-image. Ego. The need to be right, and so forth. And most of it comes of course from a *false sense of self*. The grand example of this is the wizard Saruman who is so egotistical and so arrogant that he thinks that he will be able to use the power of the Dark Lord for his own ends and then of course becomes enslaved by that himself and comes really to a very evil end.

He of course belongs (in?) to that sub-category of humans that are called *the Wizards*. These are humans who however have acquired power over various forces in the world and they each have their own particular domain. Gandalf who is the - becomes the good wizard and the great hero, originally Gandalf the Grey, eventually changes into Gandalf the White. Saruman, whom I

just spoke of, and there are indications of others: Radagast - and each one has a color. Gandalf the White. Saruman of many colors, Radagast the Brown. So the skilled, the learned, even the wise are destroyed and brought low by ambition.

But: there is another group. And this doesn't really fit anywhere. Probably closest to the human, this is the race related to the humans: the hobbits, the halflings, of whom we shall say a little more later. And all of this brings to focus the nature and pitfalls of what Tolkien would call "the character of the Race of Men" and that we would probably call the people of soul, the Psychics, those who are captured by the mind; and the mind will not let go.

So - this is a very, very important issue. Now, the Elves are really not captured by anything because they are beyond that. Their main preoccupation is the dichotomy between the existential condition within which they find themselves and what they know is their true home from whence they came long ago and whither they long to return. This is the preoccupation, the principal preoccupation of, let's say, of the Pneumatic; of the really spiritual person; of the person who is in touch with the spirit.

The dwarves are for the most part very much enmeshed in and enslaved by the external, by the physical, by physical things. And the humans, the race of Men in turn, are enslaved by their own mind. But the mind can go either way: the god, one of the gods, who probably symbolizes the mind best in Antiquity, and that's the Roman god Janus who had two faces: he has a head and has a face here and a face in the back; and they used to put him on the gates of cities so that he looked inside the city - and he looked outside the city, as a kind of a guardian. But that's how the mind is: it is able to look towards the spirit; or in turn it can look elsewhere.

Jung said that one can fall into the inner abyss; and one can fall into the outer abyss of the world. The mind can catch you; or the external, the physical world can catch you. So you sort of have to have another, third attachment, a third possibility where you're not caught by any of these (?) but you see, most people have no real inkling of that third factor; they only - in part, even religion has reflected that because from a certain time on - you can actually pinpoint it in history the Christian church abandoned the notion of body, soul and spirit, and it just made body and soul.

And that sort of really symbolises the fact we are really caught between these two opposites: the dichotomy of mind and body, the dichotomy of mind and matter and we don't know of anything else. And so we bounce back and forth between these two. We've become frightfully intellectual and frightfully mental and think *"Aha! Well now, you know, I'm safe."* Well, because there is a certain safety and i've known people with a very active mind; they grew sick in body; they were in pain of one thing or the other but their thoughts, their mind, you know, kept them going. But it's still only another opposite. There must be something yet, beyond that. And that is the spirit. It's neither mind nor matter but it's something else.

Now - we have time only now for about two more elements or themes to consider. But they are quite important. The first of these is the ring. The great Ring, the ring of power. Note that the story of the trilogy is a kind of quest in reverse: not a quest to find the treasure, like the Grail, or to find the beautiful damsel, but it is a quest to get rid of something. I think that the (taoist?) would certainly sympathise with that, and certainly I know Jung would sympathise with it because often the real remedy for our predicament, of our crisis, of our existential predicament, is not grabbing yet something else, but rather getting rid of something, you know. We don't

consider that very often, because we are an acquisitive lot, mentally as well as physically; so great dangers, horrible suffering just to get rid of something. This something is an object that has the capacity to corrupt existence; to secure the rule of evil in the world. The verse about the ring reads:

*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.*

Something that gains ascendancy over everything; that all the various kinds of protagonist races have something of that sort. But they all can be brought under the malign rule of the evil power and made subservient to it.

Much speculation has been expanded - you know - for a while I was so enamoured that one time in the 70's, of the Lord of the Rings, that I bought every book of literary criticism, anything that pertained to it. But then it grew so much that I neither had the money nor the library shelves to house them all. But people have speculated what the ring could be: "oh, atomic power". Some kind of ideology.

