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# The Art of Pilgrimage

In this booklet I will describe the art of pilgrimage seen in the light of the pilgrimage narrative in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Ring*. The booklet is divided into the following chapters:

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## 1. The Pilgrimage Narrative in The Lord of the Rings

In *Love's Knowledge*, Martha Nussbaum argues that literature humanizes philosophy by giving philosophy a corpus, a body, in which to live. Outside of this humanizing process, philosophy remains abstracted and disconnected from life experience. You can certainly say that about modern and postmodern philosophy. Moreover, in portraying characters whose actions mimic the lived experiences of human beings, literature offers us a lens into the philosophical dimensions of human actions – ethical, aesthetic, and ontological. If this is true, then Tolkien's characters can be said to humanize and clarify aspects of Western philosophy.

In *The Blackwell Philosophy and Pop Culture Series* volume on *The Lord of the Rings*, J. Lenore Wright claims, in her article *Sam and Frodo's Excellent Adventure*, that the narrative of Western philosophy is a journey-narrative. Considered together, the narratives that form the history of Western thought reflect journey motifs of two general types: a journey directed *outwardly* into the world, and a journey into the self [or the Soul]. The former – the journey without – is typified by a series of conflicts often initiated by the introduction of evil in the journey narrative. The latter – the journey within – is typified by a series of

dramatic encounters wither within oneself (an inner psychological battle) or with another character. This encounter is often initiated by a strong emotion or force, such as love, and culminates in a union with the force against which a character struggles.

I begin my first book *Meditation as an Art of Life* with the claim that I would like to tell the reader the story of my life. I write:

*It is first by now I, as Karen Blixen could have put it, can begin to see the dreaming tracks and songlines in the artwork of my life. By now I, seen with collective and universal eyes, consider it as a philosophical journey, that began in the dawn of time, before this universe.*

*Anyhow, seen with the personal eyes, the memory of my philosophical journey goes back to when I was 5 years old. Here I started to reflect over, whether life is a dream. This philosophical question has always followed me: whether we sleep, whether we dream this long dream, which is life? Therefore my adolescence has always been accented by a strong wonder over life, and a strong longing after something inexpressible, after something that can't be satisfied by explanations and interpretations - perhaps a longing after awakening.*

You could say that this story continues in this book.

Wright claims that one of the most famous journeys in Western thought is St. Augustine's. In his autobiography, *Confessions*, Augustine depicts his early childhood in North Africa, his adulthood spent teaching rhetoric in Carthage, Rome, and Milan, and finally his conversion to Christianity and his subsequent rise to the position of Bishop of Hippo. In reading his life story, we also bear witness to his philosophical journey toward a vision of Truth found in the triune image of the Christian God. Augustine's description of his conversion draws heavily upon Plato's Allegory of the Cave, which appears in Book VII of the *Republic*. The Allegory of the Cave tells the story of a slave who breaks free from his shackles inside a dark dwelling and makes his way out into an unknown world filled with sunlight and "real" objects. As the slave comes to recognize the world beyond the cave, he denounces his allegiance to shadowy images and affirms eternal Forms, the source and constituents of all that is true and knowable. Plato offers an epistemological account of this experience in the *Phaedrus*, where he claims that every human soul once lived in communion with the Forms, contemplating the Beautiful and the Good, aware of true being in its supreme and uncorrupted state.

Following in Plato's footsteps, Augustine searches to understand Goodness and Beauty in the world. He begins his journey out of the cave of Pagan Rome by embracing Manichean philosophy, a materialist philosophy of good and evil. After meeting the spiritual guide of the Manichean sect, Faustus, Augustine flirts with astrology and then Academic skepticism, until he finally encounters an allegorized rendering of Christian thought in the preaching of St. Ambrose. Once Ambrose teaches Augustine how to allegorize scripture, Augustine sees himself in the image of God and begins his pilgrimage of faith.

A journey is a movement from one place to another. "But not all journeys are movements in space or through time", says Wright. Many are spiritual, like St. Augustine's passage from Manicheanism to Christianity. Others are intellectual. Wright suggests as an example the journey of the townspeople in the movie, *Pleasantville*, who see the beauty of reality once the stifling veil of repressive rules is removed from their lives. Although a journey involves movement – physical, spiritual, intellectual, or philosophical – there is more to a journey than reaching one's destination. As Bilbo points out, "Not all those who wander are lost" (FR, p. 278). Indeed, movement requires one to accept and act upon at least two kinds of freedom: freedom from material belongings (a freedom to uproot and wander), and freedom from conflicting duties.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo's journey out of the cave is a journey out of the Shire. He frets over his journey and delays the decision longer than he should. Though he has longed to travel for some time, he confesses that leaving one's home under these conditions is an "exile" (FR, p. 69). Frodo becomes increasingly burdened by his outward journey as he recalls Bilbo's admonition that leaving one's home is dangerous business. The first step Frodo takes outside of his cave occurs when Gandalf recites the history of the Ring and Frodo infers the role he might play in its destruction. He thereby becomes part of the Greater History. As second step occurs when Frodo sells Bilbo's home and belongings to the Sackville-Bagginses, the relatives he despises (FR, pp. 64-69). A third step occurs when Elrond offers Frodo freedom from the burden of the Ring. "Frodo glanced at all the faces, but they were not turned to him. All the Council sat with downcast eyes, as if in deep thought."

*At last with an effort he spoke, and wondered to hear his own words, as if some other will was using his small voice. "I will take the Ring," he said, "though I do not know the way."* (FR, p. 303).

As Frodo and his hobbit companions journey further and further from the comfortable Shire, they forge new self-identities. Though typical hobbits are passive and fearful, Sam, Merry, Pippin face their fears and confront the horrors of war, engaging in varied forms of battle themselves. They suffer physical and psychological wounds, wounds that with each stage of healing, make them stronger, braver, and more confident. As a result the wounding and healing process they undergo, they unchain themselves from their natural instincts and hobbit-like desires. Only then does their physical journey become existential; that is: they begin to realize the five existential categories of suffering: unreality, division, stagnation, anxiety and meaninglessness. These five categories constitute together the suffering, which in this way is a part of their lifesituation. Like this suffering has a past and a future. The past and the future form an unbroken continuum, unless the Now's releasing power is activated through their aware presence. Behind all the different circumstances which constitute their lifesituation, and which exist in time, there in other words exists something deeper, more essential: life itself, their being in the timeless Now itself.

On their journey they begin to activate this deeper dimension and sense the opposite categories: reality, cooperation, movement, safety and meaning. Once this transformation occurs their self-conceptions become harmonized with their duties, and they fulfill the existential charge to "become who you are."

Though Frodo makes his decision to carry the Ring to Mordor without obvious compulsion, his choice illustrates the limits of human freedom. Not only is freedom tethered to responsibility, it is contingent upon a willingness to choose between two viable options – a choice that is shaped by many historical situations. Frodo is the Ring-bearer in part because his cousin, Bilbo, surreptitiously acquired the Ring from Sméagol (a.k.a. Gollum) and then passed it down to him. He is also the Ring-bearer because the Ring remains in his possession – "the ring chooses the bearer." Clearly, Frodo's choice is not a choice for himself; his lack of knowledge regarding the location of the Cracks of Doom compels others to bear his burden along with him. His decision to carry the Ring, however, means that he is not only responsible for destroying the Ring, but he is also responsible for the individuals who help him achieve his Quest. His decision offers freedom *for* the Ring, not from the Ring. And Frodo's decision to destroy the Ring *creates* the Fellowship; it is productive. It simultaneously binds the fellows to Frodo, and it frees them to travel with Frodo on his journey to Mordor. Hence, Frodo's commitment to carry the Ring is a commitment to create freedom in fellowship.

Like philosophical inquiry, Tolkien's journey motif moves in two directions: it is a movement outside the dark cave of illusion and into the light of knowable reality, and it is a turning away from the façade of the self into the innermost Soul. The journey inward into the Soul presupposes an existential freedom that is itself part of the structure of authentic human existence. The Ring-bearer and his fellows must break free from their assumptions and false beliefs if they wish to be transformed by the journey inwards.

Boromir attains his philosophical transformation and self-knowledge only at death's door, when he confesses to Aragorn, "I tried to take the Ring from Frodo...I am sorry. I have paid...go to Minas Tirith and save my people! I have failed" (TT, p. 4). Aragorn replies, "No!...You have conquered. Few have gained such a victory. Be at peace!" Burdened by his wish to save his people, Boromir succumbs to his deep desire to use the Ring to destroy enemies of his land. His enslavement to this desire brings about his own demise.

Wright says that a key step in the transition from enslavement to freedom is personal transformation. Once we break free from our inner chains, we are free to grow as individuals. For example, Gandalf's transformation from "Gandalf the Grey" to "Gandalf the White" begins in the bowels of Moria while battling a Balrog. When he reappears in *The Two Towers*, he represents a new beginning, the dawning of a new day. And as Aragorn assures Gamling, "dawn is ever the hope of men" (TT, p. 152). Other characters that achieve personal transformation include Aragorn, who began the journey as "Strider" and in the end is crowned "King Elessar," and Sam Gamgee who becomes "Master Samwise."

Wright makes us aware that the endowment of new titles and the changing of names is a sign of pilgrims making progress in journey tales. In the Eastern tale, *Monkey*, the main character acquires a new name along each stage of his journey toward Buddhahood. He begins as "Handsome Monkey King," then he is named by the Patriarch Subodhi, "Aware of Vacuity." And finally he becomes "Buddha Victorious in Strife."

But other characters never accomplish this existential feat. For instance, though he pretends to be a devoted disciple of Frodo, Sméagol secretly plans to take the Ring from him, with the help of the hideous spider-like creature, Shelob.

Tolkien suggests that Sam and Frodo's physical journey may have been mapped out for them by the circumstances of time and history. But he also suggests that their existential journey – their choices to either affirm or deny each element of the

journey – is a matter of their own choosing. The two processes mutually fertilize each other.

Unlike the hobbits, Sméagol and Saruman are lamenting their own failures, licking their wounds, and wallowing in self-pity. Sméagol remains enslaved by the Ring even when it is out of his possession, pitying himself for his lack of food, lack of rest, and lack of trustworthiness. Saruman refuses to accept the mercy of Gandalf and company, stating, “Pray, do not smile at me! I prefer your frowns” (RK, p. 283), to which Gandalf replies, “alas for Saruman! I fear nothing more, can be made of him. He has withered altogether” (RK, p. 285). Both Sméagol and Saruman live inauthentic lives in the constant self-producing *Becoming*, and the denial of universal history.

