

## CHAPTER V

### PRIMAL GOODNESS

[of Bombadil's speech] an ancient language whose words were mainly those of wonder and delight. (I, 158)

[Theoden] And in such a battle... what would you do, Master Meriadoc, swordthain though you be, and greater of heart than of stature? (III, 77)

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In opposition to draconitas and power, several forms of primal, innate and practical goodness are presented. However, the basis of them all is a sense of wonder experienced and of delight at savouring the world around one. With the hobbits, in particular, this expression of wonder is so all-pervasive that it becomes almost synonymous with their essence, in fact their 'heart'. This combination may be termed 'primal goodness'; it is innate in them, and those hobbits concerned more with understanding than with goods or power, are able to retain it in the pristine form. This characteristic is to be found in all of Tolkien's better known chronicles, and is present in all his morally good characters. The words 'wonder' and 'heart' are so frequently applied to particular characters and situations that they become stylistic pointers and touchstones of basic moral character, adding a further dimension to the moral effect of the vocabularies of light/dark and draconitas. Criticism has hitherto neglected this basis to the portrayal of goodness; even in the frequent catalogues of the childlike behaviour of hobbits this aspect is not stressed unduly. Analogues for the concept may be

found in the Beowulf, Ancrène Wisse and in Parzival, but there they are not developed artistically to the degree in which they are in Tolkien's creative writings. Contemporary Georgian interest in 'wonder' was important from c1920, and is best indicated by the then impact on general religious thought of Rudolph Otto's The Idea of the Holy<sup>1</sup>, an important text when religion was becoming more a personal mystical experience, and moving from its nineteenth century stresses on dogma. Overall then, Tolkien recaptured the original sense of the miraculous that was once strong in the word 'wonder'; with a philologist's insights, and careful placement of his vocabulary, Tolkien is able to reinvigorate a long lost moral dimension to the Germanic word.

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The concept receives its first tentative exploration in The Hobbit, in the character of Bilbo and in his homely virtues. He is appreciative of nature, imaginative, and loath to think too highly of himself. Although much of The Hobbit is a charting of his growth in greater awareness and understanding of Middle-Earth, from both the contrivance and the guidance of Gandalf, the moral basis of the work is that he, Bilbo, is able to retain his primal integrity despite the many demanding tests upon him.

The homely hobbit virtues are introduced early with Bilbo's formal politeness and generous hospitality, only to be tested in turn by Gandalf and then by the thirteen dwarves. As well, the narrator addresses the reader directly in the second person to say that Bilbo was 'not quite so prosy as he liked to believe' and that he was also 'fond of flowers' (H, 14). And when his imagination is kindled

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1. Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy (trans. John W. Harvey), London, 1923 (first German ed. 1917).

- or as Tolkien puts it 'something Tookish woke up inside him' (H, 22) - he first imagines himself as heroically wearing 'a sword instead of a walking-stick'. However, the reverie is concluded almost immediately with a mixture of fear and awe:

He shuddered; and very quickly he was plain Mr Baggins of Bag-End, Underhill, again.

In this reaction, the narrow-minded fear of the unknown predominates. Yet in the whole reverie and its conclusion there is also an awareness of its fascination, mysterium tremendum and the fearful annihilation of self that Otto describes as the presence of the holy.

The concepts of 'heart' and of 'wonder' are presented in the narrative in situations which underscore them, as in the concluding sentence of a chapter. This pattern, one already considered in Tolkien's corpus, is used for the first emphatic use of 'heart'. The company is setting out 'with their hearts ready for more adventure' (H, 53). After several conventional uses of 'wonder' for astonishment the word is given greater moral dimension. Thus, Bilbo 'wonders' what he has in his pocket, puts his hand in and then finds the ring on it. And so he is made invisible, and is then saved from Gollum. The pace of the description here suggests that Bilbo is saved by a combination of his wonder and the seeming benign volition of the ring (H, 77). An increase in the word's force comes when Gandalf uses it later as part of an exclamation. Bilbo has suggested that Beorn could be a 'furrier', to which Gandalf replies 'Good gracious heavens, no, no, NO, NO!' It is followed by a parallel expression: 'in the name of all wonder' (H, 103). The use of the word in this way suggests that 'wonder' is synonymous with either 'Heaven' or 'God', but now certainly more than 'thought'. Later uses of it are consistent with this higher moral sense. Thus, in one of the few moments in which Thorin is more concerned with his duty to his people than with the retrieval of the gold, he 'began to wonder what had become of his unfortunate friends'

(H, 146). This unaccustomed unselfishness is reinforced linguistically by the expression 'Thorin had taken heart again' (H, 151) upon hearing of the rescue of his followers from the spiders.

In The Hobbit, where seemingly straightforward statements have been already shown to be densely charged with moral significance, even such general remarks have possible spiritual meaning, as when Gandalf says that Bilbo 'has more about him than you guess' (H, 120). It is usual to interpret this last comment in terms of Bilbo's character and potential. However, at this point his character is simple, and his potential is dependent upon sufficient grace to retain his primal goodness, as Gandalf implies.

The precise meaning of 'heart' varies throughout Tolkien's works. At times it is the physical organ itself, but the meaning is frequently blurred to refer to the (health of the) whole body. At other times it refers more specifically to the emotions, but again the meaning is frequently extended to include the spiritual centre of the character, although not called so, - in fact, as in Middle English, the soul. The frequent repetition itself creates echoes of the other meanings, and with 'heart' tends to suggest that the spiritual is not far behind the surface of the physical. This pattern has already been shown in Tolkien's use of light and dark, and it is reinforced through his repeated use of 'heart'.

However, the description of good and evil, linked with the heart, can be ambivalent. Of the Company of the dwarves we are told that:

the pride and hopes which had stirred in their hearts  
at the singing of old songs by the lake died away to a  
plodding gloom. (H, 173)

Pride and hope are opposed to plodding gloom, both here seemingly located in the heart. The almost mechanical greyness of the latter phrase is clearly evil, Yet opposed to this is pride, one of the Seven Deadly Sins (in fact the chief sin as seen by the medieval world). Combined with their pride are hopes, which may,

however, be both good and bad. At the same time they are hoping for the restoration of Kingship, as well as lusting for vast treasure. This is preparation for the serious moral failure of most of the dwarves both in the practice of generosity and in assessing fairly the various claims upon the treasure.

Just as there was some uncertainty earlier in this text about the distinction between 'wonder' and 'thought' (with the former eventually developing spiritual import), Tolkien later draws a similar distinction between 'wonder' and 'marvel'. When Smaug, the personification of evil, is showing off his diamond waistcoat he describes it as 'rare and wonderful' (H, 193) and the narrator comments that Smaug is 'absurdly pleased'. After the steady build-up of 'wonder' meaning 'goodness', this is a disturbing usage. Its effect is similar to that of Saruman's 'White Hand' discussed previously. Bilbo, whose private thoughts show that he is not overwhelmed by the dragon, clarifies the situation by not acknowledging 'wonderful', preferring instead 'Dazzlingly marvellous!' So the dragon's diamond waistcoat is something unusual and seldom seen, but has no connection with goodness. Later, the same applies to the dragon's hoard. Bilbo feels that it is 'so marvellous a hoard' (H, 201). Later still, it is 'the marvellous stone' that becomes 'the heart of Thorin' (H, 229). At this stage Thorin certainly does not have 'wonder' in his heart.

As well as 'wonder', the main indicators of goodness are closeness to nature and delight in homely virtues. Bilbo is protected from avarice for his mithril mail vest by imagining the possible laughter which it would provoke at home:

'but I expect I look rather absurd. How they would  
laugh on the Hill at home!' (H, 204)

Even his wish for a looking-glass in which to see himself seems partly a desire to share the imagined laughter. His simple goodness is further indicated by his emphatic preference for a 'drink of something cheering out of one of Beorn's wooden bowls!' rather than from the sterile golden goblets around him.

Birds, too, are an important correlative of the goodness of nature in the author's exploration of moral worth. The Company 'gazed and wondered' (H, 208) at the assemblage of birds; the good character, Bard, listens to the birds and accepts their moral advice; and Thorin's misuse of the messenger birds is an additional indication of his ignorance of nature's ways. The Eagles are singled out for character development, but their goodness is best shown through their deus ex machina role in the plot.

Bilbo's evolving goodness is best seen in his handing over of the Arkenstone. It is an act for which even the Elvenking looked at Bilbo with a new wonder. (H, 230) Bilbo now stimulates goodness in others. Still he has not forgotten the morality of simple friendship and he is prepared to sacrifice himself through returning to the dwarves, his 'friends'. Well might the newly returned Gandalf advise him to 'keep your heart up!' The revelation of the Arkenstone has a powerful, although only momentary benign effect on Thorin: 'wonder overcame him' (H, 232). For an instant he realises the limits of draconitas and power, in what is a hint of his later salvation. Thorin's final goodness is shown in his affirmation of 'friendship' with Bilbo, and in his perceptive description of the hobbit:

There is more in you of good than you know, child of the Kindly West. Some courage and some wisdom, blended in measure. If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world. (H, 243)

After Thorin's death it is not surprising that it is a long time before Bilbo 'had the heart to make a joke again.'

The distinction between the concepts of 'wonder' and 'marvel' occurs again in the last pages of the work. Bilbo's return to Hobbiton is described as a great deal more than a nine days' wonder. (H, 253) The last expression is derogatory, referring to a shallow folk astonishment which soon loses even its novelty. From

the pattern considered earlier, one would expect Tolkien to say 'nine days' marvel', but this would be to use a trite phrase. As written, it gives the impression of a return to ordinary village life, where moral concepts and language are blurred through jocularity, and through being infrequently tested. More perception and precision in these matters is gained only by the hero (and reader) through the trials of the quest. Also, in the quotation above, the stress is upon 'a great deal more', implying that the hero's return provided moral freshness for at least some in the community.

The simple goodness of hobbit life is reaffirmed in the seemingly casual last words of the work:

'Thank goodness!' said Bilbo laughing, and handed  
(Gandalf) the tobacco-jar. (H, 255)

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The same method of portrayal of goodness is found in The Lord of the Rings, and across the wider range of good characters found in this longer work. A detailed description of the characters and customs of Hobbiton is given before the narrative proceeds. Generally, this is approving, as in the narrator lingering over the list of things to be cleared up after the party (I, 45). However, the use of 'marvel' and 'wonder' suggests the potential fallibility of the rustic hobbit community. They have Bilbo's 'prolonged vigour to marvel at' (I, 29), and of Gandalf's fireworks 'all agreed they were marvellous crackers.' (I, 37) In general, hobbits are more ready to 'marvel' than to 'wonder', with notable exceptions. The Gaffer, who is most remembered for being close to nature through his gardening, uses the expression 'small wonder' (I, 30). Bilbo 'wondered if [Gandalf] would turn up.' (I, 40) Frodo confesses 'wonder' as to whether he would ever see Bilbo again (I, 50). These are all conventional uses, charged somewhat by the reader's

familiarity with Tolkien's vocabulary. In the next two uses the words gain more power in their own right. In the pattern common to dialogue in Tolkien's works, the second speaker picks up or queries one of the words used by the first, and thus Gandalf replies to Frodo's comment, 'So do I... And I wonder many other things.' The device puts great emphasis on the word. It is evocative but lacks detail. Some of this detail is soon given when Frodo:

found himself wondering at times... about the wild lands, and strange visions of mountains that he had never seen came into his dreams. (I, 52)

There is clearly a difference between these characters who 'wonder', and hobbits in general, who merely 'marvel'. In Christian terminology, 'wonder' could be represented by 'prayer' as well as by holiness. It is a preparedness to put oneself into whatever (good) is to come, as well as to ponder the nature of things.

Even at this early stage of the narration, 'heart' and 'wonder' are used frequently of Frodo. This befits the real beginning of his quest, not his offer at the Council of Elrond, but rather the desire to set out for foreign lands, far from the safety of Hobbiton: 'a great desire to follow Frodo flamed up in his heart' (I, 72), and 'his heart was moved suddenly with a desire to see the house of Elrond' (I, 75). It is not without pain that he follows this path, for

The thought that he would so soon have to part with his young friends weighed on his heart. (I, 77)

Chief among these friends is Sam, who, although otherwise he receives slight (moral) description, is here singled out for the clearest detail of wonder/holiness:

at Frodo's side, as if in a dream, with an expression on his face half of fear and half of astonished joy. (I, 90)

This detailed passage fits the pattern of Otto's mysterium tremendum, the presence of the holy, and the goodness inherent in this description suggests the

strength upon which Sam will later draw in his triumph over the active evil of the Ring.

In contrast with Sam's simple and unaffected goodness is the elf Gildor's goodness to Frodo: 'I do not think the Road will prove too hard for your courage' (I, 93), and 'Courage is found in unlikely places.' (I, 94) The change to the Romance word 'courage', instead of the conventional (in Tolkien's works) Germanic 'heart', suggests that there is a difference in the culture of the elves, and, more precisely in this case, an overly formal attitude to goodness. This accords with the later revelation that elvish culture has lost its vigour, and that these fey people are preparing for their imminent departure into the West. Still this is not to deny the vestigial goodness of the elves which, like Gandalf's goodness, is at a different level of social participation from that of the hobbits. From the hobbit perspective the elves are almost synonymous with the goodness of nature, and even priestly in their ministrations. The drink which the elves give to the hobbits:

had the scent of a honey made of many flowers, and was wonderfully refreshing. Very soon they were laughing (I, 99).

Tom Bombadil and Goldberry sit awkwardly in the narrative in that they are great forces for goodness but do not act beyond their now circumscribed realm. In the larger world of Middle-earth they are not now moral combatants. Nevertheless, they are important in underscoring the indicators of goodness common throughout Tolkien's works: 'wonder' and 'heart', 'nature', 'singing' and 'laughter'. Tom's first appearance is heralded by 'a deep glad voice... singing carelessly and happily' (I, 130), and his face 'creased into a hundred wrinkles of laughter.' (I, 131) Goldberry the river-like rural spirit is similar, and both have a powerful effect for goodness on the hobbits: 'The hobbits looked at her in wonder.' (I, 134) The guests are given a drink which 'went to their hearts like

wine' (I, 136) and leaves them 'singing merrily, as if it was easier and more natural than talking.' After much time seems to have passed, Frodo 'did not feel either hungry or tired, only filled with wonder.' (I, 142)

The description of Tom's language, as well as reinforcing the concept of 'wonder', also gives an insight into what Tolkien the philologist would like to have found in his professional work:

an ancient language whose words were mainly those of wonder and delight. (I, 158)

Tom describes himself as 'Eldest' (I, 142), and when this is combined with the 'ancient' integrity of his language, one gains the impression that his is the ultimate (surviving) primal goodness. To laugh and sing, and to take 'wonder' into one's 'heart' is to share in this ur-goodness, as do our hobbit heroes. To respect nature (to 'wonder' over it) is essential to this goodness. After all, Goldberry is a Water-sprite, and Tom is, as Tyler puts it:

a benevolent spirit of the forest, a veritable incarnation of the ancient life-force present there <sup>2</sup>.

Through Tom's portrayal, the life-force seems to be goodness itself. The spirit that animates nature is good, until, as seen elsewhere, it becomes perverted or twisted towards evil. Thus, when in his parting advice Tom tells the hobbits to 'have good heart' (I, 159), the advice is explicitly moral. The evil characters are described in some detail through their own hearts and through their desire for control over others' hearts. On Weathertop, the attack upon Frodo is more metaphysical than physical; by using the evil Ring, he becomes visible to the Riders, in other words, becomes part of their eternally twilight world of evil. Gandalf best describes the ensuing action,

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2. J.E.A. Tyler, The New Tolkien Companion, 2nd rev. ed., London, 1979, p. 580.

'They tried to pierce your heart with a Morgul-knife which remains in the wound. If they had succeeded, you would have become like they are, only weaker and under their command. (I, 234)

Here the spiritual death overwhelms the slight sense of physical death. Of course, the most detailed description of such spiritual death is given by Gandalf, of Sauron:

'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.' (I, 282-283)

Draconitas rules all of Sauron's essential being. The good characters sense or experience events in their hearts, such as the elf, Glorfindel: 'my heart warns me that the pursuit is now swift behind us' (I, 224). By contrast, Sauron's heart uses the more mechanistic 'thought'. His whole spirit is ordered towards contemptuous mind domination of others.

Paradoxically, the complete single-mindedness of Sauron's infernal order, leads to his downfall. He is unable to see into the hearts of others, while his own course is all too predictable. With Frodo in particular, as Bilbo himself now says: 'there is more about [him] now than appears on the surface' (I, 291), but for the wise at least, this is not the case with Sauron. Although Bilbo focuses his comment on the disguised mithril-mail now worn by Frodo, the comment has much wider reference. The phrase is the same as that repeated in The Hobbit, which built up to the climax of Bilbo breaking the deadlock by handing over the Arkenstone. Gandalf also uses the expression in this work (I, 342), drawing the similarity with Bilbo, and thereby stressing the continuity of the moral theme.

Places, too, can produce wonder or lesser emotions in those who behold them. Even Moria, the eternal monument to the draconitas of dwarves who 'delved too far', and now the abode of the evil Balrog, can have a good effect on others. At first sight, 'The Company stared in wonder' (I, 321) but soon the hobbits feel the

'dread and wonder of Moria.' (I, 329) The latter expression encapsulates Otto's mysterium tremendum. In addition, both uses have added weight through being the ultimate words in their respective paragraphs. 'Marvel' would be inappropriate here because of the overpowering sense of vastness and of potential evil; these observers are not ordinary hobbits. The place itself does not have to be totally good to prompt good thoughts in those who observe it. Rather, the potential for evil seems to be necessary to stimulate the higher forms of holiness or goodness.

Lorien inspires wonder through its obvious links between nature and goodness. In this fantasy landscape, the veil of nature permits frequent glimpses of the goodness behind. First there is the: 'music of the waterfall running sweetly in the shadows... [and] a voice singing, mingled with sound of the water.' (I, 353) But of course the life of the forest is best felt in the trees themselves:

never before had [Frodo] 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 a delight in wood and the touch of it, neither as forester nor as carpenter; it was the delight of the living tree itself. (I, 366)

Here Tolkien's view of nature is similar to that of the ancient Ionians. According to R.G. Collingwood, Tolkien's friend and co-scholar, to the Ionians the word 'nature': 'always means something within, or intimately belonging to, a thing, which is the source of its behaviour.'<sup>3</sup> Tolkien's descriptions of nature are

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3. R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of Nature, Oxford, 1965, p. 44. Collingwood was Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy (1935-1941), and an eminent historian. With Tolkien he was a Fellow of Pembroke College, having rooms only two doors away. The two worked together on the Lydney excavation; for Tolkien's report see R.E.M. Wheeler, and T.V. Wheeler, Appendix I: 'The Name "Nodens"', Report on the Excavation of the Prehistoric, Roman, and Post-Roman Sites in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire, Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London, No. IX (1932), pp. 132-137. Collingwood, from 'August 1933 to September 1934... was working intensively [on The Idea of Nature], studying the history of both natural science and cosmological speculation, and elaborating a cosmology of his own', according to the Prefatory Note to The Idea of Nature. Tolkien could not fail to be influenced by these ideas.

always concerned with this inner source, and suggest that the real source is goodness itself.

In their characterization, the elves are always shown to be close to nature, and this is an indicator of their goodness. Similarly close to nature is the hobbit Sam, and his perception reveals another level in the link between the (Lorien) elves and nature:

'they seem to belong here... Whether they've made the land, or the land's made them, it's hard to say... If there's any magic about, it's right down deep, where I can't lay my hands on it, in a manner of speaking.'  
(I, 376)

The bond is one of creation, but so interrelated are the two that it is impossible to say which came first. Although the ultimate goodness (here 'magic') is still elusive, there is no doubt about the essential morality of nature here and of these elves. In Chapter I it was shown how the portrayal of the elf Glorfindel and the metamorphosed Gandalf suggested goodness as light thinly veiled by their (natural) bodies. Here nature is portrayed as covering the life within, but the ultimate goodness is beyond at least one further veil.