But in reality, I think it is a mystery. It is the mystery of the workings of evil. And at this time in my life I would interpret it as the link that binds us to the powers of limitation. To what, in gnostic law, we would call 'the Archons'. It is the wedding band of darkness. Slipped on our finger by the will of the Dark Lord who wants to rule us. One can't just slip it off - that's the problem with it. Even the rather guileless hobbits when they put it on, it does something to them. It corrupts everybody. And so the truly wise don't even want to have anything to do with it; they don't want to get close to it because it would corrupt them.

Galadriel says, when they offer it to her: "would you set up a dark Queen instead of the dark Lord? If you would give it to me, that is what eventually would happen. I would start out with the best of intentions, I would try to help everybody, but with this in my possession it would all get corrupted and I would just become a dark Queen." So the thing to do is to get rid of it. To take it back to its source, to throw it into the primal fire of the archonic hell.

Perhaps there are really two quests we are on: one is the quest which we were talking about here - I don't know, six weeks ago or so, which is the finding of the pearl that we are to take back to heaven; but the other is trying to get rid of something. Something that corrupts us and that corrupts the world. This is not without some precedence. Look, for instance, at certain statements in the gospel of Thomas where the children take their clothing and take it off when the owner of the field comes and leave. But this something has to be left behind (??).

Now, this sunday is the feast day of St Francis. You may recall what St Francis did when he was very young, when he'd just started his career and his father was a cloth merchant of some standing in Assisi, and when Francis - Francesco - decided to leave, his father's business and all of that, and devote himself to higher things his father was very put out and he remonstrated with him and he said: "*Look at you! You're even wearing the clothing of my business!*" And here

Francis stood on the city square in Assisi and he said: "Oh yes?" So he took off every stitch of clothing and he stood naked in the street: "Here father, here is what is yours" and he walked away.

So, you have to get rid of something - you have to get rid of something that does not appertain to you and that would pull you into things that you don't want to be associated with. It's a great difficulty. So, the victory over these things is certainly difficult. Yet, the victory comes. Here is, for instance, the song which I always felt was a wonderful, sort of short hymn of victory which the people sing when the ring has been thrown into the fire and when the king is coming back. It's brought by the messengers, by the eagles, the news:

*Sing now, ye people of the Tower of Anor, for the realm of Sauron has ended forever and the dark Tower is thrown down.*

*Sing and rejoice ye people of the Tower of the Guard, for your watch had not been in vain. And the Black Gate is broken and your king had passed through and he is victorious.*

*Sing and be glad, all ye children of the West, for your king shall come again, and he shall dwell among you all the days of your life.*

*And the Tree that was withered shall be renewed and he shall plant it in the high places and the city shall be blessed.*

*Sing, all ye people.*

You know when I was reminded of this song of victory? I heard it in the air when the Berlin Wall fell. There are still times in this history when a dark tower is thrown down. No doubt, the power that built it reconstellates itself again and causes trouble in some fashion - but still, there are victories in this life. Victories of freedom, victories of the good. But we need to reflect: what ring of evil, what wedding band of darkness are we wearing - that needs to be given back to the fire? Because we all do! In our own way, something or the other, because (something?) the ring - the ring is handy up to a point. One of its great powers is invisibility. So let's say, all these people who I know, and you must know just as many, if not more - when they come to the door, when you meet them somewhere: how wonderful it would be to just slip on that ring and \*poof\* they can't see you anymore - you're not there! Just remove yourself from it - I actually need a ring to remove the telephone. But it does have its advantages. But there is a price to pay, and perhaps you don't want to pay that price. What is it? What kind of ring has the darkness slipped on your finger that you should take off and throw it into the fire?

And last but not least, you know, who stands the best chance of doing this work? Who is the ring bearer? It's not a great elf lord, not a great pneumatic; not a wise wizard; not even a heroic human being - and they abound in the story. Certainly not a greedy, earth-bound dwarf; but it's a little fellow. A halfling, a hobbit. Littleness that can rise to greatness. Little people who smoke pipes, who enjoy their comforts; they enjoy their food: but when the chips are down, as it were, when the call comes, they are willing to forego anything for a task that is truly important.