Despite being burdened by nature and history, Tolkien’s little hobbits, Sam and Frodo, set their own course as they journey toward self-knowledge and authentic living: the self-forgetful *Being*. This happens only by surrendering to the universal history they are set in.

Though most journey narratives adopt either the outward or inward model of journey narratives, *The Lord of the Rings* utilizes both. As John Dunne remarks, Tolkien’s saga is “a great journey, but it’s a conflict, a war, between good and evil; it’s both of those at the same time.” By drawing out the philosophical implications of the outward and inward journeys within *The Lord of the Rings*, we not only connect the past to the present historically, we confront and affirm the past existentially – we find ourselves in Tolkien’s story. By confronting both the historical and existential facets of human experience, we begin to understand something new about our tasks as contemporary philosophers – the task to gaze into the fragmented abyss of postmodern culture and find meaning and value therein.

Wright mentions other great texts – both Western and non-Western – that contain journey motifs include *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Ramayana*, Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, *The Song of Roland*, *Tristan*, Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Dante’s *Divine Comedy* Chaucer’s *Cantebury Tales*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptameron*, and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.

Throughout *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien describes the journey of Frodo and his fellows not as a heroic escapade, but as a “Quest.” Like most quests with great or exalted purposes, the hobbits’ journey is unexpected and undesired. It begins in the

familiar Shire and moves quickly to lands unknown to them. Like Monkey's journey to India in search of sacred Buddhist scrolls in the Chinese epic, *Journey to the West*, Sam and Frodo's journey occurs mainly on foot, takes place over several months, and involves a series of clashes and battles. It also unfolds in stages. When Frodo first learn of his journey, Gandalf says to him, "It may be your task to find the Cracks of Doom; but that quest may be for others: I do not know. At any rate you are not ready for that long road yet" (FR, p. 73).

Sam and Frodo appear to be typical pilgrims – a little mad, weal-willed, and very reluctant to endanger themselves or their fellow travellers. For instance, as Frodo considers the journey before him, he says to Gandalf:

*Of course, I have sometimes thought of going away, but I imagined that as a kind of holiday, a series of adventures like Bilbo's or better, ending in peace. But this would mean exile, a flight from danger into danger, drawing it after me...But I feel very small, and very uprooted, and well – desperate. The Enemy is so strong and terrible.* (FR, p. 69).

Wright says that these friends need guides in part because they are weak-willed. Tolkien's description of Frodo and Sam is analogous to the medieval pilgrim, Dante, and the fear he experiences as he makes his way through hell with his guide, Virgil. As Dante's trepidation begins to overcome him at various points in the *Inferno*, he faints, incapable of facing reality before him. Likewise, Frodo struggles against the increasing weight of the Ring, his own self-doubt, and his deep weariness. Historically, philosophers have received aid in their intellectual struggles by teachers and guides. For example, Plato burned his tragedies when he met Socrates. Aristotle joined Plato's Academy and became a teacher in his own right. St. Augustine studied under Albert the Great. Kant relied under Hume to "wake him from his dogmatic slumbers." And Jean-Paul Sartre, Hannah Arendt, and Hans-Georg Gadamer contributed to the burgeoning field of existentialism after studying with Martin Heidegger, who himself was deeply indebted to Edmund Husserl.

"What would a journey be without a guide (or two)?" Wright asks. Tolkien's mythical guide, the one who finds freedom in wandering, is Gandalf. Though Gandalf is often called away from Sam and Frodo to aid in the war effort, he never abandons his hobbit friends, assisting them in both word and deed. Gandalf arranges for Aragorn to serve as a guide to the hobbits. Later, thanks to Gandalf's wise counsel that "Sméagol may yet have 'some part to play'" (FR, p. 65), Gollum

serves as Sam and Frodo's last guide in their almost hopeless Quest to destroy the One Ring.

Pilgrims are different from heroes in the classical sense of the term. According to both ancient mythology and modern epics, heroes are courageous, large in stature, often of divine ancestry or noble birth, sometimes magical, athletic, intelligent, adept at specific skills, and knowledgeable of the arts (often they play musical instruments). Classic Greek examples include Theseus, who with help of his beloved Ariadne slays the Minotaur who guards the labyrinth in Knossos, and Odysseus, who Homer represents as the noblest and most respected hero for his courage, cunning and eloquence.

Unlike these heroes, Sam and Frodo experience constant fear and dread; their journey is overshadowed by despair. Like all hobbits, they are small in stature, often mistaken for children. Nor are they of noble ancestry or exceptionally knowledgeable, intelligent, skilled, or athletic. Their strength lies in devotion, determination, and single-mindedness of purpose. They are not heroes in the classical sense; rather, they exemplify the traits of modern pilgrims. As their journey to Mount Doom approaches its end, the Quest transforms these two reluctant pilgrims into resilient, bold masters whose characters reflect the potency of the Ring. We see this transformation in Sam most clearly in his battle with Shelob. Tolkien writes:

*As if his indomitable spirit had set its potency in motion, the glass [Phial of Galadriel] blazed suddenly like a white torch in his hand...No such terror out of heaven had ever burned in Shelob's face before...She fell back...Sam came on. He was reeling like a drunken man, but he came on. And shelob, cowered at last, shrunken in defeat, jerked and quivered as she tried to hasten from him. (TT, p. 383).*

We see the transformation in Frodo through Sam's eyes when the two companions capture Sméagol: "For a moment it appeared to Sam that his master had grown and Gollum had shrunk: a tall stern shadow, a mighty lord who hid his brightness in grey cloud, and at his feet a little whining dog" (TT, pp. 249-250). Despite their individual growth, these two friends realize their change may be of no consequence as they near the end of their journey to the Cracks of Doom. Sam, in particular, fears that even if they manage to destroy the Ring, they have no hope of escaping Mordor alive:

*But even as hope died in Sam, or seemed to die, it was turned into a new strength. Sam's plain hobbit-face grew stern, almost grim, as the will hardened in him, and he felt through all his limbs a thrill, as if he was turning into some creature of stone and steel that neither despair nor weariness nor endless barren miles could subdue. (RK, p. 225).*

Sam and Frodo's strength of character is the source of their authenticity as pilgrims.

Our contemporary concept of "hero" is rooted in the conflicts described in Greek literature, battles between great divinities and god-like humans. It emerged out of our primordial desire for immortality, along with an emergent need for divinity and unity. Despite our affluence and technological advances, the need for extraordinary creatures and events still exists. Wright asks: "So why are Sam and Frodo so ordinary?" In Plato's *Symposium*, his great dialogue on love, Diotima teaches that profound ideas emerge from one small intellectual spark. Tolkien teaches us the same lesson. The humblest creatures, as small as children, are capable of extraordinary feats.

Now, more than ever, we are realizing that we need ordinary people to be extraordinary. We need people to be all too human and frail. We need Sam and Frodo to be ordinary, not heroic. Tolkien's reluctant pilgrims show us that when ordinary people bind themselves to the good, life can be extraordinary.

## **2. The Metaphysics of the Pilgrimage**

Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy exploring the fundamental questions, including the nature of concepts like being, existence, and reality. It has two branches – cosmology and ontology, which I will investigate in the next two chapters.

Metaphysic is the most important, most foundational, part of philosophy. It is rational, not irrational. It shares this with science. Science is in fact developed out of philosophy. It is a body of knowledge ordered through explanation and causes. Like the rest of philosophy, it does not use the methods of the modern scientific method. It uses the tools of thinking and meditation alone. But it shares the concept of rationality with science, and it should not be classified under "the occult", as it is in some bookstores. This is an example of how New Age is in progress of colonizing philosophy as well.

Metaphysics explores reality as such, all of reality, not just some part or dimension of reality, such as living things, chemicals, human history, or morality. It seeks the truths, laws, and principles that are true of all being.

I will begin with introducing my own metaphysics, and hereafter investigate it in relation with Tolkien. I will begin like this since it shows what metaphysics is, and therefore can give an introductory understanding of what the metaphysics of Tolkien, and therefore the art of pilgrimage, is all about.

Your thoughts are words and images, which work in this stream. It is Heraklit's River, it is the River of Time.

As the Indian philosophy claims, then this stream not only contains your personal history, it also contains a collective and universal history – together a history, which consists of images. These images are form-formations of energy, creative up-tensions, a kind of matter, though on a highly abstract plane. These images exist in other words in the actual movement of the matter, and therefore not only in your mental activity, but also outside you in nature. So, your thinking rises from an endless deep of images, which flow in the actual movement of nature.

The Indian philosophy claims, that the movement of time in itself is a negation-power (Asat, Avidya, or Shabda-Brahman, the self-sacrifice). In Christian terms this would be called Logos or the Christ principle. Time is one great negation (self-sacrifice) of the Now's unmoved being (Atman), which is the unmanifested, the actual source: the Good, the True and the Beautiful. Or said in Indian terms: a sacrifice of pure being (Sat) pure consciousness (chit) and pure joy (ananda).

In Western theology the Good, the True and the Beautiful is God. In Indian philosophy God is called Brahman. God is the nondual reality or Wholeness. The only thing that can be said to be nondual is the Wholeness. According to the Taoistic teaching of Yin and Yang there isn't anything beyond the world. You can't see the world from outside. You are in the world and you can only describe something from its opposition. What is the good? This you understand if you know what the evil is. You can't say anything about the world as a whole, because you can't put the Wholeness in opposition to anything. The Wholeness is therefore the indescribable (Tao). It is an absolute Otherness in relation to the known.

The negation-power is in that way the power behind the world's manifestation. Logically speaking, then the concept of negation probably is the best concept to describe why the ultimate, absolute truth can't be reduced to

something particular. The negation principle (the Christ principle) is an impossible logical principle to escape from, especially when speaking about reductionism. But when moving from the negation-principle towards the manifestation of the world we need to use other concepts.

Indian philosophy claims that the manifestation of the universe thus has arisen on the background of a mighty universal vision (Mahat or Mahat Atman – a vision of beauty), which originates from past universes. It is compared with the experience of objectivity when you awake from a deep sleep an early summer morning with singing birds. All religions have concepts of this great vision: it is the Dreamtime of the Aborigines, God's words in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the Pythagoreans' Music of the Spheres, Plato's world of Forms, The Bardoworlds of the Books of the Dead, The Anabasis of the Mystery Cults, The Image Galleries of the Alchemists, the Akashic Records of the Occultists. In Indian philosophy it is also called the causal body (karanadeha), or, as in Christianity, the spirit in the symbolism of body, soul and spirit.