Pippin feels 'wonder' at what he calls 'magic cloaks' (I, 386). However, the word 'magic' is queried by the leader of the elves, presumably because it is a word which expresses (occult) power, but can be either evil or good. The elf substitutes the following:

'elvish robes certainly... Leaf and branch, water and stone: they have the hue and beauty of all these things under the twilight of Lorien that we love; for we put the thought of all that we love into all that we make.'

Nature, beauty and love are all linked in this description of good magic. Furthermore, the generosity, both metaphysical and physical, in these gift cloaks is the complete antithesis to the draconitas examined in Chapter II.

In Lorien there is much examination of the 'heart' of each character, for there one can see much further into the nature of goodness, . Boromir, the only character who implicitly fails Galadriel's test, is omitted from analysis. This Judas-like non description forms a slight shadow amongst the general impression of the renewal of heart and purpose felt by the other wayfarers. Goodness of 'heart' is soon of vital importance. In Frodo's later decision to break the Fellowship he has just sufficient 'heart [and] chance to get off' (I, 423), and after seeing Sam's loyalty, which would be crucial to the completion of his quest: 'A sudden warmth and gladness touched his heart.'

In the pursuit of the orcs bearing the two hobbits, 'heart' is referred to many times. The total effect is to make it very clear that the characters' 'hearts' are being tested by circumstances. Gimli finds Pippin's discarded brooch 'heartening' (II, 26), while Legolas declares:

'The thought of those merry young folk driven like cattle burns my heart.' (II, 27)

This is another instance of the immorality of the draconitas/power mode of treating people like things, and the whole is emphasised at the mid-chapter break. Despite the adversities of capture and flight, Merry remains true-hearted. In a description reminiscent of the Eucharist, he praises the elven food:

'Lembas does put heart into you! A more wholesome sort of feeling, too, than the heat of that orc-draught.' (II, 61)

In the meeting of new groups of people or creatures 'heart' is also important. The potential goodness of Rohan is never in doubt after Aragorn describes them as 'true-hearted, generous in thought and deed' (II, 33). Of the Riders, Eomer, who represents all that is good in Rohan, is singled out for several uses of 'wonder' and 'heart'. The moral confusion of Rohan is best captured stylistically by the contradictory imagery used for the guards:

Wonder was in their eyes but little friendliness; and they looked darkly upon Gandalf. (II, 112)

The goodness of the roving Gondor Captain, Faramir, is also indicated by several uses of 'heart', and by his laughter. In contrast is Treebeard's description of some of the completely evil trees in Fangorn: 'many are half awake... some have bad hearts.' (II, 71) More powerful evil is captured in his description of: 'dark places where the hearts of trees are black.' (II, 94) Yet the most evil character whom Treebeard encounters is Saruman, then described as one with a 'heart... as rotten as a black Huorn's.' (II, 192) Like Treebeard, those whose own hearts are good are able to sense correctly the moral state of others. So when the advancing army of Rohan accepts intelligence from the Wild Men,

to no heart in all the host came any fear that the Wild Men were unfaithful, strange and unlovely though they might appear. (III, 109)

In all these examples, 'heart' refers to the essential moral nature of the character, be it good or evil.

Given this pattern, now well familiar in Tolkien's work, one might expect a simple duality to continue throughout. However, as with all Tolkien's imagery, one is not allowed to become too familiar with such antitheses; (moral) life is more complex than this. Good and evil appear to be the guiding principles in the split in the character of Smeagol/Gollum. Yet both 'characters' express 'wonder'. One would expect this of Smeagol, but not of Gollum. Even if Gollum's own usages are merely vestigial of times when he did experience real wonder, the effect of this is to emphasise his fallen nature, and to help us to understand the pity felt for Gollum by the morally strong creatures Bilbo and Frodo.

On the other hand, the image of 'heart' is so important to Tolkien that he produces a new English compound: 'greatheart'<sup>4</sup>. 'Strength of spirit in goodness' is conveyed by its usage here. Gandalf uses it for his white horse Shadowfax: 'Run, greatheart, run as you have never run before!' (II, 206) The whole portrayal of this horse suggests that it is to some extent more than mere mortal. Eomer also uses the compound, in apt description of Aragorn, contrasting it with the latter's seeming folly in entering the Paths of the Dead (III, 71). Finally the word is used by the minstrel of Gondor in his address to the host assembled to praise and celebrate the achievement of Frodo and Sam: 'greathearts of the Shire' (III, 232).

As the quest moves closer to the centre of Mordor, the oppression of evil is felt on the 'heart'. Sam, Frodo and Gollum move on 'with heavy hearts' (II, 312). When the haggard nazgul King rides past, Frodo's:

old wound throbbled with pain and a great chill spread  
towards [his] heart. (II, 315)

Despite the increasing oppression of this section, it is clear that Frodo has not given way to evil. Just as Bilbo in The Hobbit refused to take on the inflated view of self that is the basis of draconitas, so Frodo is now protected. At Sam's imagined heroic story, with Frodo as 'the famousest of the hobbits' (II, 321), Frodo:

laughed, a long clear laugh from his heart. Such a  
sound had not been heard in those places since Sauron  
came to Middle-earth. (II, 322)

As well as noting the return of long lost goodness, the above context suggests the obliteration effected by Sauron. To combat evil, goodness must be used. In

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4 The word does not appear in the O.E.D. or Supplement. The C.O.D., 6th ed., 1976, records the hyphenated form: 'great-hearted, having noble or generous mind.' Tolkien would have found this an inadequate definition for his word.

turning to confront the evil giant spider Shelob, Frodo's 'heart flamed within him' (II, 330). With this goodness he can hold up the Phial, with its piercing light of goodness, draw his sword, and advance on the fearsome monster.

Sam's heart is to receive its ultimate test when he thinks Frodo is dead. The description has already been quoted for its use of light/dark imagery, but the true nature of Sam's despair is now clear:

And then black despair came down on him... and night came into his heart (II, 340).

Ultimate evil, 'night', enters the spiritual core of the hitherto completely good Sam. Yet he manages to revive sufficiently to attempt through his sense of duty to recover his master's body, since his essential courage had not been completely overcome. Thus he acknowledges in admonishing himself when hearing that Frodo is alive: 'your heart knew it' (II, 350) and

'Never leave your master, never, never: that was my right rule. And I knew it in my heart. (II, 351)

The true moral tides of fortune in Minas Tirith are also reflected by the terms 'heart' and 'wonder'. In advance of the Rohan host Gandalf and Pippin come with hope to relieve the increasingly besieged sense of despair in the city. At first sight of the city Pippin feels 'wonder' (III, 23), and then, as he comes closer, 'growing wonder' (III, 24). Pippin's innocent goodness prompts unexpected laughter from Gandalf and with it another description of thinly veiled goodness:

in the wizard's face he saw at first only lines of care and sorrow; though as he looked more intently he perceived that under all there was a great joy: a fountain of mirth enough to set a Kingdom laughing were it to gush forth. (III, 31)

Pippin has also brought 'heart' to Minas Tirith, having his own positive impact on the otherwise despairing Denethor. Even Gandalf cannot believe Pippin's offer of service to Denethor:

'I do not know what put it into your head, or your heart, to do that... It touched his heart (III, 32).

The many uses of 'heart' in the ensuing battle show that even if the fray is lost in a military sense, in moral terms goodness may survive, as it does with Theoden. Amongst these usages where 'heart' equates with goodness, there are two which indicate the corruption of Gondor. When Forlong's men, one tenth the expected number, arrive, the welcoming cry is a mere formality: 'Forlong!... True heart, true friend!' (III, 42) The sense of salutation has gone out of these words, for the welcomers soon set to muttering. Denethor sets the pattern for his city, as he makes the accusation that Gandalf (known to him as Mithrandir): 'has long had [Faramir's] heart in his keeping.' (III, 85) Denethor has assumed the centre of spiritual goodness to be an object for possession, in his pursuit of total power. Unlike Sam's despair, Denethor's has turned into action.

From being dominated by doubt, Gandalf's turn to hope, signals a similar change in the (moral) tone of the whole action. An intense use of the words for goodness marks this change. In Gandalf's speech, almost thinking aloud, he uses 'wonder' three times and 'heart' twice (III, 39). His hope, so indicated, outweighs the suggested evil in the bleak description 'starless blackness'. Furthermore, up to this point a mid-chapter break on the word 'night' would have heavy evil undertones. However, as used by Gandalf to Pippin, 'Good night!' emphasises the simple hobbitry where childlike curiosity prompts many exhausting questions. The vocabulary of evil is being overtaken by that of one innocent of any doubt.

As Sam and Frodo move further into Mordor, the increasing moral storm is felt in the 'heart'. Sam has resisted the visions of power promised by the Ring, through his 'love', 'hobbit-sense' and 'the core of his heart' (III, 177), and so when Frodo accuses him of attempting to steal the Ring, Sam feels 'as if he had been stabbed in the heart' (III, 189). Frodo's heart is being tested more severely: 'this blind dark seems to be getting into my heart.' (III, 195) Sam, however, suggests that Frodo eat some lembas, the elves' food, adding: 'it may hearten

you' (III, 197), and he is himself affected by the beauty of the brief twinkle of an unexpected star, which 'smote his heart... and hope returned to him.' (III, 199) In the description of Frodo's failure at the Cracks of Doom there is no use of his 'heart', but there is a distancing in the descriptions of Frodo from here on. It is as though the reader is being left to ponder the real nature of such a moral threat and the subsequent attempts to live with that temporary failure. Nevertheless, the word 'heart' is used in another way to underpin this moral climax. Three instances occur in quick succession - two meaning the centre of Sauron's realm, and the last meaning the centre of the cataclysmic (evil) storm (III, 222-224). These uses give the impression of the chaos and the finality (for current evil) of the climax.

The restitution of the rule of goodness is underscored, as one might expect, by many therapeutic uses of 'heart' and 'wonder'. Frodo and Sam show their own innocence by responding to any form of praise with 'blushing... and their eyes shining with wonder' (III, 231). Gandalf when he no longer has the cares of anticipation of the enemy, nor the organization of the forces of the West upon him 'laughs now more than he talks.' (III, 233) The hollow courtesy which was previously the case in Minas Tirith is reinvigorated with honest elemental goodness:

the houses were filled with men and women and the  
laughter of children (III, 246).

And of course there are many uses of 'heart' in the description of the growing love between Faramir and Eowyn (III, 236-243). Frodo shows his own intuitive trust in his first sight of the elven princess Arwen. He was 'moved with great wonder' (III, 251). However, more often with this later Frodo, we are told of his lingering pain and suffering. After the company return to Bree the innkeeper's simple goodness is clearly shown: 'Butterbur's face was a study in wonder.' (III, 273) In addition, his own use of the word is similar to the Gaffer's earlier in

the work, underscoring the morality of both characters. The use of the word for Saruman indicates the complexity of his character. Of his observing the change in Frodo, we are told:

There was a strange look in his eyes of mingled wonder and respect and hatred (III, 299)

for Saruman has just a little of goodness left in an otherwise evil heart. He is not yet a Sauron.

Rejuvenation in the Shire, in both nature and in morality, depends upon Sam. After the brief heroic 'scouring' by the returned hobbit warriors, the burden of rejuvenation falls on Sam. He accomplishes this through his family, guidance and gardening, the latter described with 'wonder' three times. Yet the sadness of nature (and of History) is that all things (and people) must eventually pass. Sam feels this mortality after Frodo has left, and when he is still standing by that great symbol of the rhythms of nature, the sea:

hearing only the sigh and murmur of the waves on the shores of Middle-earth... the sound of them sank deep into his heart. (III, 311)

With this knowledge, that he can still return with determination to the fragile warmth of home and hearth, is the measure of his inner spiritual strength.

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Tolkien's use of the notion of primal goodness is also evidenced in his shorter texts. The earliest, 'Leaf by Niggle', relies heavily on 'heart'. For most of the story, Niggle's dedication to his art is contrasted with his attitude to his fellow man. As well, the impermanence of art is contrasted (Everyman fashion) with the lasting value of good deeds. Niggle still retains much of his native warmth, despite his increasing attempts to sacrifice it to what he sees as the higher beauty of his art:

he was kind hearted, in a way. You know the sort of kind heart: it made him uncomfortable more often than it made him do anything' (T&L, 80).

He strives hard, but:

He could not get rid of his kind heart. 'I wish I was more strong-minded' (T&L, 81).

Up till now, his deficiencies in dealing with others seem minor. The evil in his characterization increases greatly with his reaction to his visitors from the town: 'he cursed them in his heart' (T&L, 82). When this is followed by: 'He tried to harden his heart; but it was not a success', his moral dilemma is neatly poised. As in the texts previously treated, 'heart' is here the moral centre of the character.

However, in this story the alternative is not intrinsically evil, since his art is an attempt to capture a vision of beauty in nature, in a form in which it can be conveyed to others. In fact, the one leaf that survives from the whole painting is framed and put on public display, because the worshipful aim of its delineator is conveyed. Beauty and nature we have seen previously to be equated with goodness in Tolkien's world, and the attempt to convey such vision is like a gift, the opposite of draconitas. His artistic (and moral) intention is good, but his exclusion of all other practice of goodness is itself a (limited) evil. Subsequent to his death, his judges put the problem this way:

[Second Voice] 'What was the matter with Niggle? His heart was in the right place.'

'Yes, but it did not function properly, said the First Voice. (T&L, 90)

This exchange firmly places the (moral) problem on the lack of continual exercise of the 'heart'.

If Parish and his wife can be said to have faults, these would be their blindness to the beauty (goodness) of Niggle's painting, and an overpresumption upon their neighbour. Both faults are redeemed: the latter in the intensive help

which Parish gives to Niggle in the perfection of the vision; the former in Parish's newly opened eyes of wonder. Tolkien enunciates this best through the following unusual construction which draws attention to the concept of 'wonder':

Parish often wondered about looking at trees, and especially at the Tree. (T&L, 97)<sup>5</sup>

It is notable that in such an early work, unrelated to the hobbit sequence, the concepts of 'heart' and 'wonder' are such important structural devices.

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Farmer Giles of Ham, by contrast, does not use these concepts as stylistic pivots. Certainly they occur, but not in the frequency found in the works previously treated. What is most notable in this area is the comparatively high frequency of the Latin based 'courage'. This is in accordance with the post-Roman setting of the story, yet even 'courage' is not used as a key word in the narration.

The village community - and Giles in particular - are notable for their unsophisticated innocent goodness, and this is shown through narrative detail. One example is the blunderbluss, which, in contrast with those countries 'civilized':

was not superseded... People preferred bows and arrows and used gunpowder mostly for fireworks. (FG, 17)

These characters do not have the peaceful innocence of the hobbits, for unlike the latter, the people have links and some familiarity with the outside world. Hence their moral pride in their own lives appears stronger:

'Nay!' said Giles. 'Dubbing is not for my sort. I am a farmer and proud of it: a plain honest man' (FG, 30).

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5. The more usual idea here would be 'wandered', and in fact one edition emends the text (The Tolkien Reader, New York, 1966, p. 106.). The original publication had 'wondered'; see The Dublin Review, 432, Jan. 1945, p. 57.

The inflated sense of self that accompanies draconitas is not for these people. Indeed the Miller's suggestion of dubbing is part of the usual teasing that goes on between himself and Giles; it is as though the Miller is tempting Giles into a social vanity, an overblown sense of self that may be more readily pricked. In this vein the Miller picks up Giles' earlier comment that knighthood was not necessary, only 'courage': 'Surely he has as much courage as any knight?' The agreement to this by those around leaves Giles feeling very uncomfortable, for he feels his reputation is outstripping his capabilities.

When the King refers to these peripheral people he would feel that he was flattering them, yet the reader would know that the words were true:

'Here at least a sturdy and uncorrupted folk still retain the ancient courage of our race.' (FG, 50)

The phrase 'ancient courage' is another way of expressing 'primal goodness', while the Latinate 'courage' suggests, ironically, that the King himself no longer possesses the innocent 'heart' of his people.

Only the dragons and monsters have remained free from the influences of advancing (Latinate) civilization, it is suggested. The dragon:

had a wicked heart (as dragons all have), but not a very bold one (as is not unusual). (FG, 42)

The centre of evil is in the 'heart', but boldness or courage are missing. One gains the impression that 'courage' in this culture means putting on a brave show, rather than being a modern expression for the ancient goodness of heart. The dragon's ability in the use of folk customs suggests the ancient lineage of such customs:

And so [Giles and the dragon] kept on for a while, chaffering and arguing like folk at a fair. (FG, 60)

This dragon differs from being purely a personification of evil. Unlike Smaug, folk culture and respect for true moral worth appear to survive in this dragon.

Although the plot leads towards this characterization, in the conclusion Tolkien heavily qualifies the kindly side of the dragon:

In his bad heart of hearts the dragon felt as kindly disposed towards Giles as a dragon can feel towards anyone. (FG, 76)

On the whole this story is a playful work, without the level of moral seriousness of the other works. Hence Tolkien has permitted his description of evil to stray somewhat. But at the end he has to restore what is, after all, in folk culture the most potent symbol for evil.

Late in the story there are several uses of 'wonder', all coming in quick succession. There is a change in the meaning from 'thought' to 'marvel' to 'moral renewal'. First the horse 'wonder(s)' who will carry the treasure (FG 62). Next Giles 'wondered' how to get through the night alive (FG, 64), a context which has a suggestion of the need to put oneself into the hands of whatever (good) may happen. When they return to their own country 'their arrival caused such wonder and uproar' (FG, 64-65). Here the emphasis is on the marvel, but with 'uproar' there is a movement towards the society's sharing in Giles' courage. The transition is complete with the indication of proud self-respect in all as:

They sang songs in his honour: rough and ready, but they sounded good in his ears. Some folk cheered and others laughed. It was a sight both merry and wonderful. (FG, 65)

Song, laughter and wonder are all familiar indicators of active moral self-respect in Tolkien's works.

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Smith of Wootton Major is concerned with the gift of artistry, and with the spiritual world of Faery. Unlike Niggle's art, Smith's is not closely related to nature. In comparison with the elves of Lorien, the concern is more with (the

artistic potential of) people than with nature; these are more perilous. Hence the work gives the feel of movement into the next level of perception of goodness.

Yet there are some similarities to Niggle's world, such as Smith's singing:

'in Faery the people sing too.' Then he began to sing, high and clear, in strange words that he seemed to know by heart; and in that moment the star fell out of his mouth and he caught it on his open hand. (T&L, 116-117).

Singing has prompted the next step in his development of his own dormant gift. Both have a strong impact (presumably wonder) on others. When he is producing his metalwork, things that have 'a grace about them' (T&L, 117), he sings:

and when Smith began to sing those nearby stopped their own work and came to the smithy to listen. (T&L, 118)

In the world of Faery itself Smith (and the reader) are in a state of wonder throughout. It is a place where he 'had seen things of both beauty and terror' (T&L, 120). At its most fearsome this is seen in the elven warriors who sing their:

song of triumph, [at which Smith's] heart was shaken with fear (T&L, 120).

Otto's mysterium tremendum is here in almost monastic intensity. It is a world that is 'wholly other', producing a 'self abasement into nothingness before an overpowering, absolute might of some kind.'<sup>6</sup> In this realm there is also intense pleasure in nature, for a mountain scene is:

filled with the sound of bubbling waterfalls, and in great delight he hastened on. (T&L, 124)

Yet the end of the story is concerned with how much of Faery (goodness) can be passed on to the normal world. The star shining on Smith's forehead, in addition to his work and singing, brings a little of the holy to people:

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6. Otto, op. cit., p.10.

in some villages people stared at him in wonder and watched him till he rode out of sight. (T&L, 126)

In a narrative so concerned with Faery, these descriptions become more spiritually charged than the more prosaic 'marvel'. The gift of artistry is itself passed on, not to enrich inherent skill, nor due to kinship, but because of 'love' (T&L, 137). That the Fairy King had already chosen the same child to succeed indicates some degree of obvious existing worth. The basis of 'love', and the essence of Faery must both be goodness. At the final feast, several of these aspects of goodness are reinforced in the physical world. Smith is there 'to sing songs' (T&L, 144), and the children 'sang and danced'. Smith considers the children look 'more beautiful and lively' than those of his own youth, which causes him to 'wonder' whether the Fairy King has been acting to make them so. The young successor Tim as yet merely distinguishes himself through his 'sweet voice in the singing', yet this is an important characteristic for Faery/goodness. Tim is soon changed by the Faery gift, and:

soon a light began to shine in his eyes, and he laughed and became merry, and sang softly to himself. Then he got up and began to dance all alone with an odd grace that he had never shown before. (T&L, 145)

In him is a conjunction of 'light', laughter, merriment, song, dance and 'grace', all facets of internal/latent goodness. Smith can only 'wonder what strange places the star will lead (him) to'. In the vocabulary of Tolkien's works, to 'wonder' is in itself to will one's transition to a strange place, the holy.