What have these funny little people with their furry feet got that the other three kinds of beings don't have? What is it? Well, they are free, for one thing, they are free of the obsessions and the preoccupations of most of the others. Their predilections and their interests are sort of natural; what comes to a person. Why not want to be a little bit comfortable, you know? Why not want to eat a good meal? Why not want to have a nice, clean hobbit-hole? All of these things. But they just like it for what it is; because these things are pleasant in themselves. They don't have all kinds of mental projections and preoccupations with them: they ego is not bound up with all of

these things as it is with the others. They are free of the sickness of the mind that people have, and that is why they can be heroic. That's why the ring bearer is a hobbit, rather than any other. And I think we need to keep that in mind, because our minds play these tricks on us; that there is always some kind of egotistical projection, some kind of weirdness that gets into our heads and that then frustrates our ability to rise to the heroic exigencies of life.

It's a simplicity which has to be gained. You can't say: "*Oh, the simple man, the simple woman, the simple natural person, that's the most wonderful!*"

Well, what if you are not simple like that anymore?

What are you going to do? Are you going to hit yourself over the head with a hammer to destroy your brain? It's not going to work!

So, what you have to do is, you have to kind of de-complicate your character. You have to get away from the malign convolutions and gyrations of the mind. And that is a lot more easily said than done. Look, just no matter how tired you are in the evening, you lie down for a well-deserved rest and the mind goes to work. "What about *\*this\** and what about *\*that\**"; how about *\*this\** and how about *\*that\** and why didn't I do *\*that\** and how could I do *\*that\** and it goes on and on and on and on. And you can't stop it! And it does this during the day, too. And then: this is what makes you human: this weirdness, this silliness, it goes on. Your cat, or your dog, or your iguana - they don't have these problems! When they're tired, they sleep, like a zen buddhist. When they're hungry, they eat. But you don't! When you're hungry, you look into the latest health fad. "*What can I eat - if anything? What can I eat - if anything?*"

When you feel like saying something, you won't say it, because "*is it politically correct what I'm going to say? Are all of these goons (?) around to punish me if say this?*"

Or, for that matter, if I smoke a cigaret or a cigar or whatever the case may be - hobbits were partial to pipes, primarily, and they had their own wonderful tobacco that was referred to as pipe-weed that they grew themselves. But again, it's that uncomplicated character which is not held in thrall really by the illusions of the mind. And I think only a hobbit could have written this poem, which is written by the old hobbit Bilbo who was already in a sort of retirement in Elrond's house - and look at the wonderful attitude that is present here:

*I sit beside the fire and think  
of all that I have seen,  
of meadow-flowers and butterflies  
in summers that have been;*

*Of yellow leaves and gossamer  
in autumns that there were,  
with morning mist and silver sun  
and wind upon my hair.*

*I sit beside the fire and think  
of how the world will be  
when winter comes without a spring  
that I shall ever see.*

*For still there are so many things  
that I have never seen;*

*in every wood in every spring  
there is a different green.*

*I sit beside the fire and think  
of people long ago,  
and people who will see a world  
that I shall never know.*

*But all the while I sit and think  
of times there were before,  
I listen for returning feet  
and voices at the door.*

With the nostalgia there is still always an immediate practicality of the good that is present at that particular time.

So, we come to the end of our time and perhaps also to the end of this work. When the victory has been won - even though it's understood that there will be problems undoubtedly at some point later, something interesting happens. First of all, the elves themselves and all those humans who were associated with the ring now go to the ocean, to the grey havens, where the mysterious grey ships wait for them to take them across the ocean to the blessed land. And I'll read you a little bit of that part, pretty much in conclusion and then maybe I'll be able to still append just a word of commentary to that, because here is something very important. It is not just a nice sentimental story. Now, some of you don't know the names of, perhaps, of the people who are mentioned here but that doesn't make any difference.

*Then Elrond and Galadriel rode on; for the Third Age was over, and the Days of the Rings were passed, and an end was come of the story and song of those times.  
With them went many Elves of the High Kindred who would no longer stay in Middle-Earth; and among them, filled with a sadness that was yet blessed and without bitterness, rode Sam, and Frodo, and Bilbo, and the Elves delighted to honour them.*

*Though they rode through the midst of the Shire all the evening and all the night, none saw them pass, save the wild creatures; or here and there some wanderer in the dark who saw a swift shimmer under the trees, or a light and shadow flowing through the grass as the Moon went westward.*