In this way, the future arises, and an outgoing creative movement; a movement, which can be compared with what they within science call The Big Bang (but it is not the same). In the outgoing movement, the great vision becomes, because of the negation-power, shattered in many images, which now become a kind of memories about the great vision; signs from Eternity. In this way, the past arises, and a longing back towards the origin, the unmanifested. And then a destructive backmovement is created. This longing and backmovement are the background for life seen as a Quest, or a Pilgrimage. Tolkien's Rivendell and Lórien are places you long for. Every kind of longing contains a glimpse of a longing after the universal vision and song of the Universe.

But the progressive karma, our special providence, is our inner light. And that is also the bright side of Galadriel, her rational and wise side. Tolkien teaches us to trust that inner light and be strong enough to leave old problems behind. This inner light is only to be found in the Now. That will say that when you begin a spiritual practice, meditation or wordless prayer, you'll be practising in the Now. And then your painbody will begin to open itself. The destructive backmovement has started. And this is paradoxically enough the same as a process of awakening.

In that way, the movement of time consists of two universal movements, which we could call the outgoing movement and the backmovement; future and past, creation and destruction. These two movements are reflected throughout the universe in a multiplicity of different lifecycles; they are Samsara's wheel of up-cycles which

are followed by down-cycles and vice versa (for example life and death, success and fiasco, joy and sorrow) – all this which lie behind the law of karma and rebirth. In Western theology: original sin. This universe is for example considered to be a reincarnation of a past universe, the same way as a human being is considered to be a reincarnation of a past existence.

So the images in the movement of time is shattered reflections of the great vision of the universe, and are background for the manifestation of the holy scriptures of India, the Vedas, which are claimed to have been "heard" by wise men (the so-called Seers) in the dawn of time, and by word of mouth delivered over oceans of time. They are shadows, dreams, masks, mirrors, fables, fairy-tales, fictions: signs from Eternity. The Vedas therefore both include the most sublime and difficult available philosophy, as for example in the Upanishads, and good folktales as Ramayana and Mahabharata (with the famous Bhagavadgita), which with its clear ethical messages is told in village temples, to the children as bedtime stories, and which is inspiration for great poets as Rabindranath Tagore.

This is a description from Indian philosophy which I philosophical seen find very satisfying. In Western theology the great vision would be the same as God's word, or said with the Pythagoreans: the Music of the Spheres. *Musica universalis* (literally universal music), also called Music of the Spheres or Harmony of the Spheres, is an ancient philosophical concept that regards proportions in the movements of celestial bodies—the Sun, Moon, and planets—as a form of music. This "music" is not usually thought to be literally audible, but a harmonic, mathematical or religious concept. The idea continued to appeal to thinkers about music until the end of the Renaissance, influencing scholars of many kinds, including humanists. Further scientific exploration has determined specific proportions in some orbital motion, described as orbital resonance. This musical metaphysics is quite central in Tolkien's philosophy, as we shall see in the following chapters.

The most powerful and magical language is music. The reason for this is that music is the original language. Music is the language of creation. As mentioned: In *The Silmarillion*, God and His angels *sings* the world into being: "In the beginning, Eru, the One, who in Elvish tongue is named Iluvatar, made the Ainur of his thought; and they made a great music before him. In this music the World was begun" (*Silmarillion*, p. 25).

It is not that the music was in the world but that the world was in the music. Many Indigenous Australians refer to the Creation time as "The Dreaming". The

Dreamtime laid down the patterns of life for the Aboriginal people. Creation is believed to be the work of culture heroes who traveled across a formless land, creating sacred sites and significant places of interest through their singing. By singing the world into existence, the Ancestors had been poets in the original sense of poesis, meaning 'creation'. In this way, "songlines" were established, some of which could travel right across Australia, through as many as six to ten different language groupings. A songline, also called dreaming track, is one of the paths across the land (or sometimes the sky) which mark the route followed by localised "creator-beings" during the Dreaming. The paths of the songlines are recorded in traditional songs, stories, dance, and painting.

A knowledgeable person is able to navigate across the land by repeating the words of the song, which describe the location of landmarks, waterholes, and other natural phenomena. In some cases, the paths of the creator-beings are said to be evident from their marks, or petrosomatoglyphs, on the land, such as large depressions in the land which are said to be their footprints.

By singing the songs in the appropriate sequence, indigenous people could navigate vast distances, often travelling through the deserts of Australia's interior. The continent of Australia contains an extensive system of songlines, some of which are of a few kilometres, whilst others traverse hundreds of kilometres through lands of many different indigenous peoples — peoples who may speak markedly different languages and have different cultural traditions.

Since a songline can span the lands of several different language groups, different parts of the song are said to be in those different languages. Languages are not a barrier because the melodic contour of the song describes the nature of the land over which the song passes. The rhythm is what is crucial to understanding the song. Listening to the song of the land is the same as walking on this songline and observing the land.

In some cases, a songline has a particular direction, and walking the wrong way along a songline may be a sacrilegious act (e.g. climbing up Uluru where the correct direction is down). Traditional Aboriginal people regard all land as sacred, and the songs must be continually sung to keep the land "alive".

This mythology reminds in an astonishing way about “the music of the spheres,” *in* which everything is, the “Song of Songs” that includes all songs. All matter, space, time, and history are in this primal language.

Plato knew the power of music. In the *Republic* it is the first step in education in the good society and the first step in corruption in the bad one. Nothing is more powerful to the good society, to education, to human happiness in this world.

Music is not ornamented poetry, and poetry is not ornamented prose. Poetry is fallen music, and prose is fallen poetry. Prose is not the original language, it is poetry made practical. Even poetry is not the original language; it is music made speakable, it is the words of music separated from their music. In the beginning was music.

*The Lord of the Rings* is full of singing. One of its indices lists fifty-six songs or poems. The Hobbits sing high hymns to Elbereth and homespun Walking Songs and Bath Songs. Tolkien, like Bombadil, is a writer of prose who is bursting with poetry and music. Peter Beagle calls him “a writer whose own prose is itself taut with poetry”.

Music is an essential part of Elvish enchantment. When the Fellowship enters Lothlorien, Sam says, “I feel as if I was *inside* a song, if you take my meaning” (LOTR, p. 342). And we say the same when we enter *The Lord of the Rings*.

Kreeft says that the last division of philosophy that will ever be understood clearly and adequately by reason is aesthetics, and within aesthetics, music.

Because of the negation-power the images in time are coming only to exist in relation to their negation. For example, images of the powerful, the perfect and the good, only exist in relation to the powerlessness, the fiasco and the evil. So, all images contain a structure of opposites. The most universal images include their polar partners, they are a kind of visionary mandala-structures or yantrafields. The more collective and personal images expel their polar partners. However, this is in accordance with the logic of the images not possible, and the result is contradiction and division (suffering).

As the Buddhist philosopher, Nagarjuna, said, then the Now’s lawfulness around the function of the negation-power, is due to, that energy works as streams and divisions within a superior Wholeness. And because the Wholeness is a reality, each part will always fit into a correspondent part. This means, that each part only can be understood in relation to its negation; that is: what the part *not* is. Firstly, this implies, that each part comes to appear as part of a polarization-pair, or a pair of opposites – like in the teaching of Yin and Yang. Secondly it implies, that each

part only can be understood in relation to *everything* else; that is: in relation to the Wholeness.

The more you, through the Ego's evaluations, isolate these parts from each other, the more the abandoned parts will work stronger and stronger on their polar partners. Therefore, these polar partners in their extremes will finally switch over in the opposite extreme. Another aspect of this lawfulness, or another way to describe this lawfulness is: energy returns to its starting point. This is also-called compensatory karma, and the lawfulness works as wave movements and pendulum movements.

And since everything in this way only work correlative, yes, then Nagarjuna claimed, that we actually nothing can say about the wholeness, only about the parts. Therefore, he called the Wholeness the Emptiness (*'sûnyatâ* - see my book *Sûnyatâ Sutras*) – a teaching, which had one quite determinate purpose: the neutralization of all the dogmas, theories and viewpoints, which ignorance has created.

### **3. Pilgrimage as a Process of Awakening.**

A central reason for why it would be wrong not to emphasize the Christian angle in *The Lord of the Rings* is the important role of divine providence.

Two different ways God can act in earthly history are miracles and providence. There are no miracles in *The Lord of the Rings* (although there are at least two in *The Silmarillion*, at the beginning and the end). But there is a pervasive presence of providence.

God prefers to act by providence rather than miracles, because He loves the natures of all the things He created and wants to perfect them rather than bypass them. Kreeft says that he is like a wise, unselfish king Who exalts and empowers His servants rather than distrusting them and micro-managing His kingdom. "Grace perfects nature." It is Sauron who is in love with brute force.

It is easy to identify miracles when we see them, whether worked by God or by evil spirits. But how do we identify divine providence and how is the concept of free will possible in that connection? Before I show how divine providence and free will works in *The Lord of the Rings* I will explain the concepts by examining the process of spiritual awakening seen in the light of both Eastern and Western thought.

Time and its images consist of energy and energyfields, as well as their lawfulness within the Wholeness, which forms so-called karmic structures. In the West karmic structures has to do with original sin, personal sin, the will of God, hubris and nemesis, as well as divine providence.

Experiences of the collective aspects of these areas are experiences, which lie outside the Ego's area, or outside the dimension of the ordinary consciousness. Experiences from here are experiences such as kundalini, clairvoyance, astral travels, mythological visions, miracles, channeling, UFOs, memories from past lives, Near-Death Experiences, possession states. It is clear that *The Lord of the Rings* is a journey through such areas expressed in the language of myth. It is a journey (or maybe rather, a pilgrimage) through the dreaming state of the Wholeness, where the Inner Side somehow is beginning to wake up. You begin to sense the qualitative values of things.

The task of the Fellowship of the Ring is to inquire into the nature of these dimensions of consciousness. Wherein consists the structure of these experiences? Does there exist a map over these areas, which can lead you on the right path? Experiences of these areas namely belong to the journey from the sleep of the Wholeness, over the dreams of the Wholeness, to the awake moments of the Wholeness. And these phenomena are out of the horizon of the ordinary Ego-consciousness.