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Possible analogues/sources for these concepts are found in the Old English and in various medieval texts. Parzival has such similarity with the innocence of

hobbits, that to observe it has been called 'a commonplace of Tolkien criticism'.<sup>7</sup> However, the link in the characterization is, for the purposes of this chapter, a general one, where simple or elemental goodness is contrasted with the moral hollowness of (some of) the worldly-wise. There are parallels between the authors in some of the other aspects of goodness (free will, pity and grace), but innocence in Parzival is not structured around the concepts embodied in 'heart' and 'wonder'.

Beowulf on the other hand is remarkable for its compounds built on 'heart' (heorte), and for its frequent use of 'wonder' (wundor). In a pattern reminiscent of Tolkien's 'greatheart', there are four different heart compounds in Beowulf: gromheort 'hostile-hearted', for Grendel (l. 1682), rumheort 'noble-hearted', for King Hrothgar (l. 1799), blithheort 'blithe of heart', for Beowulf (l. 1802), stearcheort 'strong-hearted', for the dragon (l. 2288), and for Beowulf (l. 2552). Regardless of the goodness or evil of the character, the concept of 'heart' is a being's core. There is one further use of rumheort, again for Hrothgar, in the text (l. 2110). However, Clark Hall loosely translates it as 'generous', without mention of 'heart'<sup>8</sup>. Tolkien's attention may have fallen on this point, for rum, as well as 'bountiful' and 'noble' may also mean 'magnificent'<sup>9</sup>, a Latin word with the root meaning 'great'. As seen previously, Tolkien explores fine language nuances from his professional areas in the mythology of his fictional work.

There are twenty one uses of the concept of 'wonder' in Beowulf. It is used to refer to things both evil and good: Grendel's arm (l. 1724), a sea monster (l. 1440), gold (l. 2768), and the jewel (l. 2173), as well as the works of God (l. 931), and Beowulf's dead body (l. 3037). Throughout, the concept refers to an unusual object

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7. J.S. Ryan, 'Uncouth Innocence', InKlings-Jahrbuch, 2, 1984, p. 25.

8. Clark Hall, op. cit., p. 127.

9. Henry Sweet, The Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon, Oxford, 1896.

having a strong impact upon a beholder. This is more than mere spectacle, for the objects most often have overt metaphysical significance, and the effect is to put the watcher into the state of the holy, goodness. In the description of the lake the element of fear (tremendum) is openly present:

'There way be seen each night a fearful wonder, - fire  
on the flood!' (ll. 1365-6)

Of the compounds wundersmiþa (l. 1681), a maker of wonders, could be the genesis of Tolkien's 'Smith of Wootton Major'. The compound is a neat evocative expression of what is in Tolkien's fictional world a powerful idea. That Tolkien was 'an inveterate compounder'<sup>10</sup> suggests his fascination with this element of Old English style. Also his attention would have been drawn to 'wonder' through another textual crux in Beowulf. The manuscript's wæpen wundum heard (l. 2687), a weapon hardened by wounds, was usually emended to wundrum, weapon wondrous hard.<sup>11</sup> Recently the manuscript form has been accepted with its (violent) poetic image, over what was a vague use of wonder.

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Much emphasis is placed on 'heart' in the Ancrene Wisse, the standard text of which Tolkien edited for the Early English Text Society<sup>12</sup>. The work is concerned with the development of:

'the clean soul': cleanness implying not only physical  
chastity but that 'schirnesse [purity] of heorte' which

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10. J.S. Ryan, 'Tolkien's Language and Style', Ipotesi, No. 5, 1978/79, p. 365.

11. C.L. Wrenn's note in Clark Hall, op. cit., p. 192. Although the emended text is translated, Wrenn strongly suggests the change, which he later follows in his own edition, London, 1953.

12. J.R.R. Tolkien (ed.), Ancrene Wisse: the English Text of the Ancrene Riwe, edited from MS. Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402, E.E.T.S. No. 249, London, 1962.

is 'al the strengthe of all religiuns [religious professions], the ende of alle ordres'<sup>13</sup>.

To put the textual importance of 'heart' in another way:

The heart is the symbol of spiritual life in the Rule. Here, the love of God is nurtured and good works are born. The 'nest of the heart' is inviolable, a sacred place of retreat for the Bridegroom and spouse. The concept of heart as centre (physically, in relation to the body; spiritually, relation to Love) is an important organizational device in the Rule <sup>14</sup>.

With its equation between heart and soul, and the heavy structural weight this is given, clearly this text is the most important influence from his teaching on the use of 'heart' in Tolkien's own work.

The most detailed use of heorte is in Part Seven, the section dealing with love. And most notably, the early part of this section involves an extended metaphor of heorte as a field to be cultivated (a link with nature), in which love may grow. The image is introduced:

All the suffering and all the hardship that we suffer in the flesh, and all the good we ever do, all such things are but implements with which to cultivate the heart.<sup>15</sup>

Clearly the 'heart' is separate from the the 'flesh' in this work. Stylistically there are similarities between this work and Tolkien's densely packed imagery in The Lord of the Rings, and we may note the critic's comment on the Ancrene Wisse having:

such [a] piling up of ideas and images, a gathering together of phrases, repeated expressions, and cross references into a highly concentrated yet flexible unit that levels off temporarily, long enough for the author

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13. J.A.W. Bennett, Middle English Literature, (ed. and completed by D. Gray), Oxford, 1986, p. 266.

14. Janet, Grayson, Structure and Imagery in 'Ancrene Wisse', Hanover (N. Hamp.), 1974, pp. 13-14.

15. ibid., p.180. Grayson uses Salu's translation.

to wrench out a prominent image with which to begin  
the next spiral.<sup>16</sup>

As further ideas and images are examined in Tolkien's work this description of the Ancrene Wisse will be shown to be even more applicable to Tolkien's fictional work.

Another relevant use of 'heart' in Old English is in the final section of The Battle of Maldon. These may be the most famous lines in all Old English verse, for they encapsulate the spirit of Anglo-Saxon warriorhood, 'the same will to combat as his brother-in-arms in Beowulf.'<sup>17</sup> When the battle is lost and their lord is killed, the warriors are exhorted to continue fighting:

Mind shall be the harder, heart the Keener,  
Courage the greater, as our strength grows less!<sup>18</sup>

Most instructive here is the separation of 'heart' from 'mind' and 'courage', a distinction which is also of importance in Tolkien's work. As The Battle of Maldon has the 'blend of pagan and Christian which characterizes Beowulf'<sup>19</sup>, one might expect some mention of 'soul' in such an ending; it is suggested that for the listeners to the above, 'heart' would have the meaning of 'soul'.

One aspect of primal goodness that does not have its parallel in these various Old and Middle English texts is the linked importance of descriptions of nature. The older works are notable for their lack of references to nature. Unlike the early Ionians, or Plato's readers, for those of the Germanic north, nature was harsh. Their own detailed references are to winter, the sea, and the forest<sup>20</sup>. It

16. ibid., p.181.

17. G.K. Anderson, The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons, Princeton, 1949, p. 93.

18. ibid.

19. ibid., p. 92.

20. E.D. Hanscom, 'The Feeling For Nature in Old English Poetry', J. of English and Germanic Philology, Vol. 5, 1903, pp. 439-463.

takes a more comfortable age to see the dimension of beauty in nature. As in Virgil's Georgics (Book II, ll. 490-492), through being close to nature:

Blessed is he who has been able to win knowledge of the causes of things, and has cast beneath his feet all fear and unyielding Fate<sup>21</sup>.

While for the earlier civilization:

the beauty of the Greek lands sank deeply into the minds of their inhabitants, and taught them to think in terms of beauty.<sup>22</sup>

And it has been further suggested that this characteristic merged into their view of the cosmos, and that the landscape was:

in part responsible for the clearly defined images in which the Greeks conceived their gods<sup>23</sup>.

Rather than from the medieval teaching texts of his career, Tolkien appears to have drawn his inspiration for his description of nature from his loved Warwickshire countryside. In particular, his idyllic final days with his mother at Sarehole were in stark contrast with the drabness of industrial Birmingham<sup>24</sup>.

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By putting his metaphysical stress on a few words Tolkien's prose has had the effect of reinvigorating both the moral concept and the (Germanic) word itself. Throughout, either overtly or by implication, Tolkien's use of heart has been in the O.E.D. sense 6: 'The seat of one's inmost thoughts and secret feelings; one's inmost being; the depths of the soul; the soul, the spirit.' Sentences taken out of

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21. Virgil, 2 vols., Vol. 1, 'Eclogues', 'Georgics', 'Aeneid', rev. ed., (H. Rushton Fairclough trans.), Cambridge (Mass.), 1978 (1st pub. 1916).

22. W.C. Greene, The Achievement of Greece: A Chapter in Human Experience, London, 1966 (1st ed. 1923), p. 21.

23. ibid.

24. H. Carpenter, J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography, London, 1978 (1st ed. 1977), pp. 37-38.

context may suggest other senses: 2 -seat of life obs., 7 -will or purpose, or 9 -emotions. However, the echoic quality of the vast prose narrative draws all to the meaning of 'soul'. This meaning is not common, not even appearing in C.O.D. (6th ed., 1976), although it is cited back to the limits of the O.E.D.. Furthermore, the word is Germanic and of great antiquity (linked through its root \*kerd- with the Latin). And so it is possible that sense 6 extends well into the imagined Germanic consciousness. Tolkien the moral philologist would be pleased to help at least to some extent to restore this seemingly lost sense.

The word 'wonder' has become entwined in English with 'marvel' (O.E.D. sense 1: A marvellous object; a marvel, prodigy). In addition it has lost its earlier meaning of 'miracle' (O.E.D. sense 2: A deed performed or an event brought about by miraculous or supernatural power; a miracle arch.). Since the nineteenth century the loose Sense 1 meaning has led to a proliferation of compounds. An English philologist would be attracted to the word because its etymology is unknown, its cognates are all (Northern) Germanic, and it expressed a powerful idea. It is here suggested that through his use of 'wonder' Tolkien is exploring the concepts of 'miracle' and of the holy in a pre-Christian community, and again helping to restore a lost moral nuance to a seemingly plain word of casual modern usage.

In consideration of the history of these words one should again remember Tolkien's own description of the language of Tom Bombadil:

an ancient language whose words were mainly wonder  
and delight. (I, 158)

Enshrined therein is the clue to a philologist's dream of how the (Germanic) world might have been in an ideal past, an age of primal goodness. With this we are poignantly linked through the hobbits, a younger and more poignantly innocent (lost?) version of our yesterday selves.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PATH AND UNDERSTANDING

I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. Ecclesiastes (9:11)

It was a hard path and a dangerous path, a crooked way and a lonely and a long. (H, 54)

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Through their nature, the present races of Middle-earth had primal innocence, at least to begin with. That some give way to draconitas and, in its more 'evolved' form, to lust for power, is brought about by many deliberate acts of choice. However, the resolution of the fate of either an individual or a whole community depends as well on some element of 'chance', and also, by the Third Age, of providence. These elements puzzled early Tolkienian critics, until the Boethian pattern was recognized:

providence, which rules all things, also governs fate,  
which is the earthly manifestation of that rule.<sup>1</sup>

What has not been fully examined is the explicit narrative distinction between those characters who do not accept providence, and those that do. It is the difference between knowledge and understanding, essential elements of the vast

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1. K.E. Dubs, 'Providence, Fate, and Chance: Boethian Philosophy in The Lord of the Rings', Twentieth-century Literature, No. 27, 1981, p. 36.

exploration of evil and of heroic good which is shown in these works. The great symbolic equivalent of chill scheming knowledge is the lidless eye<sup>2</sup>, that of attempted understanding is the growing tree, while the sphere of the operation of fate or chance is the time the group or individual spends out on the path or road. Dreams in these works appear as a projection of the individual's fears, the exact workings out of which are yet to be seen in time.

These and other associated words and concepts are repeated with such regularity and consistency that literary reinforcement occurs. By now it should be seen that Tolkien's prose is densely charged with significant verbal repetition. Old and Middle English analogues to the notion of quest/experience are found in Boethius (translated by Alfred the Great and by Chaucer), and in Chaucer's 'The Nun's Priest's Tale'.

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The Hobbit - although with humour, begins with a crisis in free-will, fate and providence. Bilbo's all too comfortable essential self tries to reject the dwarves and their adventure. After all it is part of the 'queer' outside world. Against this selfish decision, he is cajoled, organized, and hurried, and his self-respect appealed to by Gandalf and the others. Yet what really decides the issue is the underlying pattern of Tookish blood. At a higher level than his concern with the respect of neighbours, and his daily organization (handkerchiefs and the like), is a feeling that somehow, yet to be understood, it is right that he should go and have dealings with such unorthodox outsiders as wizards:

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2. Edward Lense, 'Sauron is Watching You: The Role of the Great Eye in The Lord of the Rings', *Mythlore*, No. 13, pp. 3-6, is more concerned with the lesser versions of Sauron's eye, such as the barrow-wight's, than with the metaphysical aspect of watching.

'Sorry! I don't want any adventures, thank you. Not today. Good morning! But please come to tea - any time you like! Why not tomorrow! Come tomorrow! Good-bye!'

'What on earth did I ask him to tea for!' (H, 15)

The struggle between self and outside agency continues throughout the work. That most often things turn out 'well' for Bilbo is **described** by those around him as 'luck'. But the Big People who have greater understanding can glimpse the guiding pattern. In Tolkien's works those characters who 'understand' accept this (imposed) moral patterning.

Some knowledge of self is necessary for understanding, but those who are victims to draconitas put an inordinate stress on empirical knowledge. The collection of all information is at one level akin to the collection of gold and jewels, a means to best protect the hoard from thieves. Hence Smaug has enough detailed knowledge of dwarves and their business arrangements to cause Bilbo to be taken aback. At another level knowledge is used for the expanded purpose of giving one control over others. Gathered intelligence is necessary for the exercise of power. The importance of (evil) eyes, repeatedly described, is in their ability to collect information and to make it available to sheer cold intellect.

The evil characters' sole concern with knowledge is best seen in Gollum after he has lost his 'precious' - the greatest fear of all those with draconitas - and when he suspects that Bilbo has it:

'We guesses, precious, only guesses. We can't know till we find the nasty creature and squeezes it. But it doesn't know what the present can do, does it?... It doesn't know, and it can't go far... It doesn't know the way out. It said so.

'It said so, yes; but it's tricky. It doesn't say what it means. It won't say what its got in its pocket. It knows. It knows a way in, it must know a way out, yes.' (H, 78)

Bilbo has felt (through his primal goodness) the latent danger from Gollum, and has almost absent-mindedly protected himself. Knowledge is reductionist, an

attempt to diminish (moral) life to a near mechanical level, for the better possession of the object of one's lust. Here Gollum suggests a similar use of knowledge by Bilbo, whom he sees as a thing. Bilbo is better prepared in his confrontation with Smaug. On that occasion he recognizes the vast knowledge of the dragon but can also see the limits to the dragon's world view:

'You don't know everything, O Smaug the Mighty,'  
said he. 'Not gold alone brought us hither.' (H, 191)

The Company's aim of revenge cannot be taken seriously by the dragon with its vast power, and so is dismissed. Yet it is Bilbo who has:

'always understood... that dragons were softer  
underneath' (H, 193),

and who now gains the knowledge that will be the dragon's downfall. To dismiss the higher knowledge or understanding of another is a necessity to those (evil) creatures who take pride in their own knowledge: 'Your information is antiquated,' he snapped. Despite this, what Bilbo has always 'understood' proves to be true and leads to the dragon's death.

On some occasions there is a frequent use of the words 'know' or 'knowledge' used for Gandalf. This is particularly so early in the work, when the (good) company needs more organization, and so is still not ready for 'understanding'. To defend oneself adequately some objective knowledge of the enemy and his ways is needed, and to a certain level this can be done without one becoming the same as the enemy. Gandalf's wisdom (understanding) is the more powerful determinant of his character. Tolkien reintroduces the older benign sense of wizard when the narrator tells us:

Even the good plans of wise wizards like Gandalf... go  
astray... and Gandalf was a wise enough wizard to  
know it. (H, 55)

It is almost a semantic note.

The pattern of providence developed throughout the work is seen most clearly in the character of Gandalf who, although sometimes appearing as a (vulnerable) combatant, is reminiscent of *deus ex machina* in his rescues. First he saves the company from the trolls, then from the goblins under the mountains, while, in his final reappearance, he acts only to reassure the races after Bilbo has effectively broken the deadlock between Thorin and Bard. Gandalf's most vulnerable moment occurs when he is on top of a tree surrounded by goblins and about to jump to his 'end' (H, 95). On this occasion he is rescued by the eagles, who with Gandalf appear merely as elements in a greater plan of providence. The reappearance of the eagles during the battle is, for the subsequently unconscious Bilbo, the climax of the struggle by the side of goodness. Gandalf ponders the greater pattern or plan at times in the narrative, but often in a form that appears like a colloquial set phrase:

'but keep your heart up! You may come through all right.' (H, 230)

The context and the echoic effect change such phrases. Gandalf is most explicit in his description of providence in the conclusion, after Bilbo has expressed surprise that the old prophecies have proved true:

'Surely you don't disbelieve the prophecies, because you had a hand in bringing them about yourself? You don't really suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, just for your sole benefit?... you are only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all!' (H, 255)

Bilbo is happy to see that his own role is small, and as was previously noted the work ends with his affirmation of his own essential moral goodness. Gandalf's role as a commentator is similar to the voice of the overall narrator. The (moral) effect of the latter is well indicated by the observation of the critic Kuznets:

The obtrusive narrator implicitly promises protection and companionship... the voice of a benevolent

anthropomorphic god – not only the creator but the guardian of the imaginary universe<sup>3</sup>.

Tolkien's narrator voice frequently expresses doubts about outcomes, but as another level of a guiding hand, his role in itself suggests an even higher plan of providence.

The recurrent symbol of 'path' in Tolkien has been examined<sup>4</sup>, through its illustrated if not widely accepted etymology, and for Tolkien's use of its older element of 'beat'. The concept of path occurs in several forms in this work, but after the actual word, 'path', the most common form is 'road'. A 'road' is a temptation to those who live by it, drawing one's imagination away from the familiar. For those who choose to follow, it is also a direction, and imparts a sense of purpose to life, and not merely experience, for there is always the element of 'there, and back again'.

There are many uses charged with metaphysical import, but nowhere more so than in coming up to Rivendell and the preparation for the mountain crossing. Dire necessity prompts an urgent and detailed description:

[Gandalf] 'We must not miss the road, or we shall be done for... also it is very necessary to tackle the Misty Mountains by the proper path' (H, 46).

The only path was marked with white stones, some of which were small, and others were half covered with moss or heather. (H, 47)

[an elf] 'if you are making for the only path across the water and to the house beyond.' (H, 49)

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3. L.R. Kuznets, 'Rhetoric of Childhood', in N.D. Isaacs and R.A. Zimbardo (eds.), Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives, Univ. of Kentucky, 1981, p. 154.

4. J.S. Ryan, 'The Origin and sense of the word path: problem and speculation', in Quettar, 1988, (forthcoming).

There were many paths that led up into those mountains, and many passes over them. But most of the paths were cheats and deceptions and led nowhere or to bad ends... infested by evil things [but the company] helped by the wise advice of Elrond and the knowledge and memory of Gandalf, took the right road to the right pass. (H, 54)

The last of these passages is given even more weight from occurring at the beginning of a chapter. Several familiar elements of good and evil are brought into the above descriptions: colour imagery; the manipulative devices of evil; the protection given by wisdom, and humble necessary knowledge; as well as the new element of there being only one path. That it is not easy to follow is underscored by the company's failure to keep to the correct path.