*And when they had passed from the Shire, going about the south skirts of the White Downs, they came to the Far Downs, and to the Towers, and looked on the distant Sea; and so they rode down at last to Mithlond, to the Grey Havens in the long firth of Lune.*

*As they came to the gates Círdan the Shipwright came forth to greet them. Very tall he was, and his beard was long, and he was grey and old, save that his eyes were keen as stars; and he looked at them and bowed, and said, "All is now ready."*

*Then Círdan led them to the Havens, and there was a white ship lying, and upon the quay beside a great grey horse stood a figure robed all in white awaiting them. As he turned and came towards them Frodo saw that Gandalf now wore openly upon his hand the Third Ring, Narya the Great, and the stone upon it was red as fire. Then those who were to go were*

*glad, for they knew that Gandalf also would take ship with them.*

*[... then they said goodbye ...]*

*Then Frodo kissed Merry and Pippin, and last of all Sam, and went aboard; and the sails were drawn up, and the wind blew, and slowly the ship slipped away down the long grey firth; and the light of the glass of Galadriel that Frodo bore glimmered and was lost. And the ship went out into the High Sea and passed on into the West, until at last on a night of rain Frodo smelled a sweet fragrance on the air and heard the sound of singing that came over the water.*

*And then it seemed to him that as in his dream in the house of Bombadil, the grey rain curtain turned all to silver glass and was rolled back, and he beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise.*

What is it? What is this? Well, this is the third element. The element of transcendence. Beyond the opposites of the light and dark, of Sauron and of his opponents, there is yet something else. And that is that which transcends the bounds of this world and its opposites. Ultimately and eventually, all of us have to get beyond; beyond even the quest to get rid of the ring. Beyond the conflict of good and evil. To the source. To the blessed land, to transcendence. If that isn't there, all the rest of it doesn't make any sense; and every effort will just remain an exercise in futility.

You'll have to keep that in mind: to look at what is going on. If the philosophies, if the mythologies, if the poetry, if even the nice things that come around in this world, if they are bereft of that element of that elemental transcendence; if they be only with this world: they are false and they will lead you only to more trouble. Only when that additional element is there, the element of the promise of ultimate and real and total freedom; not just the temporary defeats of the darkness in this world, not just another redistribution of money, not just fixing up another riverbed or something - all those things may be useful and necessary, but without the ship that takes you to the real, that takes you to the true, they are worth precisely nothing. And the entire history of this sad and miserable and conflict-ridden and crisis-ridden and scandal-ridden world in which we live is living proof of that: that when we try and try and try to solve the problems of this world, only with the resources of this world, and we have no handle on anything else, we are not connected to anything else, time after time we are in more and more trouble than we have been before. Watch out for that!

Because without the ships, without the opening to something else, there is no help for us or for anything else. And this, of course, was recognised before Tolkien by others. Let me give you just one - there were so many of these that I didn't know which one to pick - just one little analogy from the songs of the Manichaeans (?):

Look, the ship has put in (?) for you. Mark it of old. Noah is coming. He's steering. The ship is the good command, Noah is the light mind, he who comes and puts on the Saints (?).

Embark your waters.

Sail with the windy doom (?)

Return to thy kingdom and rejoice with all the Aeons (?) and enter thy rest.

I can find no better way to conclude this little rumination in Tolkien's wonderful myth; because here in a very important and very critical period of our culture; in the 1960's, in the 1970's, a grand, heroic and ultimately transforming and liberating myth has come our way. Let's not forget

about it. Many have been excited by it and thrilled by it when they were going to school; thereafter a whole generation was nourished on it; let's not just consign (?) "oh well, when I was in school and when I was in college .. in those days I read Tolkien and I took LSD and I smoked some grass and I - I won't catalogue all the other things - don't put it in that category. Because it's something very precious, this is something very important, this is something that should be made available to other generations to come because it is really the kind of myth, the kind of story that in a very proper sense can be called salvific.

Not only the Bibles and the Koran's and the Sutra's of this world are salvific; these things also are. They bring salvation, they bring redemption, if we properly address ourselves to them.

So I hope that, if you haven't done so yet, then you have something wonderful awaiting you if you address yourselves to this. And if you have, then you may want to return.

Step through the hedge from the Shire and enter the great Forest of the mind, the imaginal world, the world of the Aeons, the world of Middle-Earth and you will be well rewarded.

Thank you very much.

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