If you continue being identified with your personal time and lifesituation, and therefore use the consciousness in a self-circling way (words, images, feelings, moods, thoughts), then the Wholeness remains asleep. If you choose to begin to awake (through yoga, meditation and prayer), then your consciousness, like a flower, will uncover and open up its own divine dimensions in the Inner Side of the world. Everybody has this inner pure awareness. It reveals the qualities of the Now and therefore of life itself. And therefore, it is also love, self-forgetful openness.

To be yourself is determined by the way you relate to everything. Whether you are attentive or inattentive. Being *without* character is to drive away the mind in inattention. To *have* character is to focus the mind in awareness, in the neutral attitude to the mind's content. Having character is therefore the core in being yourself. This core is at the same time the self-forgetfulness in the Now, love. The oneness of awareness and love is the essence in the experience of reality.

To exist from your inner thinker means that you seek to master life from a power you can dispose over. This power is the will, and the will is the motivating power in the thoughts. The inner thinker, or the thinking's past and future, the Janus Face, is the instance, which evaluates and chooses. The will is therefore energy, which is taken from the Now and invested in the past and the future. To exist from the past and the future is to be absent and inattentive in the Now. It is the experience of unreality. Here you are *not* yourself, although there is a peculiar tendency in the modern society to acclaim the life style of the will and of the choice. This is the state where you only see the Outer Side of the world, you only sense what is quantitative. This is the separation of the observer and the observed; a discrepancy where emptiness and loss slide in between, creating reflections, displacement and darkness. Therewith is created unreality and absence, a condition where there is an inner spectator, calculator or doubter (the Ego), which places itself outside, either the individual, or the surroundings.

It is a condition where you experience yourself as locked inside, or locked off from, and where you feel homeless and without belongings. It is an activity of the will to power. The illusion and the self-deception in this activity are, that it is a kind of intellectual secureness or safety, which is created on the background of an escape from the anxiety, or from what you are, and this is precisely the cause of the separation between the observer and the observed, which increases the anxiety. It is a vicious circle.

To exist from your innermost means that you are *liberated* to be yourself. Then you live in an atmosphere of free and unstrained life-unfolding, of fullness and movement. Then you live from a richness in the Now, a power, which you have not produced yourself, a power, which you could call the Source of life. When you live from this power, then you are in the middle of the stream of life.

The powerfulness in the Now *is* life. This power is something carrying, something granted, something, which is greater than yourself. Something, which you can characterize as an absolute permanent Inner Side (God, or Brahman) in relation to the relativity of the impermanent Outer Side.

To be yourself, free and unforced, is only possible if you are in contact with the power of the Inner Side. The Inner Side is the instance, that leads you into the things in an opening and involving way. This power exists in the Now's relations to everything.

Life itself is the life in the Now, where you are present and active from awareness, the innermost in you, and from heart-fullness, which is the whole of yourself. Life itself is therefore the self-forgetful life.

The self-forgetful life is divine because the life-fulfilment, which life itself contains, is so absolute, so complete, that there herein is something eternal and endless.

If you are present in the Now, actively and involved from awareness, the innermost in yourself, and from heartfulness; that is to say: totally, with the whole of yourself, and therefore in self-forgetful openness and world absorption, then you will experience eternity and infinity. You will experience the true essence of nature, which is the Inner Side of nature. Existence and essence is therefore one and the same. In my book [Sûnyatâ Sûtras](#) I have expressed it in this way:

*Only meditative-existential you can be in the Now.  
The passive listening presence is meditation.  
Meditation is to see completely with the heart and the mind; that is to say: with  
the whole of your essence.  
The human essence is therefore meditation.  
Meditation is the self-forgetfull openness for, and absorption in life itself.  
The meaning of life is therefore to express the human essence.  
Human essence is therefore an appearance-form of the Now.  
Why? Because the essence in the human life is meditation.  
Total existential presence in the Now is meditation.  
The essence is therefore one and the same with existence; and this realized  
oneness is precisely meditation, or the Wholeness of the observer and the  
observed.*

When your consciousness is identified with your personal time, then this essence (the Soul) will be hidden by thoughts and images, and then the awareness is sleeping, the innermost in you is sleeping. And therewith the Wholeness is sleeping. When the contents of the consciousness fall silent, the consciousness itself begins to light and awake.

In the spiritual development there exist some existential conditions - as well as some growing conditions and growth levels common to all mankind - which indicates a universal map of the inner pilgrimage towards awakening, which is known in all wisdomtraditions.

In Zen it is for example said about this process of awakening: "In the beginning mountains are mountains, and woods are woods. Then mountains no longer are mountains and woods are no longer woods. Finally, mountains are again mountains, woods are again woods."

This refers to the three forms of states the Wholeness can be in: sleep, dream, awake. When the Wholeness is sleeping, mountains are mountains and woods are woods. This is the reality of the ordinary consciousness (the Ego-consciousness). The ordinary consciousness can sleep in three ways: 1) the dark sleep which is the Ego's deep nightly sleep; 2) the grey sleep, which is the Ego's nightly dreams and other dreams; 3) the light sleep, where the Ego is awake.

The three forms of states the Wholeness can be in, can also be described as the personal time, the collective time and the universal time. These three states can further more - when we talk about going through them in a spiritual development process - be said to reflect the structure of the so-called *Bildungsroman* (Novel of Formation). The *Bildungsroman* is a literary genre that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood, in which character change is extremely important.

The *Bildungsroman* is especially known from Romanticism. With concepts collected from Goldschmidt's "The Homeless" (1853-57) the development process of the *Bildungsroman* can be characterized in this way: *at home – the homeless – home*. Although great parts of the course of the *Bildungsroman*, are about *the homeless* phase, we know, that the person very probably shall arrive "*home*" again. A more or less pronounced model for all *Bildungsroman* of Romanticism is Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister" (1795-1829) – and which actually, in very symbol-satiated form, describes a spiritual development process. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is another example on a description of the spiritual development process.

When the Wholeness begins to dream – and this happens only, if you set yourself existentially into the process of awakening – then the Ego, or the inner thinker, experiences him or herself as a flower, which begins to open itself towards the collective time: the thoughts will be lit through, whereby their collective components – sound, symbol, color, structure – will be visible and make themselves current in the image of reality. The clearness from your dissolved and evaporated thoughts and content, will expand the consciousness out towards the borders, behind which the collective common human structures exist. Said in another way: you will begin to sense the Inner Side of the world.

This is the essence of spiritual awakening. Types of spiritual awakenings are: Ego-inflated awakening, Dark Night of the Soul Awakening, Chakra awakening, Sensitive/Psychic awakening, Shamanic awakening, Occult awakening, Religious awakening, Possession/entity awakening, Non-human origin awakening, and Kundalini awakening. Such types of awakening are often experienced as spiritual crises, since they often come unexpected and unprepared (see my article [Spiritual Crises as the Cause of Paranormal Phenomena](#)).

Spiritual awakening has to do with the sense of the qualitatively, and therefore it can't be scientific studied as something quantitatively. We have looked at this in connection with the problem of the mind. It is the ability to read the book of life, and not only looking at the cover. Spiritual awakening will eventually happen in a serious meditation and/or prayer practice. You will develop a passive listening presence, a bidirectional consciousness, which both listens inwards to the Inner Side of yourself, and out towards the Outer Side of the world. What you will discover is that the Inner Side of yourself also is the Inner Side of the World (essence and existence is the same). Bidirectional consciousness therefore only exists in the relationship with everything. It is not introspection. I have termed this the *Wholeness of the Observer and the Observed*.

This Wholeness is what we refer to as the mystical experience. It consists in, that the observer is one with the observed, so that everything only is the movement in the state of experience. You are self-forgetful open for, and engaged in life itself, the observed. Your life has become real and present. The happy life is the real, so that the individual fully and entirely exists, and the important is present. Fully and entirely to exist means, that there isn't any dreamer, any spectator, any doubter within yourself. You *are* your activity. The real life is characterised by a devotion, which creates that coherence in life, where you are drawn into, and are melting into, a unified Wholeness, that contains middle, fullness and light. Your being is one with reality and truth.

Patanjali called the Wholeness of the Observer and the Observed Samadhi, the unity of consciousness with its object, or the complete fall of the consciousness into the higher itself, the unification with the absolute. In Zen Buddhism it is called Satori, and in Buddhist philosophy Nirvana.

The Wholeness of the Observer and the Observed can happen in glimpses, and it can be a permanent condition. The by glimpses condition, mystics, such as Teresa

and Eckhart, called *Illuminatio*, in which the soul and God in a single moment is one. That permanent to be one with God they called *Unio Mystica*.

If you *understand* what the known is - that is to say: your perspective on yourself and the world, your self-image and world-image, and all the symbols, ideas, opinions and conceptions which are manifestations of these images – if you *understand* this, you will experience this unusual peace, which is not caused, which is not forced, the creative emptiness in which only reality is able to enter, the emptiness which Eckhart called The Virgin Mary State, the state in which God is able to give birth to the Son.

Spiritual awakening is the first step towards this, and it is therefore extremely important that this ability not is being misused and misdirected. Psychic awakening, for example, is one of the most misused and misdirected abilities in the New Age environment, where it has been commercialized in all kinds of educations of psychics and “psychic” entertainment. The intention is that a psychic ought to put up a business as a psychic. On such educations you are induced the whole New Age ideology, and a variety of thought distortions, especially those of Truth by Authority and Cold Reading.

For example, remember that guy John Edward who had a show on the Sci-Fi Channel from 1999 to 2004 called *Crossing Over with John Edward*? He claimed to be a psychic who talked to the dead, but really what was going on was a combination of hot reading (he gathered information about some person, and that person didn’t know that Edward knew the information) and cold reading (he used generalized questions, comments, and suggestions, read body language, and reinforced what a person said in a “fast-talking” way to make it look as if he was talking to the person’s dead relative).

Such techniques (which in reality are thought distortions) are induced into both fake and real sensitives and psychics, and it is something of the most unethical, bordering to the cruel and evil, to tell people distorted things about death and life as if it were “truths” from beyond, and which therefore can’t be questioned.