Later, in Mirkwood, the company will again fail to keep to the path, despite severe warning from Gandalf:

'Stick to the forest-track, keep your spirits up, hope for the best, and with a tremendous slice of luck you may come out one day' (H, 121),

'DON'T LEAVE THE PATH!' (H, 122)

As well as the link here with essential morality, Gandalf draws attention to the operation of fate through his use of 'luck', and to providence through the stressing of 'may' (as seen above, and similarly stressed later in the work). Bilbo's 'luck' is a recurring element in the latter half of the plot. Even the unobservant dwarves saw that he had: some wits, as well as luck and a magic ring (H, 143). However, the reader sees a decreasing reliance on the magic ring, and Bilbo more often using his wits to make more choices. In acting upon these choices he is helping strongly to determine the fate in time of himself and the increasingly more numerous forces of goodness. For those around Bilbo, his 'luck' becomes a source of wonder, hinting at a guiding hand of providence.

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In The Lord of the Rings all the paths are longer and more complex, and the author's view of providence less clear until the complex ending. Between battles, most action in the narrative is concerned with knowledge of the (good) characters being sought by evil eyes. The main defence to the privacy of moral action is to distract the Enemy's Eye, while maintaining the slender hope that the quest will be achieved. Dreams are fewer, and then often receive only a generalized description. The dream of most significance is that often had by Faramir (I, 259), and once by Boromir. It foretells the finding of the Ring, the location of 'the Sword that was broken', and sets Boromir on the path to Rivendell. In the last part of the work, 'dream and waking mingled uneasily' for Frodo (III, 213), reflecting both his physical exhaustion, and his partial move into the spirit world of the Ring, and probably the fears met in his dreams. There is further development in the patterning of the text's philosophical concepts around recurring vocabulary: 'knowledge', 'understanding', 'wisdom', 'path', 'road', 'maybe', and 'choice'.

Early in The Lord of the Rings an important part of the characterization of Gandalf concerns his link with 'knowledge'. On two occasions, when another speaker has used the word, he singles it out and modifies it, thus putting more emphasis on the significance of the concept. First, Bilbo speaks to him what is almost a set expression: 'but I expect you know best as usual.' (I, 40) Gandalf answers: 'I do - when I know anything.' The answer suggests Gandalf's small knowledge in the vast scheme of things, and also that, ultimately, knowledge is not of supreme importance. Soon after, the wizard draws even more attention to the state in his answer to Frodo's simple question, regarding information about the ring: 'How long have you known all this?' (I, 56):

'Known?' said Gandalf. 'I have known much that only the Wise know, Frodo. But if you mean "known about this ring", well, I still do not know, one might say. There is a last test to make. But I no longer doubt my guess. (I, 57)

Again there is suggestion of the vastness of knowledge, but this time Gandalf shares much of it. Also, in the testy tone of Gandalf's query is a feeling that knowledge is overly mechanistic, and even dangerous. One feels that he would be happier with his doubtfree guesses, which themselves imply 'understanding' or true 'wisdom'. As well as 'the Wise' above, 'wisdom' occurs in a kindly description of Gandalf (I, 55), and the concept becomes the keynote of his character. That Gandalf is aware of the dangers of the possession of mere knowledge is evident in his account of Smeagol and the ring:

He was very pleased with his discovery, and he concealed it; and he used it to find out secrets, and he put his knowledge to crooked and malicious uses. He became sharp-eyed and keen-eared for all that was hurtful. (I, 63)

In this description one can also see the transition of evil from draconitas to knowledge, to power.

'Choice' is the next word experiencing development in this moral sense. Bilbo has chosen to leave the ring behind, and despite some difficulty, he accomplishes this. The major act of choice in this work is the continuing one of Frodo's quest, so uncertain is the path, and later so heavy does the burden become. This pattern begins when Gandalf firmly locates the problem of evil as one of choice. All regret the rise of evil in their own time:

But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us. (I, 60)

It is the larger view of the rise of evil, the meta-history of evil, that leads to the downfalls of Saruman and Denethor. But Frodo the hobbit, closer to nature and the earth, makes his choices in response to the threatening evil which he sees around him. Despite earlier feeling restless because 'the old paths seemed too well trodden' (I, 52), when he does set out he feels the strain of the beginning

quest. In singing Bilbo's song for the beginning of journeys, 'The Road goes ever on and on' (I, 82-83) he varies the original 'eager' (I, 44) to 'weary'<sup>5</sup>; Frodo's road is not merely direction but has a moral dimension. He makes momentous decisions in this volume, gaining his strength from his inherent goodness, and from an implied sense of purpose. Sam is more open on his feeling of purpose in the choice which he makes:

I seem to see ahead in a kind of way. I know we are going to take a very long road, into darkness; but I know I can't turn back. ... I have something to do

before the end, and it lies ahead, not in the Shire... if you understand me.' (I, 96)

Sam's concern with 'understanding' is *appropriate here*, for the concept is not only less treacherous than 'knowledge', but it gives one intimations of an overall plan. Similarly, the Rangers 'understand' (I, 161), rather than 'know'.

However, despite the difficult choices based on attempts at understanding, the moral crisis of the work comes from the overpowering of the will by the proximity of vast evil. On Weathertop Frodo yields without reason to the evil urge to put on the Ring. He felt something 'compelling' (I, 207) him, and so, without thinking of the moral overtones, he succumbs as though it were a necessity, almost mechanically. Later, after crossing the ford pursued by the Black Riders, Frodo makes a fragile gesture of resistance, but again succumbs and is only saved by the fortuitous intervention of others. Against evil of this magnitude, any success can not be felt to be due merely to the triumph of one's simple choice or will. In addition, often the path that is taken is the only one

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5. J.R.R. Tolkien and D. Swann, The Road Goes Ever On, 2nd ed., London, 1978, p. 2, uses the version with 'weary'. With its wistful tone this version is more powerful, echoing the feeling that 'lif is læne' from The Wanderer ll. 108-109, (T.P. Dunning and A.J. Bliss eds., London, 1969). Here 'all is transitory' except the road itself.

possible (I, 126, 221). Success appears as part of a greater scheme, in the face of which the individual is humbled.

At his Council, Elrond neatly summarizes the situation, bringing the themes of knowledge and purpose to the fore. He claims that all will hear enough 'to understand the purposes of the Enemy' (I, 255), and that 'all may understand what is the peril'. He tells of the early Elven-smiths and 'their eagerness for knowledge, by which Sauron ensnared them.' On how and why the group has itself assembled, Elrond gives his clearest statements on the greater purpose:

... you are called hither. Called, I say, though I have not called you to me, strangers from distant lands. 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... .

He clearly believes in a moral, even cosmic, guiding purpose. Aragorn agrees, shown in his refusal of the Ring:

It does not belong to either of us [Frodo and him]... but it has been ordained that you should hold it for a while.

Throughout the Council there are many uses of 'doom', but in contexts that have some element of hope, such as the question of what to do with the Ring: 'That is the doom that we must deem.' This is not using the modern meaning of the word: 'Fate, destiny, (usu. evil); ruin, death' (C.O.D.). Rather, the usage is in its Old English sense of '(free) will, option, choice... judgement' (Sweet) and, as it is used throughout the work, gives the impression that, regardless of the ultimate fate, what is more important is how they will be finally judged. It is in this vein that Elrond decides that the Ring must be sent to the Fire, to 'take a hard road, a road unforeseen. There lies our hope, if hope it be.' (I, 280)

Gandalf agrees with Elrond, adding that there may be a dimension of despair: 'for those who see the end beyond all doubt. We do not' (I, 282); and observing, of the use of knowledge for evil power, '[Sauron] 'weighs all things to a nicety in

the scales of his malice.' The former statement prefigures Denethor, and the latter has the familiar (modern) mechanistic view of life. To protect themselves best from this abuse of knowledge for power, Gandalf suggests: 'let folly be our cloak, a veil before the eyes of the Enemy!' Bilbo, in thinking about himself returning the Ring, refers again to his 'luck'(I, 283). This is reminiscent of the latter half of The Hobbit, and was an inappropriate description at that time. In relation to the vast task set on this present occasion it seems oddly naive. However, this assembly of great leaders cannot refuse the sacrificial offer of another simple hobbit, Frodo, made 'as if some other will was using his small voice.' (I, 284) As Elrond puts it: 'I think that this task is appointed for you'. Guidance appears to have come from without. Despite this, Frodo has made a 'choice', and has done so 'freely'. Elrond adds a guiding hand in his selection of the Fellowship. Rather than forming it as a collection of the greatest powers, his guiding principle is harmony: nine are sent, to be 'set against the Nine Riders' (I. 289); and all of the 'Free Peoples of the World' are to be represented. When there is insufficient power to overthrow Sauron it is advantageous that, as Gandalf says, none of them can 'see clearly'. It is enough that the quest is humbly undertaken, even if some go only through their 'friendship'.

The first great test of the strength and selflessness of the Fellowship takes place in Moria. Impending death is signalled by the orcs' rhythmic pounding: 'Doom, doom went the drums in the deep.' (I, 340) At the first sight of the Balrog, Gandalf mutters 'Now I understand' (I, 344) as he prepares himself for the struggle. Unlike Gandalf's actions in The Hobbit, he cannot disappear to deal with a more important task. However, just as in the shorter work, it is important for the spiritual growth of the others that they be compelled to make choices on their own. When the remainder of the Fellowship escape out of the mines, there are many references to 'path', 'track' and 'road'. They are aware that they are heading

towards Lorien, there being no doubt regarding the direction of the journey. Instead, the many references reflect their uncertainty in a moral sense.

During their rest in Lorien these themes are developed further. At first the elves, in their insistence on blindfolds, show their fear of the eyes of others gaining dangerous knowledge about them. Yet it is not long before some elvish 'understanding' develops. Galadriel's defence of Gimli, and her use of the dwarves' ancient tongue, cause him to look 'into the heart of an enemy and [see] there love and understanding.' (I, 371) His first reaction is 'wonder', and at this point his redemption of his race begins. In Galadriel's silent test of each heart she offered:

a choice between a shadow full of fear that lay ahead,  
and something that he greatly desired... and to get it  
he had only to turn aside from the road and leave the  
Quest and the war against Sauron to others. (I, 373)

And further, that one's choice would remain secret. When subjected to such a test, to choose to continue on the road, indicates a selfless understanding of the greater purpose. Galadriel's Mirror is an important element in the theme of providence, for it 'shows things that were, and things that are, and things that yet may be.' (I, 377) The vision is not narrowly deterministic, because some things shown

'never come to be, unless those that behold the  
visions turn aside from their path to prevent them.'  
(I, 378)

As with Galadriel's later predictions, the precise circumstances are not made clear, and hence, the Mirror is 'dangerous' as a source of knowledge on which to base action. Its real value is in showing mutability, or the flux and change in human affairs, a necessary step towards 'understanding'. Galadriel is herself tested by Frodo's offer of the Ring, a choice which could give her vast power. In declining the offer, she accepts with sadness the changes that will occur. The link between the Ring and knowledge is revealed in Frodo's question:

why cannot I see all the [other rings] and know the thoughts of those that wear them? (I, 381)

The concept of 'understanding' the ordering of Middle-earth does not appear in this question which is really concerned with power. Galadriel's answer shows the link even more strongly:

Do not try! It would destroy you... Before you could use that power you would need to become far stronger, and to train your will to the domination of others.

The pattern of increasing solitude seen in the early changes of draconitas is here reversed. At this level of evil, even greater knowledge can only be gained through the exercise of (evil) domination of others, which brings its own type of solitude. Although clearly Frodo is not at this level of evil, the Ring has given him greater perception; he can see Galadriel's thoughts, the otherwise invisible ring upon her finger, and has seen the Eye (I, 382).

On leaving Lorien the burden of choice reappears. The first choice is between journeying west to Minas Tirith, or east 'the straight road of the Quest' (I, 383). Boromir presses for the western road to his homeland, while the others hesitate. Celeborn offers boats so that the group may journey down the river before committing themselves to a choice until they are better prepared. Further down the river, Frodo still cannot choose until after Boromir attempts to wrest the Ring from him, in effect breaking the Fellowship through his own lust for power. Boromir acts this way because he sees Frodo's possession of the Ring as only :

unhappy chance. It might have been mine. It should be mine. Give it to me! (I, 415)

His highest purpose is the heroic defence of his city, and he does not understand the role of 'chance' in serving a higher purpose. Frodo realises that he must go alone after the vast visions of evil across Middle-earth. Great and terrifying knowledge is revealed to him while wearing the Ring and sitting on 'the Seat of Seeing... the Hill of the Eye of the Men of Numenor.' (I, 416) It is only in a brief

respice from the power of the Ring and Sauron's searching Eye, that Frodo's goodness and understanding are sufficient for him to choose. There is even a suggestion that the respice comes from without: 'as a flash from some other point of power' (I, 417). His choice is soon modified, for he must either take Sam with him, or leave his closest friend to drown. With this decision made, it appears now to Frodo that they 'were meant to go together' (I, 423) and the last page of the volume ends with a cluster of spiritually symbolic terms - 'a safe road', 'may' (three times) and 'seeking a path'.

Similar to Boromir, Aragorn regrets unexpected situations and the risk of wrong decisions:

Alas! An ill fate is on me this day, and all that I do  
goes amiss. (II, 15)

However, at a higher level he accepts certain limits, such as the protection of friends. When these friends are split he must decide which group to protect, and has what he first calls 'an evil choice' (II, 17). Yet soon he understands that they all 'must guess the riddles, if [they] are to choose [their] course rightly' (II, 18). Although Gimli feels that 'Maybe there is no right choice', both he and Legolas submit humbly and unselfishly to whatever choice Aragorn makes. In this section there are many uses of the search for the 'path', which go beyond the pursuit in the narrative, giving an impression of the characters' uncertainty in a moral sense. On Gandalf's return he attempts to reassure Aragorn, with a description that shows how small man's knowledge and power are within the greater purpose:

You chose amid doubts the path that seemed right: the  
choice was just, and it has been rewarded. For so we  
have met in time, who otherwise might have met too  
late. (II, 104)

Despite this encouragement, Gandalf deems that for the present Aragorn needs closer guidance, and so tells him that he 'must go to Eddoras' and that Aragorn's

sword 'must now be uncovered'. Questioned as to the future, he answers: 'Who knows? Have patience. Go where you must go, and hope!' This last is a neat statement of the work's implicit Stoic philosophy. Yet just previously, guidance (Gandalf) has decided what 'must' be. The greater purpose is operating. Elsewhere, the hand raised to slaughter the two hobbits was pierced by an arrow 'aimed with skill, or guided by fate' (II, 60). In this text what elsewhere might seem a set phrase becomes a spiritual exhortation.

Aragorn has taken Gandalf's advice by the time of the events at Helm's Deep. His keynote here in advising others is 'hope', the word most strongly used to signal a mid-chapter break (II, 142). Thereafter there are several uses, particularly by Legolas, and in this we see the moral impact on others of Aragorn's growth to Kingship. Gimli is himself growing to moral awareness but more slowly. He says to Pippin: 'Luck served you there; but you seized your chance with both hands' (II, 169). Here 'luck' sounds like the earlier Bilbo, but Gimli with his battle heroics has greater respect for one's own deeds. This is well short of the bemused understanding which Gandalf shows: 'Strange are the turns of fortune! Often does hatred hurt itself!' (II, 190) The same idea is expressed by Theoden: 'But it has long been said: oft evil will shall evil mar' (II, 200), but the remembered expression is stilted and not really understood.

Saruman is the prime example of an over-reliance on knowledge, and an over-certainty of the outcome of events. Through his fall one can see the danger of knowledge leading to manipulative evil power. Although one of the 'Wise' (I, 57) his description (by Gandalf) is qualified from the beginning:

His knowledge is deep, but his pride has grown with it,  
and he takes ill any meddling.

His treachery is revealed at the Council of Elrond, first suggested by his knowledge of evil: he has 'long studied the arts of the Enemy himself' (I, 270). Saruman's search for knowledge has been so ruthless that it is at the expense of

any growth of understanding. As Gandalf says to him: 'he that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom.' (I, 272) The link between Knowledge and power is made clear by Saruman in his attempt to persuade Gandalf to join him:

But we must have power, power to order all things as we will, for that good which only the Wise can see... the high and ultimate purpose: Knowledge, Rule, Order

With 'Order' of this sort the highest good is the will of the ruler. Such Knowledge as Saruman already has persuades him that a 'new Power is rising' and there 'is no hope left' except in joining with that power, 'deploring maybe evils done by the way'.

Saruman's method of collection of Knowledge is described by the ent, Treebeard. He would wander the woods, without prior permission and was 'always eager to listen' (II, 76), but never returned information. These characteristics intensified, until: 'his face [presumably 'eyes'] ... became like windows in a stone wall: windows with shutters inside.' The distinction between love of nature and lust for power is neatly put in the further description:

He is plotting to become a Power. He has a mind of metal and wheels; and he does not care for growing things, except as far as they serve him for the moment.

The mechanistic mind here described is incapable of 'wonder' and of any glimpse of a higher purpose. Saruman's own description of Gandalf is clearly lacking:

you are proud... having a noble mind and eyes that look both deep and far... You are proud and do not love advice, having indeed a store of your own wisdom... misconstruing my intentions wilfully. (II, 186)

In fact, each of these characteristics is more applicable to Saruman himself, and by extension to Sauron. When Saruman says 'wisdom' it is clear from the above that he means what is elsewhere described in the narrative as 'Knowledge'. He sees it as something that can be stored up like a hoard. As might be expected

Saruman also misuses 'understand'. In the speech above, he makes the following offer to Gandalf: 'Let us understand one another, and dismiss from thought these lesser folk!' By 'understand' he means 'share knowledge with one another' and if possible co-ordinate the 'metal and wheels' of their minds. Gandalf appreciates the concept and queries the word in his answer:

Understand one another? I fear I am beyond your comprehension. But you, Saruman, I understand now too well. (II, 187)

Gandalf has enough compassion for Saruman to offer him the opportunity to 'turn to new things', but Saruman's pride, and for him the certainty of Sauron's victory, will not permit him to submit.

On the difficult terrain of the Eryn Mui, Frodo and Sam are at this time beset by doubts:

'perhaps another day will show us a path.'  
 'Or another and another and another,' muttered Sam. 'Or maybe no day. We've come the wrong way.'  
 'I wonder,' said Frodo. 'It's my doom, I think, to go to that Shadow yonder, so that a way will be found. But will good or evil show it to me?' (II, 210)

Through the explicit link with good or evil the spiritual meaning of the 'path' and the 'way' is clear. Unforeseen assistance from Smeagol soon helps them to find a way; in this way, both good and evil show Frodo the necessary way. Just before meeting up with the two travellers, Smeagol shows his fear of knowledge being gained about him by his comments on the moon: 'it spies on us, precious' (II, 220). This excessive fear (irrational in the terms of this work) gives a hint of the vast intelligence collecting power of Sauron.

The new character at this time, Faramir, has as his task the active defence of Gondor. Unlike their despairing comrades in Minas Tirith, the soldiers under Faramir's command have some glimpses of an overall benign purpose. They claim that their leader's 'life is charmed, or fate spares him for some other end.' (II, 268) On the fate of Minas Tirith, Faramir himself denies any 'hope' (II, 286),

but he recognizes that the talismanic 'sword of Elendil, if it returns indeed, may rekindle it'. Still he feels this would only delay the collapse; what is needed is 'other help unlooked-for'. On what is really a slight hope, despite his denial, he continues with all his energies. He is perceptive, and can make decisions both wise and brave, without full knowledge. Of Gollum's promise to him he rightly declares:

There are locked doors and closed windows in your mind, and dark rooms behind them... But in this I judge that you speak the truth. (II, 299)

The description is reminiscent of Treebeard's comment on Saruman (II, 76) quoted earlier. In his protection for the three hobbits he is breaking the law of his own country. By contrast one feels that Sauron, in his own interrogation of Gollum, would have forced these 'doors' and 'windows' to explore the darkness in Gollum's mind.