Passive listening presence is founded in our capacity to be and “bear with” others in Maryan pregnant silence, to hearken from the stillpoint of silence within the soul-womb of our Hara and give time for these inner impressions to gather and gestate within us in a dreamlike way. In this way we transform our listening into a type of inner seeing or clairvoyance – the “in-sight”.

Often when people feel their heads or hearts are full and that they can no longer listen, they get tired and begin to fall asleep. Yet it is precisely when our ordinary listening tires and we get sleepy that we come to the threshold of a deeper level of listening linked to the Hara. If, instead of “switching off” when our heads are full, we allow ourselves instead to sink into a more meditative type of listening, we can experience a process which is something like “sleeping” into the words of others and “dreaming” their inner meaning with our passive listening presence. The images we behold may not be visually sharp or colourful, but they are substantial – for they are imbued with inner feeling and “in-tuition” (literally: “inner sight”). They are not images “in” the head, but impressions of the soul. They are not “in” us at all. Instead we are within them, feeling and understanding them from within. In this they are like images of our dreams, images which we can feel ourselves into as well as perceive from without.

We may not be able to articulate personal differences of meaning in the same way that we define common or agreed meanings of language. But if we listen, we can hear them wordlessly.

This is not something exclusively limited to psychic awakening, but is something commonly experienced. It is possible for us to hear meanings “in our souls” (from the Inner Side) that are not identical with word meanings, but are nevertheless conveyed through them. It is a sense of the *quality* of the word, not the *quantity* of the word. The quality belongs to the Inner Side. The quantity belongs to the Outer Side. “Scientific” explanation would have us believe that we do this purely through perceptual information – eye-signals and body language, for example. We have already looked at the absurdity in this with the example of only looking at a book’s cover without reading it. It is like saying that when lovers gaze into each other’s eyes and feel themselves to be gazing into each others souls what they are doing is examining each other’s pupils and eye movements and “interpreting” these as signals. Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) has made this into a pseudoscientific tragicomedy (see my article [Neuro-linguistic Programming \(NLP\) and Large Group Awareness Training \(LGAT\)](#)).

Common sense, or intuition, tells us otherwise. We know that as soon as we begin to optically inspect each other’s eyes there is no longer any real “eye contact”. Eye-contact is contact between two beings, both of whom mean something *through* their gaze and feel themselves meant through the gaze of the other. If I am looking at your eyes I am looking at a thing but not at a being – I am not looking at *you*. And if it is merely my *eye* that examines you the *I* am not looking at you – not meaning you with my gaze. Indeed, to look at a person in a

way that makes genuine eye-contact requires us *not* to focus our vision on their eyes as such but on a point between and behind the eyes.

The radiance, light and darkness of someone's gaze is not physical light, however brightly it may seem to shine and however much it brightens what it rests on. Ordinary science has no physics to explain the trans-physical *qualities* of this gaze-light, any more than it can explain the trans-physical *qualities* of movement communicated through gesture and dance, the trans-physical *qualities* of form and colour, communicated through painting, or the trans-physical *qualities* of sound communicated through music, song and speech. All these qualities are mirrors and echoes of the soul, of the Inner Side of the world, not outer things to be studied, read and interpreted.

We can treat a thing, the sea for example, as an object or as something with beingness and meaning – with “soul”. We can listen to it and hear “waves breaking”. Or we can hear waves speaking. We can look at the face of mother earth – or we can meet its gaze.

This is why true poetry is an exercise, not just of the linguistic imagination and verbal artistry but of the intuitive, passive listening presence. The passive listening presence is the basis, not only of poetry but of musical composition, of waking-life insights and of our capacity to recall our nightly dreams. Through it, we can transform our listening into a type of lucid waking dream (“clairvoyance”), into a type of lucid inner hearing (“clairaudience”) or into a type of inner knowing or “channeling”.

A movie which seems to be created over this theme, is James Cameron's movie *Avatar*. Captivating movies are like dreams. They offer a break from our ordinary lives, a release from the stranglehold of mundane concerns, and a passport to fascinating worlds that exist only in imagination (or do they?) This is all certainly true of James Cameron's spectacular 2009 film. Employing state-of-art digital effects, motion-capture photography, and other cutting-edge cinematic technologies, many developed just for this movie, Cameron and his team of artists, designers, and technicians created a lush world of breathtaking beauty, like nothing that had ever been seen on a widescreen before.

Hightening the dreamlike quality (astral quality) of the movie experience was Cameron's revolutionary use of 3D technology and the presentation of *Avatar* on gigantic screens in IMAX theaters – which, much like Jake Sully's avatar, enabled audiences to step outside of themselves and temporarily inhabit the jungles of

Pandora. Immersed in this fantastic new world of floating mountains, hexapods, and bioluminescence, we shared Jake's feeling of ever-deepening intimacy with Pandora, curling up alongside him in a Hometree hammock and navigating the skies on the back of a great toruk. The beauty of *Avatar* and Pandora left many moviegoers shuddering in pure awe. Some viewers even reported that they suffered bouts of depression as they went into Pandora withdrawal. After awakening from such a captivating and realistic dream, our everyday lives can seem grey and dreary by comparison. But, as Jake reminds us in the voiceover that accompanies the opening images of the movie, "sooner or later you have to wake up."

More than a dreamlike escape, *Avatar* is also an allegory for events in the real world. Critics and commentators have been drawn into heated debates about the movie's presentation of a wide range of cultural, social, political, and religious themes. *Avatar* is a feast for the eyes, but it also offers much food for thought on issues such as the health of our planet, imperialism, militarism, racism, corporate greed, property rights, the plight of indigenous peoples, and eco-friendly spirituality.

Just as Jake's rendezvous with the Na'vi and his experience of the astonishingly rich panoply of strange biota found on Pandora awaken him to a new view of the world while simultaneously reshaping his loyalties and priorities, so too our experience of *Avatar* can help us to see the real world more truly and perhaps even inspire us to change it for the better. "Everything is backwards now," says Jake at a crucial point in the movie. "Like out there is the true world and in here is the dream." "Out there" is the world of the Na'vi, with their deep reverence for life and their wisdom about how to live sustainably. "In here" is Hell's Gate – the sterile, artificial world fabricated by greedy human beings who have forgotten how to live in harmony with nature. Clearly Cameron is encouraging us to see the environmentally destructive aspects of modern industrial civilization as products of a deluded worldview, as a bad dream from which we might be awakened.

Sorting out dreams from reality has long been a preoccupation of philosophers. But *Avatar* also provides fodder for reflection on the most contentious moral and political issues raised by the movie, addressing topics such as environmental ethics, colonialism, war, and the conduct of corporations, questions concerning the relationship between mind and body, personal identity, the possibility of truly knowing an alien civilization, empathy, aesthetics, science, technology, religious attitudes toward nature, and our experience of the world of movies. Could *tsaheylu* (the bond) really be possible? Is the mind something that can be transferred from one body to another? Are trees really "just goddam trees"? Or

might there be more to the world than we can know through the methods of empirical science? In the Blackwell series on pop culture and philosophy, the authors on the book about *Avatar* are focusing on the Na'vi teachings on *Learning to See*.

This can't happen in the self-circling distance to the Outer Side of the world. It can only happen when you in a self-forgetful way are being drawn into the Inner Side (which Pandora represents). And this can only happen in the relationship, in a communicative view of nature, which I will return to in the chapters on Philosophical Anthropology and Ethics. In the chapter 5, Epistemology, part 3: *The Peter Pan Project* I will return to *Avatar* and the Na'vi teachings on *Learning to See*, which I develop further into *Learning to see with Heart*, or seeing with the Soul.

[Myth and Moor](#) is a blog by [Terri Windling](#), and is described as "notes from a Dartmoor studio on folklore, fairy tales, fantasy, mythic arts and mythic living". I believe that this blog in an exceptional way also shows the Inner Side of the world as just explained. Read for example her blog posts [Traveler's Tales](#), [An Ode to Slowness](#), and [The Gentle Art of Tramping](#); her blogs on [maps](#), [Mazes and Labyrinths](#), [Time](#), [Walking](#) and [Into the Woods](#) series.

In *The Lord of the Rings* Treebeard and the ents most precisely symbolize this awakening of the Inner Side. In Hans Christian Andersen's faerie-story [The Elder-Tree Mother](#) a boy is drinking elder tea for his cold, and is asking an old storyteller, who is on a visit:

*"Tell me a story! Tell me a story!"*

*"I would if a story would come of itself. But that kind of thing is very particular. It only comes when it feels like it. Wait!" he said suddenly. "There is one! Look! There's one in the teapot now!"*

*And the little boy looked toward the teapot. He saw the lid slowly raise itself and fresh white elder flowers come forth from it. They shot long branches even out of the spout and spread them abroad in all directions, and they grew bigger and bigger until there was the most glorious elderbush - really a big tree! The branches even stretched to the little boy's bed and thrust the curtains aside - how fragrant its blossoms were! And right in the middle of the tree there sat a sweet-looking old woman in a very strange dress. It was green, as green as the leaves of*

*the elder tree, and it was trimmed with big white elder blossoms; at first one couldn't tell if this dress was cloth or the living green and flowers of the tree.*

*"What is this woman's name?" asked the little boy.*

*"Well, the Romans and the Greeks," said the old man, "used to call her a 'Dryad,' but we don't understand that word. Out in New Town, where the sailors live, they have a better name for her. There she is called 'Elder Tree Mother,' and you must pay attention to her; listen to her, and look at that glorious elder tree!"*

In other words: In the process of awakening the thoughts become less personal, more common, more collective, deeper, more philosophical. And these, common deep thoughts of mankind, your consciousness can *see* (or hear, or sense, like the other types of psychic awakenings), by force of its increased clarity, as visions (primordial images, religious images, symbols, teachers, higher worlds, other dimensions etc.). Your consciousness then observes/senses a worldaspect of vibrant, soundfilled energyfields, which shimmer in symbols and colours. It observes a world of auric colours, archetypical symbols and yantric or other energetical structures. It begins to sense karmic phenomena (phenomena of original sin, personal sin, hubris nemesis, and divine providence).

Reality expands itself, all things seem different than before, people shine as transparent onions; plants and animals vibrates, cosmos is alive: mountains are no longer mountains, woods are no longer woods. This is the opening of the collective time, which lies on a so-called astral plane.

But in a spiritual practice it is the form of the dream-consciousness (the soul) it is about, not its content.

On the plane of the universal images, and therefore on the Now's plane, the central is the form of the consciousness - the actual consciousness and its clarity and openness. Not the content of the consciousness. In the spiritual practice, the spiritual, and spiritual active, is the consciousness' course towards its source (the Now, the deepest aspect of the Inner side). What the consciousness and the mind and the senses are filled by, is of less crucial importance.

The collective time is namely a very dangerous intermediate area. The temptation to here, either to become afraid, or to experiment with various possibilities (astral travels, clairvoyance, telepathy etc. etc.) is great. It is a very forceful state. Goethe and Dante write about the collective time in *Faust* and in *The Divine Comedy*.

Tolkien about it in *The Lord of the Rings*, Ursula Le Guin in *The Wizard of Earthsea*. The shamans had to dare the journey to the underground kingdoms with their shadow-inhabitants, demons and dead. And they had to handle the journey to the heavenly regions, where gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines, accommodated. The mystics had to experience the descent to hell with its belonging devils, fire and sulphur and torment and suffering. And temptations: If the temptation of the Devil was too difficult to resist, they had to confess their sins to heavenly hosts of angels and light-creatures.

The creativity, and the reality-creating ability, is in the collective time set free in fascinating degree. However, you are, in this astral state, still on the plane of the collective images of time, which work in sequences in past and future, and you are in danger ending up in a spiritual crisis. A spiritual crisis is an expression of, that you have followed the spiritual path out into the collective time, led by your Ego, and therefore without having done the philosophical preliminary work; that is to say: the realization-work and the ethical training. The Ego will then make you lose your way in the collective time.

A spiritual crisis can be expressed in two ways: 1): as suffering, often called The Dark Night of the Soul, or 2) as Ego-inflation (inflammatio).

1) If the borders to the collective time is broken down or being exceeded out of hand, for example through LSD or through one-sided development techniques, or in shock, the consciousness and the personality will slide crucial out of balance and therefore suffer. The Ego will sideways with its personal identity and lifesituation, suddenly experience break in of tremendous astral energies, clairvoyant abilities, visions of mythological beings, good and evil forces, various demons and angels, death and themes of rebirth, unusual light phenomena, messages from supernatural beings, memories from past lives. These experiences will, because of that the Ego's nature has not been realized, be characterized by unreality and division, anxiety of going mad and anxiety of death, or the experience of a total meaningless and dark extinct world.

2) The personality can receive informations through the break in of astral and collective energies, images and symbols: information about, what approaches human beings from outside (from other people, from chance, destiny, life etc.). However, informations through collective images are contradictional and split. Many have therefore been seduced by these colourful experiences and have remained there, with the ability to see the aura, with the ability to create images, to create in reality. When the collective time is used spiritual in genuine sense, then

the Ego, in its egoistic isolating and self-affirmative function, steps aside. However, the same forces can be used for other intensions. It can be creative, Ego affirmative, political, demonical and so on. The forces which in spirituality are given to others' disposal in healing, energy transmission and spiritual information exchange, the same forces can themselves be turned in through the Ego-structures and open creative channels, create super Egos, create political leaders and popular seducers. This is the temptation of the One Ring.

The problem, or the danger, does not consist in using creativity or auric abilities. I directly advice my guests in philosophical counseling to formulate their experiences creatively, and to become life artists, as we shall examine later; no, the danger is, whether the Ego grows and becomes swollen on the world's positive responses. And if the Ego gains strength, takes the honour, or blows itself up, the transformationprocess of consciousness stops, the growth forward towards the goal: illumination and later enlightenment.

#### **4. The Hero's Journey**

I don't think that are any other theory that explains the journey of The Fellowship of the Ring, and eventually Sam and Frodo's lonely journey, better than the monomyth about the Hero's Journey. In his book *The Hero's Journey* the mythologist, Joseph Campbell, the monomyth, or the hero's journey, is the common template of a broad category of tales that involve a hero who goes on an adventure, and in a decisive crisis wins a victory, and then comes home changed or transformed.

Campbell's concept of monomyth (one myth) refers to the theory that sees all mythic narratives as variations of a single great story. The theory is based on the observation that a common pattern exists beneath the narrative elements of most great myths, regardless of their origin or time of creation.

The central pattern most studied by Campbell is often referred to as the hero's journey and was first described in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. An enthusiast of novelist James Joyce, Campbell borrowed the term "monomyth" from Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Campbell also made heavy use of Carl Jung's theories on the structure of the human psyche, and he often used terms such as "anima/animus" and "ego consciousness".

As a strong believer in the psychic unity of mankind and its poetic expression through mythology, Campbell made use of the concept to express the idea that the

whole of the human race can be seen as engaged in the effort of making the world "transparent to transcendence" by showing that underneath the world of phenomena lies an eternal source which is constantly pouring its energies into this world of time, suffering, and ultimately death. To achieve this task one needs to speak about things that existed before and beyond words, a seemingly impossible task, the solution to which lies in the metaphors found in myths. These metaphors are statements that point beyond themselves into the transcendent [the Inner Side of the world]. The Hero's Journey was the story of the man or woman who, through great suffering, reached an experience of the eternal source and returned with gifts powerful enough to set their society free.

As this story spread through space and evolved through time [as we already have investigated as the negationpower with the outgoing movement of time and the backmovement], it was broken down into various local forms (masks), depending on the social structures and environmental pressures that existed for the culture that interpreted it.

The basic structure, however, has remained relatively unchanged and can be classified using the various stages of a hero's adventure through the story, stages such as the Call to Adventure, Receiving Supernatural Aid, Meeting with the Goddess/Atonement with the Father and Return.

These stages, as well as the symbols one encounters throughout the story, provide the necessary metaphors to express the spiritual truths the story is trying to convey. Metaphor for Campbell, in contrast with comparisons which make use of the word like, pretend to a literal interpretation of what they are referring to, as in the sentence "Jesus is the Son of God" rather than "the relationship of man to God is like that of a son to a father". For example, according to Campbell, the Genesis myth from the Bible ought not be taken as a literal description of historical events happening in our current understanding of time and space, but as a metaphor for the rise of man's cognitive consciousness as it evolved from a prior animal state.

In the 2000 documentary *Joseph Campbell: A Hero's Journey*, he explains God in terms of a metaphor:

*"God is a metaphor for a mystery that absolutely transcends all human categories of thought, even the categories of being and non-being. Those are categories of thought. I mean it's as simple as that. So it depends on how much you want to think about it. Whether it's doing you any good. Whether it is putting you in touch with*

*the mystery that's the ground of your own being. If it isn't, well, it's a lie. So half the people in the world are religious people who think that their metaphors are facts. Those are what we call theists. The other half are people who know that the metaphors are not facts. And so, they're lies. Those are the atheists."*

Campbell describes 17 stages of the monomyth. Not all monomyths necessarily contain all 17 stages explicitly; some myths may focus on only one of the stages, while others may deal with the stages in a somewhat different order. In the terminology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, the stages are the individual mythemes which are "bundled" or assembled into the structure of the monomyth.

The 17 stages may be organized in a number of ways, including division into three "acts" or sections:

1. Departure (also Separation),
2. Initiation (sometimes subdivided into Descent and Initiation) and
3. Return.

Let's try to go through these stages and insert references from *The Lord of the Rings*. In the Departure part of the narrative, the hero or protagonist [Frodo] lives in the ordinary world [the Shire] and receives a call to go on an adventure. The hero is reluctant to follow the call, but is helped by a mentor figure [Gandalf].

The Initiation section begins with the hero then traversing the threshold to the unknown or "special world", where he faces tasks or trials, either alone or with the assistance of helpers [Sam and The Fellowship of The Ring].

The hero eventually reaches "the innermost cave" or the central crisis of his adventure [the Cracks of Doom], where he must undergo "the ordeal" where he overcomes the main obstacle or enemy, undergoing "apotheosis" and gaining his reward (a treasure or "elixir" – [the destruction of the Ring]).

The hero must then return to the ordinary world with his reward. He may be pursued by the guardians of the special world, or he may be reluctant to return, and may be rescued or forced to return by intervention from the outside [Gandalf and the Great Eagles, the messengers of Manwë].

In the Return section, the hero again traverses the threshold between the worlds, returning to the ordinary world with the treasure or elixir he gained, which he may now use for the benefit of his fellow man. The hero himself is transformed by the adventure and gains wisdom or spiritual power over both worlds: the Inner Side and the Outer Side.

So, the hero begins in a situation of normality from which some information is received that acts as a call to head off into the unknown.

What the Hero's Journey in length is describing is the intermediate world of the collective images; the stage where the Wholeness has begun to dream. It is so to speak the threshold between the Outer Side of the world and the Inner Side. In my teaching the most appropriate is to use the dreaming state of the Wholeness, to begin to practice the supporting exercises in my first book [Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader](#). Focus on yoga, the Relaxationmeditation and the Hara meditation, and only keep the other exercises in mind. The most important is the development of Hara, which is fundamental to all wisdom traditions and natural healing professions. Critical thinking is the Navigator, but Hara is the Compass.

If you as a practitioner remember to use an opening in the Wholeness spiritual seen correct, then this can give your total development a considerably lift forward.

It is in other words very important that you do not move accent from awake everyday life (for example a good earth-bound job, ordinary people and family) to dreams and sleep, don't use drugs or one-sided development techniques which promise you great experiences and abilities.

You need to have patience. Even for people with a regular and well-ordered practice (2-3 hours every day) there can pass weeks, months or years between the reflections into the dreaming state of the Wholeness. However, if practice is appropriate, the spiritual consciousness (the Soul) will with time automatically open the dreaming Wholeness.

And if moments of actual awakening are coming, then everything is simple, intensive, present, in the right place: mountains are again mountains, woods are again woods, but without longings, without wishes and desires, without the past, without the future. The mountains are. The woods are. The consciousness is. The Now is. You are at home again, at home in genuine sense.

So, the Ego's partial consciousness is part of a greater Wholeness, which is the Now, life itself. And life itself is the life in the Now, where you are present and active using the pure awareness, the innermost in you, and using the heart-fullness, which is the whole of yourself; what we could call your spiritual essence (the Soul), because the life-fulfilment, which life itself contains is so absolute, so complete, that there herein is something eternal and endless.