Against such powerful evil, 'help unlooked-for' continues in the form of the hobbits on the Quest. Their hopes are those of simple innocence, as Sam says:

I mean plain ordinary rest, and sleep, and waking up to a morning's work in the garden. I'm afraid that's all I'm hoping for all the time. (II, 321)

The hobbits are protected against the worst of the Ring's effect by their simple aims, to be close to nature, to wonder, and to understand. When Sam is wearing the Ring he can 'understand' what the orcs are saying. The uncertain narrator qualifies this detail as to the Ring's power:

Perhaps the Ring gave understanding of tongues, or simply understanding, especially of the servants of Sauron its maker (II, 344).

Given the previous pattern of 'understanding' being used solely for the better characters, it is disturbing to see it here used as a quality of the evil Ring. It may be that Sam's love of story (words) is magnified by the Ring, or simply that

the evil characters are easier to 'understand', with their mechanistic lust for goods or power.

After Saruman, the next most powerful character to succumb to the evil effects of Knowledge, and so to the certainty of defeat, is Denethor, the Steward of Gondor. Like Saruman, he is given vast knowledge through the palantir which he possesses and consults in secret. However, the knowledge thus obtained is only that which Sauron wishes to reveal, that is, the strength of the evil powers. Unlike Saruman, Denethor will not permit himself to serve the Dark Lord, and hence despairs. The concept of 'despair' was discussed at the Council of Elrond. There Elrond's chief counsellor, Erestor, described the sending of the Ring to the Fire as 'the path of despair.' (I, 282) Gandalf queried the word: 'It is not despair, for despair is only for those who see the end beyond all doubt.' At no point is Gandalf so sure, but the reverse is true of Denethor. The men of Minas Tirith say that Denethor sits alone and that he:

bends his thought this way and that, he can read somewhat of the future; and that he will at times search even the mind of the Enemy, wrestling with him. (III, 37)

As seen with Saruman this is a dangerous search for knowledge, which only leads to seeming certitude and to despair. After the death of his first son, and the imminent death of his second, all hope has gone for him, and Denethor turns to suicide. Just before his end he reveals his fears to Gandalf: 'Thy hope is but ignorance', and 'Thy hope is to rule in my stead, to stand behind every throne, north, south, or west.' (III, 129) Pippin he claims was a spy planted by Gandalf. He fears knowledge being gained about him, and the loss of any power, even to the rightful King (III, 130).

Gandalf always trusts in a higher purpose working itself out in chance and by fate. On the possibility of Aragorn arriving in Minas Tirith, an event for which a manipulative counsellor would find great opportunity, he merely says 'Maybe,

maybe' (III, 26). Theoden has grown to acceptance of this higher purpose. When others attempt to dissuade Aragorn from taking the Paths of the Dead, Theoden says to him: 'It is your doom, maybe, to tread strange paths that others dare not.' (III, 52) And so Aragorn takes such a path to follow Galadriel's advice, and to fulfill the prophecy of the oath-breakers. He describes his journey to Eowyn:

It is not madness, lady... for I go on a path appointed.  
But those who follow me do so of their free will  
(III, 57)

He puts great trust in an uncertain outcome. It is a tenuous time for Middle-earth, reflected by the frequent occurrence of the word 'doom' in the text over these pages. What follows are several occurrences of 'hope unlooked-for': Gandalf's dramatic arrival at Minas Tirith; the presumed evil black ships carrying Aragorn and further assistance; and later the revelation that Eowyn is not dead.

In the attacks of the Nazgul Lord, the evil power's use of knowledge is more clearly seen. The fear of Denethor, and of others who live purely for knowledge, is that perhaps this knowledge could be taken (spied out) by another. This fear is shown in its extreme form in the threat by the Nazgul Lord to Dernhelm/Eowyn, which concludes: 'thy shrivelled mind [shall] be left naked to the Lidless Eye.' (III, 116) The very appearance of this evil Lord seems to the hobbit Merry 'like a shadow of despair'. Yet, even if such power is used by Sauron himself, there is hope. With his strength of will Aragorn has revealed himself to Sauron through the palantir. As Legolas says of him:

Not for naught does Mordor fear him... nobler is his  
spirit than the understanding of Sauron (III, 152).

In the Last Debate the situation is similar to that at the Council of Elrond. There is still very little hope. They are all, in Aragorn's words at 'the very brink, where hope and despair are akin.' (III, 156) However, the result of this meeting is different. Instead of the small secret group that was sent on the first mission, now a whole army rides openly towards Mordor. The aim is put clearly by Gandalf:

[Sauron's] Eye is now straining towards us, blind almost to all else that is moving. So we must keep it. Therein lies all our hope.

Whatever slim chance the lonely Frodo had of destroying the Ring would thus be aided through the Enemy's own lust for knowledge. The evil Mouth of Sauron, who confronts the army at the Black Gate to Mordor, is described partly in terms of 'knowledge'. He is one of the group that 'worshipped [Sauron], being enamoured of evil knowledge.' (III, 164) Further we are told that he 'knew much of the mind of Sauron'. This brutal and cynical knowledge is shown in action for he is confident in the terms he demands of Gandalf's army, and the importance to them of the apparel of Frodo and Sam. Yet this knowledge is surpassed by Gandalf's continued defiance and power, climaxed by 'a white light [that] shone forth like a sword' (III, 167).

For the final journey in Mordor there are many references to 'path' and to 'hope', reflecting the increasing moral pressure and uncertainty. Frodo still glimpses his part in an overall plan. On giving his sword to Sam he says: 'I do not think it will be my part to strike any blow again.' (III, 204) This is underscored by a mid-chapter break. In the last part of the 'Mount Doom' chapter the uses of the word 'hope' disappear, after Frodo is 'almost too hopeless to care.' (III, 212) They are replaced by increasing images of darkness. On Mount Doom itself there are many uses of 'doom' and of 'path', as the ultimate judgement draws near. Frodo's failure at the Cracks of Doom is an evil act of choice:

I have come... But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. (III, 223)

The capacity for choice and moral failure has been present throughout. Yet the success of this unlikely mission is achieved through the unexpected intervention of Gollum, and the overall plan succeeds where imperfect (human) will cannot. Frodo has some realisation of this when he remembers Gandalf's earlier words: 'Even Gollum may have something yet to do.' (III, 225)

Over the remainder of the work there is a mood of awe, over the smallness of the individual's understanding and of his frail choice in comparison with the glimpse of a vast and even majestic overall benign purpose.

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'Leaf by Niggle' has few uses of the key concepts explored above. This is not surprising in such an early work. However, some use is made of them as Niggle is attempting to capture an understanding of nature in his art. In opposition to this is the reductionist knowledge and power wielded by the municipal officials. The demands of Parish make it obvious that, as yet, he does not understand art nor the surpassing wonder inherent in nature. It is just as well that Niggle's determination to harden his will does not succeed, and that his choices follow the guidance of his heart. If he had succeeded he would have become the equivalent of a minor Saruman, losing his understanding through exercising increasing power.

There is a parallel in Niggle's 'journey' and the 'road' of necessity taken by the hobbits, but by the time of his journey Niggle has little opportunity for choice. He does choose to ask kindly after Parish, and this has some effect on the controlling Voices. When in the world of the Great Tree, Niggle has sufficient understanding to realise that, alone, he cannot adequately care for this world of new responsibility:

What I need is Parish. There are lots of things about earth, plants, and trees that he knows and I don't. This place cannot be left just as my private park.  
(T&L, 96)

Here the knowledge and skills of both are to be used to serve a higher end.

\* \* \* \*

Farmer Giles of Ham differs from the other texts in that the events that happen have an element of chance or 'luck' in them. As well, in any story by

Tolkien, that involves travelling, there will be some element of moral sense in the use of 'path' concepts. It is indicative of the evil of the giant that he 'was the ruin of roads' (FG, 12), and that he 'had lost his way.' (FG, 13)

Giles' heroic career begins through a fearful pulling of the trigger of the blunderbuss 'without thinking' (FG, 17), while the gun was pointed at the giant's face only 'by luck'. In the period of acclaim which followed we are told that 'luck smiled on him.' (FG, 23) In this continued stress on 'luck' there is a suggestion that some benevolent purpose is being served. Even in the meeting with the dragon, unwanted by Giles, this suggestion is there. With intended irony the dragon describes the meeting as 'good luck' (FG, 42), but after the sword is revealed the dragon is offended, claiming that Giles 'pretended [the] meeting was by chance' (FG, 43). The parson shows greater understanding of the moral situation:

Take heart... It seems to me that you have a luck that you can trust. But take also a long rope, for you may need it, unless my fore-sight deceives me. (FG, 54)

Some reflective preparation and then right choice, especially if based on good advice, are necessary for the best long-term outcome. One should ignore the seemingly malevolent, and what they call 'a bad omen' (FG, 55).

More 'luck' assists Giles through the lameness of his horse, and their subsequent inconspicuousness at the end of the train. One cannot be too certain of 'luck', or be sure of where it has come from, for possibly here it was 'the grey mare herself' (FG, 56) who chose to be lame. When Giles confronts the surprised and terrified dragon he uses the dragon's own previous expression: 'Then we meet by good luck' (FG, 59). This underscores the dragon's feeling of doom, but the words sound more serious here, as though Giles is becoming aware that he is an (imperfect but sufficient) agent for some greater plan. In his later bargaining with the dragon (for a partial restitution of the effects of evil) Giles 'was

backing his luck' (FG, 61), with success. The themes of 'luck' and choice are drawn together in the conclusion:

It must be admitted that Giles owed his rise in a large measure to luck, though he showed some wits in the use of it. Both the luck and the wits remained with him to the end of his days, to the great benefit of his friends and his neighbours. (FG, 74)

Thus, even a simple tale, told with much good humour, as is this one, has a structure of chance and choice, with the seeming ultimate positive purpose of the betterment of others.

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The later Smith of Wootton Major displays these interconnected themes in a more developed form. The main narrative element are the journeys to the perilous world of Faery. These are undertaken by choice, and are important in spiritual growth towards 'understanding'. That the journeys are significant is suggested early in the work when the Master Cook goes somewhere unknown, and returns a changed person, laughing and singing (T&L, 108). Nokes, the stopgap Cook, does not go to Faery and is a limited character. He introduces the idea of 'luck' into the story, merely for the amusement of the children, saying 'it is lucky to find [a trinket or coin] in your slice' (T&L, 113). He attempts to belittle Alf and the fay star by calling it 'magic... a specially lucky thing to find'. For Nokes the words 'fairy', 'magic' and 'lucky' are interchangeable. The narrator's ominous tone, after some children have found neither trinket nor coin, suggests some of the peril in one of the words: 'for that is the way luck goes'.

After Smith grows and develops his own latent skill he begins to visit the world of Faery. In these sections there are several uses of 'road'. These are not roads of delight; they are burdensome and give occasions for suffering: 'His heart was saddened as he went on his long road' (T&L, 124) and 'At last he found a road

through the Outer Mountains'. Fear of one's knowledge being seen by another recurs when Smith is talking to the Queen:

He was abashed, for he became aware of his own thought and knew that she read it (T&L, 126)

The selfishness is highlighted by being between two other uses of 'knew'.

'Choice' comes to the fore in the next section. It is shown to be something perilous, and not to be taken lightly. In the description of the casket containing the Living Flower, we are told that it closes, seemingly through its own volition:

[They would] look long at the Living Flower, till the casket closed again: the time of its shutting was not theirs to choose. (T&L, 128)

The word 'choice' is further emphasised by being followed by its positional stress. Another world with choice and purposes of its own is suggested here. The climax of the narrative is prompted by the Queen's message to the King:

Now at farewell I will make you my messenger. If you meet the King, say to him: 'The time has come. Let him choose.' (T&L, 129-130)

That Smith is the messenger, seemingly effected but without full knowledge of what is to be chosen, underscores his small place in the scheme of things. When given the message the King suitably replies: 'I understand. Trouble yourself no further.' (T&L, 131)

'Knowledge' and 'understanding' are developed further in the climax. The repainting of the Hall prompts the cry of 'new-fangled, but some with more knowledge knew that it was a return to old custom.' (T&L, 135) It is implied that these latter people do not speak out, and that they have some awe of the young Cook who not only knows but respects old tradition. Yet they do not 'understand'; this is reserved for Smith. He is given the 'choice' of the next recipient of the star, and bases his choice on the 'wise' mother, and on some element of kinship (including reconciliation of the Nokes' strand), but mainly through his 'love' (T&L, 137). Although Tim is 'not an obvious choice', the King had himself already

made the same 'choice'. The King would have given way if Smith had chosen differently; man must live with the consequences of his own choices. Yet the concurrence of their choices shows that Smith has now grown to some harmony with the spirit world of Faery. There is an element of this in his recognition of the King: 'I understand at last, sir' (T&L, 137).

It is a long 'road' to 'understanding', and few succeed (less than one per generation). The effect of this one can diffuse through the community, invigorating 'knowledge' with partial 'understanding'. Smith's son is aware of this pattern:

Do you know, Master Smith, there is much you can teach me yet, if you have the time. And I do not mean only the working of iron. (T&L, 139)

Still, the 'chosen' one, the recipient, who will have the burden of growing to 'understanding' and appropriate 'choice', 'won't know' who has passed on the star, 'that's the way with such gifts.'

At the conclusion of the story the aged Nokes has still not grown at all from 'knowledge' to 'understanding'. Despite frequent dreams of the Great Cake and the missing trinket, which could be a path to acceptance of the unknown and 'understanding', he still thinks in terms of (assumed) knowledge and draconitas, as seen in the previous chapter. When he laughs at Alf's report on the star trinket, the latter replies: 'Nokes... your knowledge is so great that I have only twice ventured to tell you anything... [and] you laughed at me.' (T&L, 142) In an abrupt and unflattering description of Nokes, one detail is reminiscent of Saruman's method of collection of knowledge: 'Without thanks you learned all that you could from me - except respect for Faery, and a little courtesy.' (T&L, 142-143) Noke's wish that he become thin, made to scoff at the world of Faery, is granted by Alf after his transfiguration. However, Nokes still dismisses the whole as a 'bad' and a 'silly' dream (T&L, 144), caused

(mechanically) by the pork dinner. His subsequent fear of overeating results in him being thin, for Nokes, a simple cause and effect and unrelated to any 'magic' or 'King o' Fairy'.

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Tolkien's exploration of these related themes owes much to the Boethian conception of divine determinism which inspired pondering on the themes throughout the medieval period<sup>6</sup>. Put simply, God's foreknowledge is part of an ultimate plan that exists outside of human time. Since man's knowledge exists within sublunary time he cannot properly conceive of God's knowledge, which is so different in type that it must be given the name 'foreknowledge'. Within this plan, if fate turns out badly, instead of despairing one should remember:

Strength of character is the cure for ill fortune; stand firm and be of good cheer; let Fortune go on as she likes; seek virtue, flee from vice, and trust in the goodness of God.<sup>7</sup>

If we ignore the formal reference to God, for their community is pre-Christian, this pattern is particularly applicable to Tolkien's hobbit heroes. Tolkien would have been very familiar with Alfred's translation of Boethius' Consolatio into Old English, as it was, 'from a purely literary point of view, King Alfred's major work'<sup>8</sup>.

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6. H.R. Patch, The Tradition of Boethius A Study of His Importance in Medieval Culture, New York, 1935.

7. ibid. p. 101.

8. C.L. Wrenn, A Study of Old English Literature, London, 1983 (1st pub. 1967), p. 219.

Linked with fate, chance and foreknowledge is the sometimes complex role of dreams in the stories. As seen in The Hobbit dreams can closely foretell events which later occur, the medieval category of Visio. Galadriel's mirror also is in this category. The problem with a vision of this sort is that the exact working out of fate seems to be known, and therefore free choice may be an illusion. This is the major theme of Chaucer's 'Nun's Priest's Tale', a work influenced by Boethius' Consolatio. Half of this tale is taken up with discussion and argument over dreams, and their meanings. Tolkien was certainly very familiar with the Tale<sup>9</sup>, and would have been attracted by the theme. The confident Pertelote is precise and practical in her knowledge, with near disastrous consequences. Tolkien has explored this type of character in greater depth (in Denethor). Chauntecleer recognises his dream as a Visio, but is more concerned with the social than with the spiritual implications. More attractive to Tolkien would be the few suggestions of the character of the Nun's Priest himself. In his references to the role of God in a Visio one could glimpse a figure similar to an Aragorn.

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In common with his previous themes, Tolkien's vocabulary for these themes has both metaphysical meaning, and a restoration of its older senses. The interweaving of such themes forms a strong moral texture.

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9. The Letters, pp. 39-40, include Tolkien's positive reply to an invitation to 'impersonate Chaucer and recite from memory the 'Nun's Priest's Tale'. The reply was dated 27 July 1938, so in the formative years of his creative writing his interest in the Tale was obviously strong enough to prompt such an invitation. Presumably it was also a shared family interest for Tolkien's son Christopher later co-edited an edition of the Tale with N. Coghill, London, 1959.

## CHAPTER VII

### PITY

To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend Job (6: 14)

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. Psalms (103: 13, 14)

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It is not enough in Tolkienian metaphysic to be good of heart and to wonder. One must also choose wisely, and an important development of true goodness is in the choice to show pity to another. Furthermore, it is irrelevant and inappropriate to look for an immediate good arising from this pity. Rather it is like the hobbit custom of mathom, a casting of one's bread upon the waters and seeking no return. As was seen in the climax to The Lord of the Rings, Gollum's pity-based survival to play his part in reclaiming the Ring was crucial to the ultimate success of the quest. None could foresee his exact role, but several of the Fellowship realised the necessity of their showing pity.

Neither the word nor the concept of 'pity' occurs with the frequency of the (moral) vocabulary already considered. Rather, the word is mainly found in connection with necessary attitudes towards the character Gollum, and thus it becomes an intrinsic element in all of our responses to this character, whatever he has done. The word is not of Germanic origin, but came from Latin, via Old

French, into Middle English. It had expressed an important metaphysical concept in the Bible:

the terms 'pity', 'compassion', and 'mercy' are used as practically synonymous (being all used in different places as translations of the same Hebrew and Greek words<sup>1</sup> .

In fact the concept that the Christian God is full of pity is 'unique in the religious literature of any people.'<sup>2</sup> Tolkien's concern in his fiction with pity may well have been inspired by his translation of 'Jonah'<sup>3</sup>. His note shows the crucial importance of the concept:

This final chapter [of four] ends with the note of God's mercy on all his creatures. He has mercy on Jonah in the sea, 2:7, on repentant Nineveh, on the prophet in his self-pity; and now, 4:10-11, he explains with gentle irony how he is thoughtful even for the brute creation, still more for men and little children, 'who cannot tell their right hand from their left'. The whole book thus prepares the way for the revelation of the gospel: God is love<sup>4</sup>

It should not be surprising, then, that pity is important in the detailed structure of Tolkien's fiction, and the concept is therein shown as one of the peaks of (human) goodness. It is a characteristic of those whose 'hearts' go beyond mere 'wonder', i.e., from faith to works. In the pre-Christian world of Middle-earth, Tolkien's chronicles prepare the way for the revelation of the Bible, that there is a God and that He is full of compassion.

The Latin pietas 'piety', was extended in sense in the post-classical period to include 'compassion, pity', and it came into Middle English in the two forms 'pite' and 'piete'. However, the two meanings were common in either form, the sacred

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1. W.A. Spooner, 'Pity' in J. Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 10, Edinburgh, 1912, p. 49.

2. ibid.

3. Tolkien explains his role in Letters, p. 378. The relationship of 'Jonah' to his fictional work has been neglected hitherto.

4. The Jerusalem Bible, London, 1966, p. 1496.

and the secular enriching each other, until, as Douglas Gray says, the secular sense was 'done to death by the courtly poets.'<sup>5</sup> The separation of forms and senses was not fully completed by 1600. The specifically sacred sense has also declined, so that for 'pious', as well as the sense of 'dutiful' the C.O.D. (6th ed.) also includes 'hypocritically virtuous'. There is here sufficient motivation for a philologist deeply concerned with moral concepts to explore the possibilities of the word's senses in his fiction. However, just as the frequent use of 'pite' in Chaucer's works has not often been discussed<sup>6</sup>, so criticism has not analysed closely the concept of pity in Tolkien's works<sup>7</sup>.