The concept of karma (sin and divine providence) has therefore primarily to do with the development process of your spiritual essence (your Soul) in the Inner Side - and only secondary and indirectly with the Ego's process in the Outer Side; that is: with your personal time and life-situation. Admittedly it is the Ego's actions out on the scene, which leaves karmic tracks. Karma is the unconscious consequences of the Ego's actions. Each time the Ego acts - and thereby changes the balance in the Wholeness (the Inner Side) - then the structures and power lines in your spiritual essence (which also lies in the Inner Side) changes, in the unconscious.

When your Soul is sleeping, karma is automatically. The Ego's pendulum swings in one life out in an extreme. Hereby gathers in the Wholeness, in your Soul, momentum to, that the pendulum in a future life will swing out in the opposite compensatory extreme. This is the automatic compensatory karma (original sin and personal sin). In one life ascetic, in the next libertine, then inhibited and expelled, thereupon sybarite etc. with no end, because the Ego has freedom continual to give new momentum and new course - within the karmic possible; that is to say: heredity and environment - to the Ego's pendulum.

However, when the Ego decides to use its free energy, its existential option to begin to awake, then the karma structures changes. Then you begin to use and work with your spiritual dimension, your Soul. This dimension is not subject to the karmic structure, it *is* it, or it is over it. The Wholeness (God, Brahman) is over, is transcendent, in relation to the laws and mechanisms, which regulate the infrastructures of the Wholeness. The Wholeness is not subject to the laws and energy transformations, which rule between the constitutive parts of the Wholeness.

When your Soul begins to dream, when the Ego-consciousness begins to bloom, to open itself, you discover the karmic lawfulness and can therefore relate to them. When your consciousness in extended state begins to sense the karmic structures, which after all not only rule between the many lives of your Soul, but all the same

are known psychological mirrored from the Ego's dreams and the Ego's life - then you can change attitude.

Instead of swinging with the laws you can choose to observe. Instead of identifying yourself with impulses and incentives, emotions and thought tendencies, you can separate yourself, become a witness, become alert. And hereby you can break the karmic automatism (the automatism of personal sin and original sin).

## **5. The Map of the Inner Journey**

Let me repeat: Human beings have two aspects: an energy aspect and a consciousness aspect. Seen from the energy aspect lawfulness rules: your body is subject to the physical laws of nature, your psychic system is subject to the lawfulness of the energy fields and of the energy transformations. Seen from the consciousness aspect, then a human being seems to be akin to the Wholeness, to be transcendent in relation to these laws (a human being is created in the image of God). A human being is an unfolding of the Inner Side.

Human beings are in that way, seen from the point of view of the ordinary ego-consciousness, inserted in two dimensions: 1) a continuum, which streams are subject to laws (the Outer Side); and 2) a discontinuum, for which leaps laws not seem to be effective (the Inner Side). The Wholeness, your spiritual essence, or Soul, is normally the discontinuous aspect; normally, because this is of course seen from the point of view of the ego-continuum. Seen from the point of view of your Soul, then the ego-continuum, with its sleep and awake, life and death, is the discontinuous aspect, and the Soul the continuous aspect. But the parts, the Ego and its evaluations, is normally the continuous aspect.

When your Soul begins to dream and the continuum of the Ego-consciousness breaks and expands in a discontinuum (into the superior continuum of the Wholeness – the Inner Side, or your Soul), then the cosmic structure-pattern changes. Instead of mere compensatory karma (personal and original sin), a progressive karma (divine providence) will now be effective. That, which you through existential achievement have reached of spiritual contact in one life, will form a progressive karma, an opening for special providence.

In theology, divine providence, or just providence, is God's intervention in the world. The term "Divine Providence" (usually capitalized) is also used as a title of God. A distinction is usually made between "general providence", which refers to God's continuous upholding the existence and natural order of the Universe, and

"special providence", which refers to God's extraordinary intervention in the life of people. Miracles generally fall in the latter category.

The process of your Soul, your process of awakening, will leave progressive karma and special providence along through the various incarnations. What you spiritual have reached to realize in one life, will in the spiritual energy be there in the next life, or in the dimension of your Soul (the Inner Side).

If your Soul is sleeping, the spiritual energy is quiet. Without traceable activity. A human being can live a whole life, yes, life after life, in absolute sleep.

If you however existentially begin to seek, to seek the spiritual, the divine, to seek love, if you choose to use your energy and your life in that way, then the spiritual energy will begin to vibrate, to become active. Only the images, which have achieved to imprint themselves in the spiritual energy, in the Inner Side, will be transferred as progressive karma and special providence. Your Soul will remember its dreams from life to life. And your Soul will remember and accumulate the glimpses of being awake, it might have experienced. These, the dreams and awake moments of your Soul, are the progressive karma and special providence.

This is what is meant with, that people are born with different levels of spiritual development.

Concerning the progressive karma and special providence it applies, that each new life, in a quintessence, repeats the crucial stations on the development path of the Soul. The place, where you can find your own progressive karma and special providence, if such is available, is therefore in the life, you have lived, in the history of your present life. It lies as an invisible script underneath the history of your actual life. It is the dreaming tracks and songlines in the artwork of your life.

In the inexplicable events in your life (synchronicities), in the rows of moments of spiritual longing, in the fateful incidents and actions - in them are contained the progressive karma and special providence. In the history of your Soul there is a map. This map shows the dreaming tracks and the songlines in your spiritual work of art. This map is a universal image. It lies in the Inner Side of the world.

There is no doubt about, that Karen Blixen, though not fully conscious, had a sense of this map. All her books are about destiny seen in this way; they are about people who either live in accordance with this map, or in discordance with it.

This map, this universal image was, what she referred to as the "ancient", the "original", and which she always was seeking as authenticity, autonomy, possibility, freedom and adventure. And a universal image is of a holographic nature, therefore it contains all other images, personal, collective and universal, and therefore it contains the dreaming tracks and songlines in the artwork of the pilgrim's life.

You can live a whole life with this key lying in your own actual, spiritual biography in the Inner Side. It requires work to find it. If you through development, through training, expand your consciousness to the spiritual dimension, then this invisible script will be made visible, the dreaming tracks and the songlines in the progressive karma will be found: the treasure of special providence. The fascination of ancient maps comes from a sense of the map in your Soul.

James Cowan (born 1942) is an Australian author, who seems to have a sense of this map. He is author of a number of internationally acclaimed books, including *A Troubadour's Testament* and *Letters from A Wild State*. In 1998 he was awarded the prestigious Australian Literature Society's Gold Medal for his novel, *A Mapmaker's Dream*.

Born in Melbourne, Australia, Cowan completed his studies in Sydney. His first published works were *Nine Poems* (Mauritius, 1964) and *A Rambling Man* (Sydney, 1966). In the 1960s he travelled and worked in Mauritius, Vancouver, New York, Paris and London. For some years he lived in Marrakech, and in Libya, studying the Berber and Tuareg peoples. Returning to Australia in 1973, he decided to view his homeland as a foreign country. He made journeys throughout the continent, sometimes on horseback, exploring early European culture and its imprint on the land. This led to a succession of books, *The Mountain Men*, *The River People*, and *Starlight's Trail*.

In the 1990s, James spent two years living in Balgo Hills, a remote Aboriginal settlement in the Tanami Desert. From there he relocated to Cortona in Italy where he lived for three years. More recently he has been living in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

James Cowan then began a ten-year study of the Aboriginal culture that led him to work, study, and finally live among Aborigines in the Center, the Far North and the Kimberly region. This resulted in a series of books that explored Aboriginal themes: *Mysteries of the Dreaming*, *Myths of Dreaming*, *Sacred Places*, *The*

Aboriginal Tradition, Two Men Dreaming and finally Messengers of the Gods all found their inspiration in traditional cultural perspectives that the author encountered during his journeys.

To that end he made numerous trips throughout Australia, the Pacific islands, Borneo and the Celebes to deepen his understanding of how the mythic imperative works in present-day tribal societies.

A part of his commitment to improving the lives of Aboriginal Australians entailed working in Balgo Hills, in the Tanami Desert, for two years as the art coordinator in the mid-1990s. He was able to revive a moribund art center, put in place efficient business systems, raise sufficient capital for an art and cultural center, and lift artists' earnings to levels not seen in the industry before. As a result, Warlayirti Artists Cooperative [fr:Warlayirti Artists](#) is now one of the most successful indigenous businesses in Australia.

In the 1990s Cowan turned to a more global perspective in literature. He became interested in fashioning a new prose – one that is spare, limpid, and devoid of all the old mechanisms of literary realism. This new prose is exploited in his novels *A Mapmaker's Dream*, *A Troubadour's Testament*, and more recently in his study of the Persian poet, Rumi's *Divan of Shems of Tabriz*. Each of these books is an attempt to re-affirm the greatness of the European and Near-Eastern traditions. Though steeped in history and imbued with a continuum between past and present, Cowan's work is thoroughly directed toward the modern.

In the *Mapmaker's Dream* he tells the following story:

In sixteenth-century Venice, in an island monastery, a cloistered monk experiences the adventure of a lifetime—all within the confines of his cell. Part historical fiction, part philosophical mystery, *A Mapmaker's Dream* tells the story of Fra Mauro and his struggle to realize his life's work: to make a perfect map—one that represents the full breadth of Creation. News of Mauro's projects attracts explorers, pilgrims, travelers, and merchants, all eager to contribute their accounts of faraway people and places. As he listens to the tales of the strange and fantastic things they've seen, Mauro comes to regard the world as much more than continents and kingdoms: that it is also made up of a vast and equally real interior landscape of beliefs, aspirations, and dreams. Mauro's map grows and takes shape, becoming both more complete and incomprehensible. In the process, the boundaries of Mauro's world are pushed to the extreme, raising questions about the relationship between representation, imagination, and the nature of reality itself.

Here are some of the passages where Cowan develops some of these same ideas:

*I see the world as a series of clues that somehow explain the universe. Pachyderms and narwhals, tailpot trees and insect-eating plants, flightless birds and boa constrictors--all are part of some cryptic message that needs to be deciphered if we are to encounter its wholeness.*

[...]

*It led me to the idea of fashioning a map that would defy every category and genre. It would be a map that would contain them all; a map hard to define, yet because of this lack of definition, a map that would begin to define itself more precisely. Nor would it be designed to espouse any particular policy or persuasion. Rather, I wanted my map to show the earth in the sky, and the sky on earth; a map that would act as the prototype for all maps scattered in space and time. It would be a device by which the world could surrender itself in fragments to the open, inquisitive gaze of everyone. I fondly hoped that such a map would preside over the birth of another map, and then another.*

[...]