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'Pity' receives its first explicit use in The Hobbit when Gollum is looking for his ring:

Utterly miserable as Gollum sounded, Bilbo could not find much pity in his heart, and he had a feeling that anything Gollum wanted so much could hardly be something good. (H, 76)

This is in the urgent moment at the end of the riddle contest, when Bilbo rightly fears that he may not be shown the way out. Thus the emphasis here is not on 'pity' and it seems reasonable that Bilbo has little. The expression seems merely conventional, preparing the reader somewhat for Bilbo's great act of pity soon to follow. It is of note that this expression was added in Tolkien's revision of The Hobbit (2nd ed., 1951) after the typescript of The Lord of the Rings was complete. This was done in order to bring the earlier text into line with developments in

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5. Douglas Gray, 'Chaucer and "Pite"', in M. Salu and R.T. Farrell (eds.), J.R.R. Tolkien, Scholar and Storyteller, Ithaca, 1979, p. 175.

6. Gray, op. cit., p. 173.

7. For brief treatments see: Kocher, op. cit., passim; J.S. Ryan, Tolkien: Cult or Culture?, p. 186; and Nitzsche, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

the later work<sup>8</sup>. As 'pity' has such important results in the conclusion, to the trilogy, its addition here must be a conscious attempt to introduce the theme gently into the earlier formative text.

On the verge of escaping from the goblin realm, the invisible Bilbo finds his way blocked by the crouching Gollum. In his desperation he thinks of killing Gollum, whom he then realises:

was miserable, alone, lost. A sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror, welled up in Bilbo's heart... He trembled. (H, 79-80)

This description is formed from the conjunction of three (moral) themes: the seat of goodness in the 'heart'; the mysterium tremendum of 'horror' and 'trembled'; 'understanding', going well beyond knowledge; and, finally, 'pity'. The depth of Bilbo's mercy shown here marks the major (moral) development of his character, but the suddenness, of both insight and action (in a 'flash... he leaped'), suggests a guiding purpose beyond the individual character. This powerful section also was added to the revised text of The Hobbit<sup>9</sup>.

Unlike the above, the remaining uses of 'pity' in this work are not singled out for development. When the people of Lake-town are in great need after the devastation of the dragon's attacks, Bard sends for assistance from the Elvenking. Despite the King's desire for the treasure of Smaug:

when he received the prayers of Bard, [he] had pity, for he was the lord of a good and kindly people (H, 215),

and so turned aside from his course. 'Pity' is shown as conquering draconitas, and although the incident is not stressed in the narrative, the concept of 'pity' is

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8. B. Christensen, 'Gollum's Character Transformation in The Hobbit' in Lobdell, op. cit., p. 18.

9. Christensen, 'Gollum's Character Transformation in The Hobbit', loc. cit., p. 22.

gradually gaining textual force as a powerful corrective to evil. Then in his speech to Thorin at the Gate to the Mountain, Bard uses the word in his appeal:

Moreover the wealthy may have pity beyond right on the needy that befriended them when they were in want. (H, 224)

In spite of couching his ideas in legalistic terms, the morality of his speech is convincing. 'Pity' is again presented as a therapeutic corrective to draconitas.

The final use of it in The Hobbit is as Bilbo leaves the dwarves, expelled as a traitor, and

More than one of the dwarves in their hearts felt shame and pity at his going. (H, 234)

Indirectly opposed as it is to draconitas, 'pity' gives an indication that at least some of the dwarves have the potential for goodness, particularly as reinforced by the reference to their honest 'hearts'. The theme is introduced sufficiently in The Hobbit to permit its full development in the later work.

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In the Prologue to The Lord of the Rings the 'pity' of Bilbo's earlier act is re-stressed: 'pity stayed him' (I, 21) from slaying Gollum. In the narrative proper, Frodo's exclamation as to Gollum's ancient act of murder, 'How loathsome!' (I, 63) is refuted by Gandalf:

I think it is a sad story... and it might have happened to others, even to some hobbits that I have known.

Frodo does not display here even that 'selfish doctrine of pity' that 'ariseth from the imagination that the like calamity may befall himselfe'<sup>10</sup>. He is yet to realise Gollum's ancient hobbit origins, and in terms of the narrative he is very far from full pity for Gollum.

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10. Hobbes, quoted by Spooner, op. cit., p. 50.

After being told the sad story of Gollum's background and of his encountering the Ring, Frodo, in his fear, declares:

What a pity that Bilbo did not stab that vile creature,  
when he had a chance! (I, 68)

The chance and the choice presented to Bilbo have not been understood by Frodo. Gandalf queries the word as used by Frodo, and affirms the moral strength of the concept:

Pity? It was Pity that stayed his hand. Pity, and Mercy: not to strike without need. And he has been well rewarded, Frodo. Be sure that he took so little hurt from the evil, and escaped in the end, because he began his ownership of the Ring so. With Pity. (I, 68-69)

For Gandalf 'Pity' is so important that it is capitalized. As well he reaffirms here the protection that 'pity' affords against lust for possession, in this case for the most powerful object in Middle-earth. But as yet the fearful Frodo did 'not feel any pity for Gollum.' As draconitas merges into 'power', then mere 'pity' gives less protection to the races, as is shown in Gandalf's personal fear of the Ring:

the way of the Ring to my heart is by pity, pity for weakness and the desire of strength to do good. (I, 71)

When pressed for a decision, Frodo's compassion for the Shire is the deciding factor. Although at times 'the inhabitants [have been] too stupid and dull for words', his willingness to sacrifice himself for them is an extended form of pity. To paraphrase Saruman's later words, Frodo has already grown somewhat.

Later, pity is also implied in the treatment of Gollum by the elven guards. For Legolas reports that Gollum escaped 'perhaps through over-kindliness' (I, 268), perhaps while they were 'hop[ing] still for his cure'. In addition, it appeared that Gollum's escape was engineered by his link with the Enemy, and hence there is implied greater pity and plan behind Gandalf's prophetic utterance:

he may play a part yet that neither he nor Sauron have foreseen. (I, 269)

Gollum's capacity to arouse pity is further suggested in a battle between elves and orcs. Although Gollum was part of the orc company, 'It [Gollum] had eluded capture, and they had not shot it, not knowing whether it was good or ill' (I, 364). The impersonal 'it' is reminiscent of the abuse of one's spiritual potential by treating others as things, the opposite of the exercise of pity. Yet despite this, something about the creature makes them hold their fire. In a clearer case, later, 'Aragorn looked at [Frodo] with kindly pity.' (I, 412) This is an unstressed use of 'pity', appropriate for a (good) character whose moral stature has not yet been revealed.

However, pity is not shown in the same magnanimous way to all. Wormtongue actually pleads with Theoden: 'Mercy, lord!... Have pity on one worn out in your service' (II, 124), while he is covertly plotting the take-over of the realm. Gandalf sees through the subterfuge, and, in terminology similar to that used of elemental Gollum says of him:

With safety you cannot take it with you, nor can you leave it behind. To slay it would be just. But it was not always as it now is. Once it was a man and did you service in its fashion. Give him a horse and let him go at once, wherever he chooses. By his choice you shall judge him. (II, 125)

At a practical level, it is easier and legally valid in war just to execute Wormtongue, Gandalf's contempt being reinforced by the impersonal 'it'. But Gandalf also can remember what Wormtongue was once like and has necessary pity for his fall. Remembering that a ruler has some debt for service done, therefore the failed hall-thane is given one chance to choose the future direction of his life.

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On their way to Mordor, once Frodo and Sam have captured Gollum, Sam expresses his lack of pity through the familiar 'it': 'what's to be done with it?...

Tie it up, so as it can't come sneaking after us' (II, 221). Sam is ready to kill the grovelling Gollum, but Frodo takes over with compassion and judgement. Only after acting with his own pity does Frodo hear 'voices out of the past', recalling his earlier conversation where Gandalf explained the role of 'Pity'. His character has developed for he continues aloud the earlier passive 'conversation' with Gandalf:

Very well... But still I am afraid. And yet, as you see I will not touch the creature. For now that I see him, I do pity him. (II, 222)

The pitiless Sam, fierce in the protection of his master, stares 'amazed' (not now 'wondering') at this master's speech of pity delivered into the air.

Once the characters link up together on this journey there is an increasing use of 'pity', and the concept is less tentatively explored. In order to affirm his loyalty to Frodo, Gollum's wish to swear on the 'Precious' is met with 'stern pity' (II, 225) from Frodo, who then dissuades Gollum through a powerful description of the effect of the Ring. Observing this exchange Sam notes how Frodo has 'grown', seemingly physically, but he also realises that:

the two were in some way akin and not alien: they could reach one another's minds.

Frodo has grown to the 'selfish doctrine of pity'<sup>11</sup>, being able to see the possibility of himself degraded by the effect of the Ring, even into a Gollum. As if to echo lightly this 'stern pity' of Frodo, there are two subsequent uses not related to Gollum. For them, coming out of the marshes, the landscape ahead is 'barren and pitiless' (II, 238). Later Sam uses the idiomatic 'more's the pity' (II, 245), regretfully thinking how he will probably never hear the Gaffer again. After Frodo's prophetic threat about ordering Gollum to cast himself into a fire,

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11. Hobbes, quoted by Spooner, *loc. cit.*

the word is again used for Gollum. We are told: 'Gollum was in a pitiable state', an idiomatic comment from the narrator, assuming that pity would come readily to anyone. That it does not come casually from Frodo after this usage adds to the suggestion of the 'stern pity' which he possesses. Frodo is beginning to grow away from the reader's easy knowledge if not from his efforts at comprehension. To further underscore this, but not to give too much detail, two paragraphs are interpolated into this chapter concerning Gandalf. Even during his triumph (in the eyes of those around him) over Saruman at Orthanc, - the wizard's thoughts were on Frodo and Sam; the paragraph concludes 'his mind sought for them in hope and pity.' (II, 252)

Frodo's pity is tested more openly in his dealings with Faramir, when Gollum has eluded the Gondor soldiers, and the hobbit chooses a fine line between claiming and disowning the pitiful creature:

He is only a chance companion met upon our road, and I am not answerable for him. If you come on him, spare him. Bring him or send him to us. He is only a wretched gangrel creature, but I have him under my care for a while. (II, 266)

Pity is evident in 'only' and 'wretched' and, despite the 'chance' element, Frodo is developing a relationship of reluctant service to and personal responsibility for Gollum. Sam continues to see 'pity' only in idiomatic terms: 'But it's a pity... ' (II, 273) he begins one sentence in his dressing down of Faramir.

By contrast, mature true 'pity' is one of the main features which characterize Faramir. After reporting the dreamlike vision of his dead brother Boromir, he denies Frodo's suggestion that it was 'some shadow of evil fortune' (II, 275) or 'some lying trick of the Enemy', for:

his works fill the heart with loathing; but my heart was filled with grief and pity.

He felt 'pity' here because he was well aware of the ambitious heroic nature of Boromir, and suspects that this moral flaw has been the cause of his death. Once he knows the details of Frodo's quest he again reveals his pity:

now at last we understand one another... If you took this thing on yourself, unwilling, at others' asking, then you have pity and honour from me. And I marvel at you: to keep it hid and not to use it. (II, 290)

In this speech he combines several of the significant characteristics of moral goodness. In conjunction with his 'pity' are: understanding, service (to be fully examined in the next chapter), and resistance to draconitas and power. Only the youthful 'marvel', instead of 'wonder', detracts from the effect of his near perfect goodness.

A stronger test of Frodo's pity is caused by Gollum being discovered unawares at the forbidden pool. Frodo need only keep quiet and Gollum is likely to be shot immediately, but after a moment of hesitation Frodo speaks to save him. Yet the situation is not so simple, for Frodo must now argue to save Gollum's life:

The creature is wretched and hungry... and unaware of his danger. And Gandalf... would have bidden you not to slay him for that reason, and others. He forbade the Elves to do so... this creature is in some way bound up with my errand. (II, 295)

The first part is familiar, and now the appeal to Gandalf's wisdom is made openly, but, in the last part, Frodo shows his increasing awareness that somehow the exercise of pity through sympathy, no matter how grotesque its object, is in itself important in helping him to continue along the terrible path of duty. The crisis comes to a further head when Frodo must move closer to persuade Gollum to come with him. As he does, so the ugly sound of 'slavering and gurgling' comes to his ears, and he

shivered, listening with pity and disgust. He wished it would stop, and that he never need hear that voice again. (II, 296)

He only continues to stay with Gollum because of the other's dubious 'service': 'The servant has a claim on the master for service, even service in fear.' 'Pity' has not been the only reason for the appeal for Gollum on this occasion.

On a subsequent occasion Gollum is presented in such a way that one can feel full compassion for him. Unfortunately, neither Sam nor Frodo sees Gollum at this moment, and the effect of the description is solely for the reader. Both Sam and Frodo are sleeping from exhaustion, when Gollum returns. It is an occasion when his long-running lust for the Ring could be satisfied, for they are in his power. Yet the peaceful sight provokes sadness, memory and respect, and his eyes lost their 'gleam', going 'dim and grey, old and tired.' (II, 324) He looked like:

an old weary hobbit, shrunken by the years that had carried him far beyond his time, beyond friends and Kin, and the fields and streams of youth, an old starved pitiable thing.

At this point he is most akin to a Tithonus figure and to the old man (Age) in the Pardoner's Tale, rather than to those who lust for gold. If Frodo had woken first, he might well have shown true understanding, but Sam's fierce suspicions, on waking suddenly, destroy the moment and take its opportunity for obtaining forgiveness 'beyond recall'. Yet this 'pitiable' image is the climactic presentation of the moral theme of 'pity', and remains for the reader as surely the most touching in all of Tolkien's works. In spite of Gollum's later treachery with Shelob, the reader cannot share the feelings of the unforgiving Sam, sword in hand and with 'the red fury in his brain and the desire to kill Gollum.' (II, 336)

In the third volume of the trilogy, pity is expressed by and for a wide variety of characters. After reaching a peak in its focused intensity, the theme is now shown in its wide variety. The Pukel-men, evidence of 'power' and 'terror' in an earlier civilization, are hardly even accorded notice by the Riders. But to the hobbit Merry they are causes of 'wonder and a feeling almost of pity' (III, 67). He senses the awe that the objects once inspired, and feels compassion for the

civilization belittled and forgotten in the flux of time. Gandalf, too, feels compassion for creatures across time. In pointing out Denethor's narrowness of concern, he says:

You think, as is your wont, my lord, of Gondor only...  
Yet there are other men and other lives, and time still  
to be. And for me, I pity even his slaves. (III, 87)

Merry's compassion is prompted by symbolic objects left over from an earlier age but Gandalf has the wider imagination throughout. By contrast, it could be expected that the forces of Sauron would be 'pitiless foes' (III, 96), as seen at the Gate to Minas Tirith. Yet 'pity' can inspire selfless deeds, as seen with Merry's heroism on the battlefield. For when Eowyn reveals her identity to the Ringwraith, while defending Theoden's body fiercely but seemingly without hope:

Pity filled his heart and great wonder, and suddenly  
the slow-kindled courage of his race awoke. (III, 116)

Pity and wonder are the sources of his strength to approach and to plunge his sword into the Dark Lord, when all others flee in despair. Subsequently the wounded Merry himself becomes an object of pity. For, while taking him to the Houses of Healing, his friend Pippin's 'heart was wrung with fear and pity.' (III, 135)

Aragorn reveals to Eomer that, although he is unable to return Eowyn's love, 'Sorrow and pity have followed me ever since I left her' (III, 143). This 'pity' is fellow-feeling, because Aragorn has himself waited long for a love that may not be fulfilled. A deeper understanding is shown in his 'pity' for those in his troop riding towards the Black Gate who cannot continue on. Because of the sheer desolation and the 'horror', they were 'unmanned' (III, 162). Aragorn, when the commander of an already inadequate host, did not rage impotently, but rather realises that these his men were

in a hideous dream made true, and they understood not  
this war nor why fate should lead them to such a pass.

He has developed a breadth of sympathy, similar to that of Gandalf, in his kingly role. He even pities their shame, and sets an alternate and heroic task for them, the defence of Cair Andros.

On the path to Mount Doom, simple and loyal Sam only feels true pity for his master, Frodo. When Frodo is struggling with the burden of the Ring, Sam knows that to offer to help carry it might cause more trouble than good 'but in his pity he could not keep silent.' (III, 214) His 'pity' comes from his sense of service, love, and understanding. He responds to Frodo's expected fierce retort with 'I understand', and the practical suggestion of discarding some of their load. At Mount Doom, Gollum is confronted by Frodo transformed, as the vision appears to Sam:

[Frodo] stood stern, untouchable now by pity, a figure robed in white, but at its breast it held a wheel of fire. Out of the fire there spoke a commanding voice. (III, 221)

Frodo has been touched previously by Sam's expressions of loyalty and compassion, but now, in his 'stern' use of achieved power, he has moved beyond the level of fellow-feeling and is therefore unreachable now by Sam's pity. Yet one feels the greater pity of a Gandalf or an Aragorn might have reached him still.

Sam is about to learn greater pity. As Frodo departs, Sam again is on the point of killing Gollum, but the latter stays his hand by submitting and whimpering. Gollum utters his penultimate speech, in which he explains that when the Ring is destroyed he will 'die, yes, die into the dust... Dusst!' In spite of this bitter awareness of the seemingly pointless mortality, Gollum is pleading for the few minutes of life which he has left. Sam's hand is finely balanced. To slay Gollum would be 'just', 'many times deserved', 'safe', and it would satisfy Sam's 'wrath', but:

deep in his heart there was something that restrained him: he could not strike this thing lying in the dust, forlorn, ruinous, utterly wretched. (III, 222)

Also, because for a short time Sam has carried the Ring he has some fellow-feeling for Gollum:

dimly he guessed the agony of Gollum's shrivelled mind and body, enslaved to that Ring, unable to find peace or relief ever in life again. But Sam had no words to express what he felt.

His stocky character has now developed sufficiently to feel depth of pity for Gollum. From this point onwards he is suitable for his later position as the moral heart of the Shire. Sam has already been shown to have the habit of using the word 'pity', but, unfortunately for him, the idiomatic phrases had had no moral force, and now finds he is without words. The pity that now both Frodo and Sam feel towards Gollum is rounded off in the immediate aftermath of the Ring's destruction when Frodo suggests: 'let us forgive him!' (III, 225)

In the restoration that follows in the text (if not chronologically), 'pity' is further explored in three ways. The relationship between 'pity' and romantic 'love' is treated first. In the Houses of Healing, Faramir sees the 'sorrow and unrest' of Eowyn, and 'he was moved with pity' (III, 237). As well:

being a man whom pity deeply stirred, it seemed to him that her loveliness amid her grief would pierce his heart.

Eventually, when asked as to her love she declares: 'I desire no man's pity.' (III, 242) Faramir's persuasive speech shows the transition in him from pity to love:

Do not scorn pity that is the gift of a gentle heart, Eowyn! But I do not offer you my pity. For you are a lady high and valiant... And I love you. Once I pitied your sorrow. But now were you sorrowless, without fear or any lack... still I would love you.

Unwomanly (warrior) pride itself has caused Eowyn to feel resentment at any suggestion of pity, and until this speech it has prevented the offers of love from him.

'Pity' recurs when the hobbits return to the Shire. It is first used by the chatty Butterbur in his expression 'more's the pity' (III, 271), and after the importance given to the word and concept throughout, this usage stands out. Yet it is like the idiom of Sam, without any moral force, and similarly simplistic until tested. At the least this is a reminder of the (moral) innocence of the Shire folk and of their need for protection.

Frodo's confrontation with Saruman brings the final instance of the exercise of pity. The still powerful Saruman is gloating over his malevolent disruption of the Shire, and Frodo answers: 'Well, if that is what you find pleasure in... I pity you.' (III, 298) This is a common idiomatic construction, presumably in the Shire also, and if used by Butterbur, or the earlier Sam, one would suspect it of being long drained of its full meaning. However, when used by a character with deep experience in 'pity', it gives the impression of total moral sincerity. Whether he is aware of it or not, Frodo is reinvigorating the long dormant moral language of the Shire. He displays his own evolved sense of pity after the attempt on his life, in his protection of Wormtongue:

He was great once, of a noble Kind that we should not dare to raise our hands against. He is fallen, and his cure is beyond us; but I would still spare him, in the hope that he may find it.(III, 299)

Frodo speaks with such awesome dignity and compassion that Saruman, once that lord of power, feels dwarfed. He can only (mis)use terms of praise from his own now decayed philosophy: 'You are wise, and cruel... I must go hence in bitterness, in debt to your mercy. I hate it and you!' After Saruman's death a smoke arises that suggests the withered spirit leaving the body. It looks to the West, but is

rejected and 'with a sigh dissolved into nothing.' (III, 300) Frodo then looks at the dead body with 'pity and horror' for:

it seemed that long years of death were suddenly revealed in it, and it shrank, and the shrivelled face became rags of skin upon a hideous skull.

Well might Frodo pity the evil which gives but a lifetime of 'long years of death', and eventually a miserable death before its spirit's passing into nothingness.

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'Pity' is not mentioned in any of the shorter works. Niggle's developing compassion for Parish is the only use of the concept, where it is sketched in only briefly. This is due to the relationship between 'understanding' and 'pity'. One cannot have true 'pity' to the moral depth portrayed in the longer works, until one has grown to 'understanding' of the subject. As portrayed by Tolkien, most of the business of life involves going out along its 'path', and attempting to make wise choices, choices that help to keep one's innocent goodness, and to avoid power lusts. 'Understanding' comes slowly, and not to all otherwise good characters, but when it does, it makes the choices easier for it involves some glimpse of an external purpose to all that happens. The exercise of 'pity' for another is one of these choices, although not always a conscious choice. True 'pity' is an appropriate and generous gift and it cannot be given before acquiring some measure of spiritual 'understanding'. Furthermore, it is part of the external purpose, and the benign result of it cannot be foreseen by any of the participants.

Against such a generous force, one that can involve even the gift of one's own life, - evil never has the power to prevail. Although such evil will rise again and again the exercise of goodness will eventually prevail in some form in the life of creature and of society. When the effects of 'pity' are worked out by fate, the earlier impression of a Manichaeian view of evil again suffers. The exercise of

'Knowledge' and of 'power' by the evil characters is severely hampered in that they cannot make full account for the generous 'pity' and 'understanding' that is always possible for the good characters.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SERVICE AND KINGSHIP

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Romans (13: 1)

Every subject's duty is the King's; but every subject's soul is his own. King Henry V IV. i. l. 189

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The improper use of power has already been seen to be a despairing glorification of self. The alternate path of moral development is towards service to others, and the ultimate service to others is merited through true Kingship. On this way, choices are made from a sense of duty, rather than from the baser method of the acquisition of goods or of knowledge. A sense of duty is not in itself good, for it may be perverted (such as the orcs' duty through fear of punishment), or misplaced (such as Boromir's sense of honour). Yet throughout Tolkien's fictional works, the freely chosen act of service to a community or to others is always good.

Much of The Hobbit is concerned with the role of a dwarf King and the good or evil that can flow from his actions. As well, a large strand of The Lord of the Rings concerns the development of a good King, climaxing in the third volume of the trilogy, which is titled so as to draw attention to the concept of Kingship 'The Return of the King'. As is the pattern with the themes already treated, the vocabulary used to underscore this theme, - 'King', 'serve' and 'duty', - is

regularly repeated, thereby gaining increased force, and it occurs in deictic positions in the text which draw the reader's attention to the concept. Tolkien's scholarly interest would have been focused early on this concept, as an important theme in Beowulf, for the idea is still blurred in the earlier Continental Germanic period. Surprisingly, criticism has generally passed over 'Kingship' and 'service' as a moral theme<sup>1</sup>. Instead, it has concentrated on Aragorn the man, the details of prophecies fulfilled, or the quest motif<sup>2</sup>, and this present chapter will not cover again those areas except in passing.

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The Hobbit presents early on an informal form of service, that of 'host'. Despite the outrage of the seemingly unending number of dwarves arriving, Bilbo 'as the host... knew his duty and stuck to it however painful' (H, 16). On this occasion the effect is comic; Bilbo's 'duty' is that he must give the store of cakes to the dwarves and 'he might have to go without.' Still, however lighthearted the presentation of this motif, the idea that one should not avoid duty has been introduced. Not so lighthearted is the introduction of Thorin. After falling on the doormat, the three other dwarves salute Bilbo with 'At your service!' (H, 18). However, Thorin is different, being 'very haughty, and [saying] nothing about service'. The narration draws attention to the absence of his 'service', and it is implied that Thorin seldom serves. His concerns are also suspect after he suggests attacking the Necromancer, to which Gandalf replies:

Don't be absurd! He is an enemy far beyond the powers of all the dwarves put together, if they could all be collected again from the

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1. Two texts have a main concern with the moral issues: Nietzsche, op. cit., has chapters 'The King Under the Mountain', 'The Christian King' and 'The Germanic King'; and Ryan, Tolkien: Cult or Culture?, passim.  
 2. Kocher, op. cit., Chpt. VI 'Aragorn'.

four corners of the world... The dragon and the Mountain are more than big enough tasks for you!  
(H, 30)

One never fully trusts the wisdom of Thorin's decisions from here on. Bilbo's role as host is tested further by the dwarves ordering their breakfasts 'without so much as please (which annoyed Bilbo very much)' (H, 31). Yet, however provoked, he only goes so far as to decide not to get up to prepare breakfasts, but otherwise he fulfills his duty as a host.

The theme does not appear again until after Bilbo has narrowly escaped from Gollum and the goblins through the assistance of his magic ring. He has ended up as intended on the Eastern side of the Mountains, but he is sure that the dwarves are still held captive. Despite the horrors of the Mountains, Bilbo decided that for his friends 'it was his duty, that he must turn back' (H, 33). Friendship has a claim for one's service. From this point onwards, the theme is referred to more frequently. Gandalf had warned all to be most polite on their several arrivals at the house of the dangerous Beorn. This time, even Thorin introduces himself: 'Thorin Oakenshield, at your service!' (H, 106). Attention is again drawn to the word, so causing the listener to modify the idea. Beorn answers: 'I don't need your service, thank you... but I expect you need mine.' The pattern continues with the next pair of dwarves, who are interrupted rudely by Beorn before the second one can say 'service', with 'When I want your help I will ask for it.' (H, 107) With the next pair he does not let them speak, anticipating the offer: 'I don't want your service just now, only your names'. Again language that may be used by one as a mere formality is shown to have ancient significance. Beorn sounds like a man who has experienced true service and objects to the word being used mechanistically.

Thorin's moral Kingship is again in doubt from his brutal rebuff to Bombur's complaint that he always goes last:

You should not be so fat. As you are, you must be with the last and lightest boatload. Don't start grumbling against orders, or something bad will happen to you. (H, 126)

The threat is similar to that used in the later work by the orc chiefs. With them leadership is by fear and the real aim simply power for its own sake. Under pressure, Thorin reveals the same characteristic, which is ominous even without knowledge of the later work. He is partly redeemed when rescued from the Wood-elves by Bilbo by his sincere if awkwardly fulsome thanks:

A pretty fine burglar you make, it seems, when the time comes. I am sure we are all for ever at your service, whatever happens after this. But what comes next? (H, 154)

The offer of 'service' sounds sincere. But Thorin sounds as though he makes the gracious gesture only in situations where he has no power. He is too susceptible to power and the offer still savours of his desire to dominate others. The offer is repeated but with less sincerity after the uncomfortable ride in the barrels:

I suppose we ought to thank our stars and Mr Baggins. I am sure he has a right to expect it, though I wish he could have arranged a more comfortable journey. Still—all very much at your service once more, Mr Baggins. (H, 167)

'Service' is here more akin to a formality, and the transition is quickly to the Thorin of old, more concerned with who will do what for him only. The feeling is reinforced when, immediately after this, Thorin is seen in all his frightening power when he steps into the guard hut at Lake-town. Yet leading does not corrupt all, as is soon seen in the period in which Bilbo, the 'burglar' takes over the effective command:

Already they had come to respect little Bilbo. Now he had become the real leader in their adventure. He had begun to have ideas and plans of his own. (H, 189)

Yet he is bravely taking the worst of the risks personally. It is with relief that the selfish dwarves make minor arrangements to fit in with his plan. Thorin's

Kingship is such that he can accommodate being secondary to Bilbo at this point. However, Smaug the dragon can tolerate no moral challenge. For him, Kingship equals power, and his fury at Bilbo and the men of Lake-town is expressed in this way:

but if you are not one of those men of the Lake, you had their help. They shall see me and remember who is the real King under the Mountain! (H, 198)

Interest in true leadership in the narrative now turns to the confusion in Lake-town during the dragon's attack. While the Master was 'hoping to row away in the confusion and save himself' (H, 211), - an obvious dereliction of his duty, - there was a captain of a company of archers who held his ground. It is noted that the Captain is of noble descent, and hence, it is implied, is capable of fulfilling his duty throughout the crisis. His success in heroically slaying the dragon reinforces this idea, and the link is not lost on the people of Dale, who understandably feel discontented with their trade-concerned Master:

He may have a good head for business... especially his own business... but he is no good when anything serious happens! [and of Bard] If only he had not been killed... we would make him a King. Bard the Dragon-shooter of the line of Girion! (H, 213)

When Bard then steps forth the contrast between the two comes to a head. The Master argues that in Lake-town they have:

always elected masters from among the old and wise,  
and have not endured the rule of mere fighting men.

The old heroic tradition of Kingship has given way to a leadership by the skilled in a mercantile society. Unfortunately, the skilled as such have no tradition of dedication of their service to the whole community, which is of particular importance in conditions of extreme hardship. However, the selfless warrior does dedicate himself to serve, through willingly risking his life on their behalf. In these times one can understand the people's cry: 'We have had enough of the old men and the money-counters!' After Bard delays a decision to lead a group north,

the contrast is extended into the immediate actions of the two men. Bard serves by seeing to the organization of the camps and the sick and wounded, while the Master simply sat on the ground, calling petulantly for fire and food.

Thorin's organizing efforts in the face of advancing armies show an efficient use of power, but his efforts are in the service of nobody, but rather of his vanity and greed. Despite his anger at the news, he is able to quickly arrange further intelligence and messages to two groups for reinforcements. When the armies arrive, the contrast is between Bilbo and Thorin on one side, and Bard and the Elvenking on the other. Bard argues with some compassion for a share in the treasure, while Thorin's intransigence creates enmity and does not serve his people well. As the messenger bird Roac asks regarding the imminent winter: 'How shall you be fed without the friendship and goodwill of the lands about you?' (H, 226) The Elvenking, who has already gone out of his way to relieve the distress of Lake-town, is now loath to commit his subjects to a war over gold. Rather, statesmanlike this King desires some form of truce in preference to 'unhappy blows.' (H, 236)

On his secret mission across the lines he overhears elven guards talking about him as : 'that queer little creature that is said to be their servant.' (H, 228) Bilbo takes exception to this word: 'Servant, indeed!' His 'service' is through free choice, and even extends to risky missions like his current one. After publicly revealing the mission to Thorin, Bilbo is only saved from the latter's rage by the intervention of Gandalf, but when allowed to speak puts emphasis on his notion of 'service':

I have been told that dwarves are sometimes politer in word than in deed. The time was, all the same, when you seemed to think that I had been of some service. Descendant of rats, indeed! Is this all the service of you and your family that I was promised, Thorin? (H, 233)

Bilbo's free 'service' here is symbolized by the monetary arrangement pledged by the dwarves. Although he had earlier served through friendship, and had vehemently rejected the idea of 'servant', it at least seems appropriate that in this situation he demand the promised fourteenth share.

Thorin's lack of service to others and his oath or promise breaking leads indirectly to his death. The climax of the treatment of the theme occurs with the repentance of Thorin on his deathbed. Restoration occurs thereby, not only of his fleeting friendship with Bilbo but also of the valid moral leadership of the dwarves under the Mountain. The new dwarf King, Dain, serves others by 'deal[ing] his treasure well.' (H, 245) The conclusion of the theme is in the depiction of Dale rebuilt and flourishing under Bard, and the reorganization in the region:

Lake-town was refounded and was more prosperous than ever, and much wealth went up and down the Running River; and there was friendship in those parts between elves and dwarves and men. (H, 255)

Friendship such as this requires the service of magnanimous and selfless Kings.

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In The Lord of the Rings this theme is developed much further. For the hobbits of the Shire the laws given by a King of old have been so just that the laws have survived, not only the passing of the King but of the institution of Kingship itself. To this archetypal ancient King they attribute:

all their essential laws; and usually they kept the laws of free will, because they were The Rules (as they said), both ancient and just. (I, 18)

There is an interrelationship between the loving and good service of a wise (past) King and the moral goodness of the hobbits themselves, which has resulted in the character of a hobbit well able to bear the Ring to the Fire.

Soon the inscription on the Ring reveals the different method by which evil rules: 'One Ring to rule them all... and in the darkness bind them.' (I, 59) It is a rule based on fear and by slavery. This is contrasted with the fierce loyalty of Sam who, through duty and friendship, is going to stay with Frodo and protect him even 'if he climbs to the Moon' (I, 96).

With a name oddly reminiscent of the Master of Lake-town, the ancient Tom Bombadil is described by Goldberry as 'Master of wood, water, and hill.' (I, 135) Frodo shows no understanding of the serving nature of (good) rule, by asking 'Then all this strange land belongs to him?' Goldberry's reply is instructive on the role of benign leadership and control:

No indeed!... That would indeed be a burden... The trees and the grasses and all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves. Tom Bombadil is the Master. No one has ever caught old Tom [while] walking in the forest, wading in the water, leaping on the hill-tops under light and shadow. He has no fear. Tom Bombadil is master.

With the slavery of evil rule, things do not belong to themselves any longer. It is Tom's understanding of the forest and of his power that causes him to have no fear. Hence he is 'master' in more than name, being a whole person.

A little later, Strider's seemingly insulting dismissal of Butterbur's foolish lack of serious advice to the hobbits shows fierce wrath, and control too, within the Ranger. He shows determination, and a leader's power to state a situation clearly, organizing them despite confused objections. His moral entitlement to Kingship is reinforced by the poem from Gandalf, ending 'The crownless again shall be King' (I, 182). His eyes, too, 'gleamed a light, keen and commanding' (I, 183), and he is 'held in awe by most of the Bree-landers' (I, 192). Only later does Gandalf reveal Aragorn's nobility as one of 'the race of the Kings from over the Sea' (I, 233). The importance of hereditary rule as a catalyst for societal goodness is indicated by the fact that the grandson of Bard the Bowman is 'a

strong King' (I, 241), of a 'good folk', and he has extended greatly the realm which he has inherited. Aragorn's serving role is best shown in his actions with the Dunedain. In his own words to the Council of Elrond, and to Boromir in particular, his quality is made very clear:

Peace and freedom, do you say? The North would have known them little but for us. Fear would have destroyed them. But when dark things come from the houseless hills, or creep from sunless woods, they fly from us. What roads would any dare to tread, what safety would there be in quiet lands, or in the homes of simple men at night, if the Dunedain were asleep, or were all gone into the grave?

And yet less thanks have we than you. Travellers scowl at us, and countrymen give us scornful names... Yet we would not have it otherwise. If simple folk are free from care and fear, simple they will be, and we must be secret to keep them so. (I, 261)

Without recognition, or formal power, the Dunedain continue to serve and to protect, because it is their ancient duty. In them one sees on a grander scale the hereditary nobility which caused Bard<sup>3</sup> to serve his community so well when all others gave way under threat and danger. This larger scale of service is understood to occur in the face of a vastly larger scale of evil. On the lesser scale this service must also confound the style of service rendered by Boromir. His is a perversion of heroic duty through 'pride'; ultimately it is really the self that is served, and not the community. For a good King, the example of elven leadership offers some guidance. Elrond's farewell includes the wise words: 'yet no oath or bond is laid on you to go further than you will.' (I, 294) Gimli, a fighter in the ancient heroic mould but not a leader, affirms the value of oaths or pledges, but is overruled by Elrond. Twice the latter shows sensitive

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3. His character contains echoes of that of the younger Beowulf and of Wiglaf in the epic.

understanding of the situation into which Frodo is putting himself, and is able to turn Gimli's words back on himself.

Frodo's sense of dedicated service is soon under trial and he wishes that he was back at Rivendell, and fearfully he asks Gandalf 'how can I return without shame - unless there is indeed no other way, and we are already defeated?' (I, 308) After Gandalf's description of the certainty of defeat if they turn back, Frodo reluctantly accepts his burden:

'Then we must go on, if there is a way,' said Frodo with a sigh. Sam sank back into gloom.

Despite the slim chance of success he has ample proffered support. Boromir and Aragorn are strong leaders, and even vie against one another in giving the better advice, Boromir suggesting that they start out as soon as it is light for: 'The wolf that one hears is worse than the orc that one fears.' (I, 311) The (proverbial?) idea is neatly put by the use of rhyme. Aragorn prepares his sword for immediate battle, with a seemingly contradictory maxim: 'True!... But where the warg howls, there also the orc prowls', for his quick reply. Later, the welcome of the walkers to Lorien by Celeborn shows a combination of the ideal and inter-related serving roles of host, King, and healer:

You are worn with sorrow and much toil. Even if your Quest did not concern us closely, you should have refuge in this City, until you were healed and refreshed. (I, 372)

The same facets of the duty of a leader had been evident in Elrond's House at Rivendell. From the testing of 'hearts' at Lorien onwards, Aragorn's growing kingly style clearly surpasses Boromir's understanding of the same leadership role. On the movement of boats around the Rapids, Boromir says with complete insensitivity to the other races present: 'That would not be easy, even if we were all Men' (I, 407). At this point Aragorn takes over: 'Yet such as we are we will try it', presumably moderating somewhat the ire then expressed by Gimli. On coming

up to the Argonath, the ancient Pillars of the Kings, Frodo feels 'awe and fear' (I, 409) at the still discernible 'great power and majesty' of their bearing, and he 'cowered down, shutting his eyes and not daring to look up as the boat drew near.' The description of the Pillars and of the effect on Frodo combines the concepts of 'Kingship' and of the 'holy', reminiscent of the sacred role for which a king is formally anointed. Aragorn is transformed by this sight of the boundary of the realm, no longer the 'weatherworn Ranger', but rather:

proud and erect, guiding the boat with skilful strokes;  
his hood was cast back, and his dark hair was blowing  
in the wind, a light was in his eyes: a King returning  
from exile to his own land.

Returning to his family's duty, in the sight of the images of his ancestors, in Aragorn at least, the value of hereditary nobility is heavily underscored as he returns from his almost lifelong exile.

After the breaking of the Fellowship, Aragorn is again shown as transformed, this time over the question of 'service'. When he is challenged by Eomer, Aragorn demands: 'First tell me whom you serve... Are you friend or foe of Sauron, the Dark Lord of Mordor?' (II, 35) Eomer's retort is that they 'serve' only Theoden, their king, and that they do not 'serve' the 'Power of the Black Land', and he returns the question with 'Whom do you serve?' (II, 36) Aragorn's riddling answer begins 'I serve no man', an answer befitting either a king or a lordless wanderer, and to clarify his situation he draws his sword, proclaims his heritage, and demands that Eomer decide: 'Will you aid me or thwart me? Choose swiftly!' The turning of the challenges on the repeated word 'serve' again underscores the significance of the concept. Aragorn's transformation is described in a similar way to that which later occurs to Frodo. Both are transformations through power, but Aragorn's is a rightful and good power:

He seemed to have grown in stature while Eomer had  
shrunk; and in his living face they caught a brief

vision of the power and majesty of the Kings of stone... it seemed... that a white flame flickered on the brows of Aragorn like a shining crown.

Thus confronted, it is appropriate that Eomer experiences 'awe', and that he will 'cast down his proud eyes'. Part of the power of Kingship is to transform others to goodness. However, unlike the evil leaders who are consumed by pride, Aragorn has humility enough to realise his own limitations. On his role since Gandalf's presumed death he says humbly: 'when the great fall, the less must lead.' (II, 38) In this 'must' is the necessity of true leadership. Yet Aragorn's rise to power does not mean that he no longer recognizes any other power. He shares in the vision of the returned Gandalf and sees him as 'holding a power beyond the strength of Kings' (II, 104), and then declares: 'you are our captain and our banner.' The power of a proud King to inspire his people is seen when Theoden, revitalized, rides out and confronts his battle-weary messenger so that: 'The man's face lightened with joy and wonder.' (II, 132) Further strong evidence of Aragorn's developing good Kingship is found in his taking up of the palantir. Lacking any lust for power he has not claimed what is his by right, until offered by Gandalf the 'dangerous charge' (II, 199) of guarding it<sup>4</sup>. He answers:

Dangerous indeed , but not to all... There is one who may claim it by right. For this assuredly is the palantir of Orthanc from the treasury of Elendil, set here by the Kings of Gondor. Now my hour draws near. I will take it.

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In evil contrast with the good King's healing role is the application of obscene 'medicine' to the two captive hobbits by the orcs. The substances themselves are dubious and unpleasant: the first is a 'burning liquid' (II, 51) and the next 'some

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4. This makes the palantir akin to the orb or sceptre of a (medieval) monarch.

dark stuff'. It is mechanical caring in that it is only given to assist the hobbits to move more quickly, and the whole application to the unwilling hobbits has the feel of some form of early torture. Some of the orcs shout 'Ai! We shall have some fun later.' Still the orcs are not merely small cogs in the larger evil machine. Each is capable of his own deviousness, as seen in the argument and the attempt to make off alone with the two hobbits. Aragorn, too, knows that their masters 'would not speak openly to them of the Ring: they are not trusty servants.' (II, 93)

Much of the first section concerned with Faramir involves the concepts of service and of good leadership/stewardship. Frodo introduces himself and Sam, showing due respect for genealogy: 'Frodo son of Drogo is my name, and with me is Samwise son of Hamfast, a worthy hobbit in my service.' (II, 266) Of course in comparison with Faramir, the son of the Steward with hereditary rule over Gondor, the quality of this breeding is well nigh insignificant. It is rather the familial respect that counts, helping to give Frodo his growing sense of self-respect and duty. Faramir is aware of both these aspects when he later wishes nothing to do with the Ring 'lest peril perchance waylay [himself] and [he falls] lower in the test than Frodo son of Drogo.' (II, 290) Before the detailed dealings with Faramir take place, there is a battle where the body of one of the invading black men falls down before Sam, who:

wondered what the man's name was and where he came from; and if he was really evil of heart, or what lies or threats had led him on the long march from his home; and if he would not really rather have stayed there in peace (II, 269).

The man would seem materialistic, with two mentions of 'gold' in his description (a collar and in the braidings of his hair), but Sam with his compassion sees past this exotic style and ponders the destructive operation of evil leadership. The 'lies' considered here are preparation for the contrasting account of the good

leadership of Faramir, who claims that he would 'not even snare an orc with a falsehood' (II, 272).

Faramir's other qualities are shown in his cautionary speech to Sam:

'Patience!' said Faramir, but without anger. 'Do not speak before your master, whose wit is greater than yours, and I do not need any to teach me of our peril. Even so, I spare a brief time, in order to judge justly in a hard matter. Were I as hasty as you, I might have slain you long ago. For I am commanded to slay all whom I find in this land without the leave of the Lord of Gondor. But I do not slay man or beast needlessly, and not gladly even when it is needed. (II, 273)

The speech shows well his control and the ability to act as is needful, his understanding and compassion. His judgement is such that he can quickly satisfy himself the hobbits had no part in his brother's death: 'If hard days have made me any judge of Men's words and faces, then I may make a guess at Halflings!' (II, 276) And so he judges wisely throughout. Unlike his brother Boromir, he has been concerned with the old tradition and lore of his city, and is hence not displeased that Denethor was merely a steward and not a King. The entrusted care that is a steward's role cannot be transformed at will into the sacramental role of a King. As Denethor said, it could happen in 'Few years, maybe, in other places of less royalty... In Gondor ten thousand years would not suffice.' (II, 278) Faramir perceptively describes his brother as 'proud and fearless, often rash, ever anxious for the victory of Minas Tirith (and his own glory therein)' (II, 280). By contrast with his brother, Faramir shows that he is a capable leader and a perceptive and compassionate judge, but also he makes clear his feeling for the true role of a Steward of Gondor:

For myself... I would see the White Tree in flower again in the courts of the Kings, and the Silver Crown return, and Minas Tirith in peace: Minas Annor again as of old, full of light, high and fair, beautiful as a queen among other queens: not a mistress of many slaves, nay, not even a kind mistress of willing slaves.

Not even his father has this feeling for the true serving role. Through the necessity of living as a permanent armed camp, the men of Gondor have become like those of Rohan, and 'now love war and valour as things good in themselves, both a sport and an end' (II, 287), and few of them see value in the more cultured and settled former ways.

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This section has examined the roles of stewardship and leadership mainly through the recorded dialogue. The second volume ends with reinforcement of kingship and duty through action. The hobbits come across another large and old statue, but one which had been defaced by the soldiers of Mordor. However, when Frodo finds the missing head he cries out in delight that the King has a crown again, for:

about the high stern forehead there was a coronal of silver and gold. A trailing plant with flowers like small white stars had bound itself across the brows as if in reverence for the fallen King, and in the crevices of his stony hair yellow stonecrop gleamed.  
(II, 311)

The description implies that very nature has a reverence for kingship, and that true Kings are in some way in tune with that moral order and beauty of which nature is merely the first veil. The second act of service that occurs is Gollum's touching of Frodo's knee (II, 324). This has been examined elsewhere<sup>5</sup>, drawing a comparison with the Germanic King's qifstol. It is a cautious but total act of reverence, showing the sacramental role of a leader who is for Gollum his King. The power of the sacred knee is such that Gollum's salvation from intended obedience to it almost survives the sharp suspicions of Sam. It is reported that

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5. J.S. Ryan, 'The knee and qifstol as sacral symbols of protection and of forgiveness', Minas Tirith Evening Star, Vol. 16, No. 3, Fall 87, pp. 7-11.

Tolkien said that 'he found this moment the most painful to recall from all his own creative writing.'<sup>6</sup> The third act of service is Sam's taking on the quest alone after he thinks Frodo is dead. His simple goodness recoils in horror from the idea, but to all his objections another (good) voice from inside him answers, for example:

'What? Me take the Ring from him? The Council gave it to him.'

But the answer came at once: 'And the Council gave him companions, so that the errand should not fail. And you are the last of all the Company. The errand must not fail.' (II, 341)

Sam's sense of duty is clear, despite his arguments. Alone and so out of place, that he actually continues to show how powerful is his sense of duty.

The final volume has approximately two and a half times the references to kingship and service found in either of the previous volumes. This is in keeping with the climax of this theme in the return of the King. However, many of the concepts have been introduced earlier, and here play a reinforcing role. The great capacity of hobbits for good service is seen again in their parallel offers: Pippin to Denethor, and Merry to Theoden. The power of such oaths of fealty is seen in the extreme case of the oathbreakers<sup>7</sup>. Not only do the restless spirits recognise the true King, the heir to whose ancestor they had given their oath, but they follow him as a ghostly voice says 'To fulfil our oath and have peace.' (III, 63) Aragorn, now called the 'King of the Dead' by the terrified local inhabitants, sets the task for fulfilment of the oath, and then leads his Company and 'only his will held them to go on.' The King's power for goodness is shown to extend even into the supernatural.

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6. *ibid.*, p. 7.

7. J.S. Ryan, 'Oath-swearing, the Stone of Erech and the Near East of the Ancient World', *Inklings-Jahrbuch*, 4 (1986), pp. 107-120 examines the powerful moral background to this episode.

Lack of respect for the role of 'steward' as a Keeper has been reported in Boromir and now is seen in Denethor himself. He cannot bear a greater power in any form, claiming: '[I] will not be made the tool of other men's purposes, however worthy.' (III, 30) Gandalf sees his own role (and it would seem even the true role of all kings) as one of guard: 'For I also am a steward.' (III, 31) But the worst of Denethor's rule is seen in his treatment of the returned Faramir. As Beregonnd says to Pippin:

in these days men are slow to believe that a captain can be wise and learned in the scrolls of lore and song, as he is, and yet a man of hardihood and swift judgement in the field. But such is Faramir. (III, 39)

He is a complete man, in the model of Aragorn, and as could be said of both '[is it] strange... that the healing hand should also wield the sword' (III, 236). Yet, that the wise son should respect anything other than the power of his father, Denethor sees as an insult and a threat to that power. He upbraids his son for not forcibly taking the Ring and delivering it to him, and throws the accusation: 'For Boromir was loyal to me and no wizard's pupil.' (III, 86) This is in accordance with Denethor's method of utilizing power, to '[use] others as his weapons.' (III, 92) As punishment he sends the already exhausted Faramir on a nearly impossible mission of defence. Denethor's final exercise of will over service is his suicide. Only in attempting to take the near dead Faramir with him does his power break down, and then only at the questioning of the hobbit, who instructs the servants to ignore Denethor's command to bring fire, and who gains Beregonnd's help:

Well, you must choose between orders and the life of Faramir... And as for orders, I think you have a madman to deal with, not a lord. (III, 101)

Pippin sees his oath as not being simply to a man, but rather, to a higher service.

In contrast with Denethor's fierce clutching of power even to suicide, is Aragorn's slow and even reluctant assumption of power on his arrival at Minas

Tirith. He is well content to be acclaimed and then invited to take power. Slaves released in the battle at Pelargir report his awesome battle prowess. In the City itself, the catalyst for his recognition is the old woman Ioreth and her memory of old lore: 'The hands of the king are the hands of a healer.' (III, 136) He uses the hitherto strangely named 'Kingsfoil' to bring Faramir back to consciousness, whose first words are: 'My lord, you called me. I come. What does the king command?' (III, 142) The need of the people for kingship is indicated by the speed with which the news, from Ioreth, spread around the City: 'the king was indeed come among them, and after the war he brought healing'. Many come asking for healing, and with the sons of Elrond he laboured long to heal all. At the 'Last Debate' Eomer and Imrahil both put themselves and their forces at the service of the Lord Aragorn 'whether he claim it or no.' (III, 157) What service he is accorded is given freely, and the impetus comes from their love and respect. This is unlike the host of Mordor which serves only through fear, and has no strength when that is removed:

The Power that drove them on and filled them with hate and fury was wavering, its will was removed from them; and now looking in the eyes of their enemies they saw a deadly light and were afraid. (III, 226)

Yet what has caused the downfall of the power of Sauron is not the good kingship of Aragorn. Much more important has been the loyalty and service of Sam in helping his master. Sam is well able to retain his basic integrity because of his understanding of his lowly position in the social system. None owe service to him and:

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. (III, 177)

When he is translated to the bleak landscape of Mordor with Frodo, all that he has left of this way of life is his service to his 'master'.

The real importance of the return of the King is in the restoration of (moral) life by his semi-sacred position. Faramir can submit to the lesser but rightful authority of the ancient Warden without fear of appearing weak (III, 238). And when healed he takes up his office of Steward knowing that it is to be short lived and that 'his duty was to prepare for one who should replace him.' (III, 242) Aragorn sees his own coronation as part of the greater 'victory' (over evil), and asks that the Ring-bearer and Mithrandir play a symbolic role in the actual crowning (III, 246). Eomer returns to Rohan as another new lord and with similar aims: 'there is much to heal and set in order.(III, 247) The healing in Gondor is symbolised by the discovery and blossoming of the scion of the Eldest of Trees. The last word on the renewal wrought by Aragorn is Frodo's: 'There is a real King now, and he will soon put the roads in order.' (III, 266) This comes just after Bilbo's song 'The road goes ever on and on' and it must have some spiritual ongoing metaphysical meaning. The 'road' that is life for those folk will then be easier for some time, because of the moral guidance of a good King<sup>8</sup>.

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'Leaf by Niggle' has only one reference to 'service' and just the one to 'law'. Amongst many 'interruptions' to Niggle's art is the requirement that he 'go and serve on a jury in the town' (T&L, 82). As in his response to all the immediate needs of others, he serves but with reluctance. Later when confronted by the Inspector, Niggle is indignant at the suggestion that his own canvas, wood and waterproof paint should be used to mend the roof of a neighbour's house. Without needing to be told he should be aware that in a bleak climate 'houses come first.

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8. Compare the lines on this theme at the beginning of Beowulf.

That is the law.' (T&L, 87) After the arrival of the Driver (Death), the Inspector comments:

There now!... You'll have to go; but it's a bad way to start on your journey, leaving your jobs undone. Still, we can at least make some use of this canvas now.

The Inspector's comments on the 'journey' show that he is from the spirit world and with some responsibility for social and moral order. By reflection, Niggle realises that the 'law' that he has broken is a moral law. He should care for his neighbour's welfare and serve it truly.

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Farmer Giles of Ham, by contrast, has the attainment or style of kingship as its main theme. It falls into two parts: the corruption of the current King and court; and the emerging better Kingship of Giles. The first indication of the court's lack of concern for the people is the unfortunate comparison: 'In five minutes [the giant] had done more damage than the royal fox-hunt could have done in five days.' (FG, 14) Once the dragon is ravaging the countryside the villagers affected plead to their King: 'Lord, what of your knights?' (FG, 28) However, the court is shown to be tied up in complex formalities and in prior arrangements, the whole comprising the neglect of duty described as 'the scandal of the King's knights.' (FG, 29) Nothing unduly critical occurs until after the captured dragon has given oaths to return with treasure, at which point the 'King was deeply moved, for various reasons, not the least being financial' (FG, 49). Still the King is not totally neglectful of his role of serving his people for part of his motive in going to Ham was to investigate the strangeness of events happening there.

Once in Ham, the King's praise does not fool the people who, despite their formal thanks, now wish that they had closed the early proffered bargain of ten

pounds each with the evil dragon. Far from being a force for goodness, this King is considered a worse dragon than Chrysophylax. In the following three days the King and his retinue devour all food in the area, paid for deceptively with tallies on the worthless Exchequer. Nevertheless, the narrator indicates something of the King's vestigial goodness which causes him to frown at the Knights who are smiling at Giles' homemade armour. For this King, performed duty consists merely of limiting the worst excesses of his Knights. The people would be in no doubt over the nature of their King after his cold departure, including his cancelling of half the tallies on the Exchequer. It seems the whole realm felt as did the mare: 'What she thought of the King was luckily unexpressed, as it was highly disloyal.' (FG, 55) Expressions of disloyalty may earn punishment, but also it seems important to maintain the forms of respect for the position, possibly in the hope that the incumbent will live up to it.

Although Giles does not have the hereditary nobility of an Anagorn, he does have a nobility and a courage which arise from the 'sturdy and uncorrupted folk [who] still retain the ancient courage of [their] race.' (FG, 50) His power of leadership is well seen when he organizes six of the former Knights' servants who

'entered his service, being glad of a guide, and thinking that their wages might indeed come more regular now than had been usual.' (FG, 64)

In his organization of the dragon, the servants and a vast treasure on the journey home, it was with some justification that he 'began to feel like a lord and stuck out his chest.' After rejecting the King's empty summons Giles became 'the Darling of the Land' (FG, 68), and dissatisfaction with the King has become more open, increasing in its intensity the closer the King rode towards Ham. At first:

folk did not cheer the knights and men-at-arms as they went by, though they still took off their hats to the King. As he drew nearer to Ham the looks grew more sullen; in some villages the people shut their doors and not a face could be seen.

This is not disrespect for the position of King, but rather the people have transferred their loyalty to a man who has acted more like a good King in his serving of the community. The ancient sword of protection, Tailbiter, is Giles' badge of office, and the King's demand for its return 'Give me my sword!' (FG, 69) is rightly met with 'Give us your crown!' As the narrator tells us, the King forgets his plural, so consequently Giles' use of it shows the transfer of real Kingship. As seen with Aragorn, service to a true leader comes freely from others: 'For many a mile round about men took Giles for their lord.' (FG, 72) The title itself lags well behind the real situation, in fact it is some years before Giles became 'Prince Julius AEGidius'. Eventually he became a King, the narrator adds 'of course' (FG, 73), suggesting again that he has in worth already been a King for some time. The main characteristics of his rule are those that better serve the people: a closer watch on accounts; a court 'in which merit was often rewarded'; and the use of the vulgar or native tongue instead of 'Book-latin' for his speeches. And for the philologist/author the last was perhaps the most important act of Kingly service.

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'Smith of Wooton Major', despite having a fairy King as one of its main characters, is not closely modelled on the detail of meaningful service and Kingship. Little attention is given to Smith's duty to use the gift that he has, and most interest is centred on his exploration of the gift itself. Nevertheless the concept of 'service' plays an important role in the story. The role of Master Cook is essentially one of noble service to the community. It is a position of high standing and is much sought after. As well as serving at all feasts, and particularly at The Feast of Good Children, usually he has links with the world of Faery and, presumably, incorporates this into the exercise of his formal role.

And, of course, the climax of his duty is the production of the Great Cake, one that 'should have something novel and surprising about it' (T&L, 110). The King of Faery himself acts as apprentice and then much later as the Cook to best serve this village, revealing his role only at the end and then only to Smith and to Nokes. In human terms this is not true human kingship as seen in the trilogy. Here authority comes from the supernatural instead of from below.

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Kingship, as seen in the trilogy in particular, has parallels with its style in the old Germanic period. Leadership was often brutal in this age 'with its emphasis on the duty of revenge'<sup>9</sup>, and with its stern warrior ethic. Kingship itself appears to have arisen from the election of a leader for wartime, and to have become largely hereditary through the ascendancy of one tribal group.<sup>10</sup> The portrayals of Thorin, Bard, Boromir, Theoden and Denethor owe much to this Germanic (literary) style. Furthermore, the King was expected to be 'an effective intermediary between his people and the gods'<sup>11</sup>.

The operation of kingship during this time is clearly seen in Beowulf. There Hrothgar is described several times as the ideal king (Beo., ll. 1884-1887), and the strongest characteristic of his goodness, and that of all other kings as well, is his 'bountifulness', the giving of rich gifts to his retainers. Gifts were rewards for brave deeds done or promised, if the need should arise, through binding oaths of loyalty. As such they were a tool of pride and power, being

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9. L.L. Schucking, 'The Ideal of Kingship in Beowulf', in L.E. Nicholson, op. cit., p. 37.

10. O. Schrader, 'King - Teutonic and Lithu-Slavic', in J. Hastings (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, 12 vols, Vol. 7, Edinburgh, 1912, p. 731.

11. H.A. Myers, in co-operation with H. Wolfram, Medieval Kingship, Chicago, 1982, p. 2.

capable of enforcing recipients into last ditch stands on behalf of the lord's personal glory, such as the Battle of Maldon. Tolkien's view of such kingship is clear from the essay, 'Of ermod', after his 'The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son'<sup>12</sup>, the whole written:

as an extended comment on lines 89, 90 of the original... 'then the earl in his overmastering pride actually yielded ground to the enemy, as he should not have done.' (T&L, 168)

He traces the theme through The Battle of Maldon, Beowulf and Sir Gawain. So in his view of three of the major texts of his teaching career, the downfall of great leaders and heroes was pride which causes them to neglect the needs of their subjects.

In Tolkien's fictional work it is his weaker kings who display these characteristics. In the portrayal of his good kings 'pride' is seldom (and then only briefly) mentioned, for their qualities are service and duty. It is a portrayal of a transition from the older hero/king to a king as servant of his people (the ancient Greek idea of a philosopher king which Aquinas turned into the Christian serving king). Tolkien ignores the pagan religious role of the early (Germanic) kings, but for the transitional good king Aragorn he adds the Celtic concept of a healer king, and as well a mythic and spiritual dimension. Subsequent to Aragorn, that is, closer to our own age, would come an anointed Christian king.

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12. Most accessible in J.R.R. Tolkien, Tree and Leaf, London, 1979.