*Mauro is visited by an elderly Jew of Rhodes, who tells him: It is in us all, this desire to experience the kinship that exists between our innermost being and the will that created such a kinship in the first place. As such a desire is realized, we become preoccupied with strange and uncanny aspects in Nature herself. We are almost tempted to regard them as our own moods, our own creations. For my part, I know that the boundary between myself and Nature sometimes wavers and melts away, so that I can no longer be sure whether what I see with my own eyes springs from outward or inner impressions. An experience such as this is one sure way of discovering how creative we are, and how deeply our soil participates in the perpetual creation of the world. The same invisible divinity is at work in us as it is in Nature. If the outside world were perchance to perish, I know that any one of us would be capable of rebuilding it. I say these things because I believe that mountain and stream, leaf and tree, root and flower, everything that has ever been formed in Nature lies preformed within us and springs from the soul, whose essence is eternity. Of course, this essence is beyond all our conceivable knowledge, but we can feel it nevertheless.*

[...]

There are of course several references to compasses in the book. Interesting enough Cowan also refers to my concept of The Compass (Hara Awareness – see my page [The Compass](#)):

*Focusing on the navel was an early Christian practice devised by the hesychast monks of the Greek Orthodox faith. According to Saint John Climacus, a hesychast is one who strives to maintain that which is incorporeal (i.e., the mind) within the body. A technique of prayer integrated with breathing, the monks used to drop their heads in meditation, so gaining for themselves the derisive epithet of omphalopsychoi or "navel gazers" because it was believed by some that they situated man's soul in his navel.*

Alaya-vijnana is a term used within Yogacara Buddhism to indicate the storehouse consciousness, or the great vision, which consists of universal images. It is also called the Akashic Records. As mentioned in the Metaphysics chapter, then these universal images are a kind of energetical mandala-structures or yantra-fields. They have a linguistic nature, but it is of a visionary kind. These images are composite by sound and color, symbol and structure. You could also say, that they are what the philosophers call unmoved matter, a worldaspect of sound-colours and symbol-structures, an ocean of vibrant, soundfilled energyfields, which shimmer in symbols and colours. It is the Music of the Spheres. Altogether filled with information about life. Together the great vision, an information-ocean of holographic nature. This vision is lying in the Inner Side of the world.

We have historical records about this vision. For example, there exists within Tibetan Buddhism a peculiar doctrine about the so-called Tertöns (tib. Gter-bston - the unearthers of the hidden books), people who are born with a special karmic connection to a long ago deceased master, and who, because of the connection to this master's oneness-consciousness with the universal vision, now can collect treasures of information in from the vision, or the universal images, which after all work in synchronism with the Now, and which therefore lie in the Wholeness, in the Inner Side, in the continuum of Eternity. The master was hiding and storing holy "texts" various places in the universal images with that purpose, that a future "Tertön" would be able to find this knowledge again, decipher and publish it.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead (Bardo Thödol) is in that way one of the Tibetan texts, which is considered for having been hidden in the universal vision by the founder of Tibetan Buddhism, Padma Sambhava, and which was found again by a Tertön with the name Rigzin Karma Ling-pa. Padma Sambhava is considered for

having hidden many holy texts, whereafter he gave some of his disciples the yoga ability to become reincarnated in the right time - which were determined astrologically - for here to find the scriptures again.

After an estimated judgment, the spiritual texts, which already have been taken out by Tertöns in the run of the centuries, would form a cyclopedia on around sixtyfive volumes with average around four hundred pages in each volume.

I can see no reason to deny the doctrine of the Tertöns. You can't just deny people's experiences written down through centuries. This would in itself be unscientific, irrational, and besides, deeply arrogant. It is important though, to remember the philosophical aspects of the spiritual journey; that is: the use of rationality and critical thinking, which actually also is a central part of the training of the Tibetan monks. The problem with the alternative environment within the New Age movement, is namely, that precisely because the above mentioned, normal inaccessible, areas, in principle lie outside the area of the Ego-consciousness (the Outer Side), yes, then they are open for all sorts of fantasies.

Within the New Age movement there are countless people today, who work egoistic with karmic experiences – that is to say: they earn money as clairvoyants, regression therapists etc. Some of them live on pure make believe, others are direct frauds, but some of them have actually the ability to see into the collective time and its images (a glimpse of the surface of the Inner Side), and tell about a past and a future which lies outside the area of the personality. But usually they have no philosophical training (they are highly anti-intellectual), no realization training and ethical practice. Therefore, they basically do not know what they are doing. They have replaced the Navigator with a Sophist, and have removed body and existence (Hara and the Compass) with philosophical idealism. They are souls lost in the area of time where mountains no longer are mountains, and woods no longer are woods. There is in this area of the collective time and its images, with all its experts and clients, the possibility for a lot of waffle, a lot of imprecisely guesses and imagination, fiction and speculation. They have been fooled by the guardians of the threshold between the Outer Side and the Inner Side.

There are therefore some philosophical principles you ought to hold on to, on the whole of this enormous, and growing market. The so-called compensatory karma (original sin and personal sin) will by these experts and clients normally be misunderstood and abused as a kind of legitimation of, that we are as we are or do, as we do. He or she becomes obliged to do this or that, in order to equalize old karma and sin. This is spiritual seen nonsense. Usually the whole thing is about

escaping from reality or excuses. It all origin from the collective time, which work in sequences in past and future, and therefore, in deeper sense, not karmic and not in the least spiritual.

If a human being in genuine sense experiences compensatory karma, original sin and personal sin, then this will precisely cause a separation, a break in relation to the automatic identification with tendencies and circumstances. A human being, who actually realizes its karmic and sinful conditions, will *precisely*, by force of realization, *break* the automatic process.

Another philosophical principle is to examine, whether the karmic talk and experiences of the experts and clients remove their energy-investments in the actual reality. If focus is displaced backwards, then the collective time has taken over and spiritual seen there therefore happens an escape. Such an escape is seen both in Freud, Rank, Grof, Janov, rebirthing, regression. None of these people and theories can therefore be said to work spiritual. And if they use the karma idea in that way, it is no longer a spiritual help, it is a collective displacement of the focus backwards in time and therewith out of reality and into the unreality of the collective time.

And this area is inexhaustible. Regardless whether you make use of psychotherapy, clairvoyance, visualization techniques, regression, dream-interpretation, chakras, then there will always be more. You can continue and continue, you almost become dependent of it like drugs or sex, because the actual magnet, which attract the whole of this area with its energy – the Ego - has not been realized. The Ego will with its evaluations create new problems, new content, new longings, new dreams - which again is in need of therapy, visualization, consultation etc., indefinitely. The spiritual development stops, it leaves the rails and ends up blind.

The genuine karmic structures (original and personal sin, as well as divine providence) do not lie in the collective time, but in the universal time, which work in synchronism with the Now, or the Inner Side. If the karma idea is used spiritual seen correct, then the focus, instead of being projected out in something afar (past lives, a guru, birth, the future), will be present in something very near, namely only in the most intensive experiences of this actual life, and after that: in this actual Now with its possibility of realizing your innermost.

So, the universal images lie as a kind of dreaming tracks and songlines in the pilgrim's actual life here and now. Only here and now they can be discovered. They can manifest themselves in symbols, which contain informations about the

development process of the pilgrim's Soul. Informations from the universal images are, contrary to informations from the collective images, not contradiction-filled and split, but healing and synthesizing. They are the map, which shows the path from the pilgrim's Ego to his or her Soul. When they have been discovered, the Ego knows the way to the pure awareness and love of its spiritual essence – the home of the Soul: the Inner Side.

Only Man himself can find the progressive karma and special providence. The consciousness has the key in its life. It helps nothing, what clairvoyants may be able to see in the collective time, or fantasize about another person's karmic experiences and sins. Many of these experiences (for example about past lives) – and which have a certain reality for either the clairvoyant or the client – are collective fantasies.

Collective fantasies have two aspects. The one aspect of the fantasies is a kind of archetypal, mythologically symbolizings of more personally, unclarified matter. The second aspect of the fantasies is relatively valid information about incidents, for example in other centuries. The misleading happens because the two aspects are blended together. The clairvoyant, or the client himself, can remember, that he has lived in a past incarnation (often very romantic, for example as a pharaoh), and he can even travel to the places, where he had been incarnated and find things which "proves" his assertion. There has been made many examinations of things of that kind. But regardless how fascinating it is, then it proofs nothing about past lives. And therefore, it is deceptive and dangerous to occupy oneself with.

Nobody can tell you about your karmic structures, about your personal or original sin, and not at all about your special providence (should another person know what God's special gift to you are?). But this is what New Age self-made spiritual authorities are doing all the time. We constantly see it in advertises, etc. But all people - clairvoyants, regression therapists, shamans etc. etc. - who are claiming they can help you karmic, are cognitional and ethical delusional and deceptive. Keep away from it!

Only your own realization opens. Whether another person even was able to read the whole of the karmic and sinful course and tell the seeker about it, it would not help. On the contrary, it would harm. Only your own inner experience and realization can open the spiritual dimension of the Inner Side. Karma and sin in other ways are nonsense. And by the way, that's the same with all spiritual.

In all briefness, you can say, that genuine spiritual practice tries to guide pilgrims, who wish to learn, to go around the states, which have to do with the collective time, or at least, to shorten the passage through these areas. And if they are lost in them, to lead them back on the right track.

The commonest examples of special providence in our experience are remarkable “coincidences”. Synchronicity is a concept, first introduced by Jung, which holds that events are “meaningful coincidences” if they occur with no causal relationship yet seem to be meaningfully related. During his career, Jung furnished several different definitions of it. Jung defined synchronicity as an “acausal connecting (togetherness) principle,” “meaningful coincidence”, and “a causal parallelism.” He introduced the concept as early as the 1920s but gave a full statement of it only in 1951 in an Eranos lecture.

In 1952 Jung published a paper “Synchronizität als ein Prinzip akausaler Zusammenhänge” (Synchronicity – An Acausal Connecting Principle) in a volume which also contained a related study by the physicist and Nobel laureate Wolfgang Pauli, who was sometimes critical of Jung's ideas. Jung's belief was that, just as events may be connected by causality, they may also be connected by meaning. Events connected by meaning need not have an explanation in terms of causality, which does not generally contradict the Axiom of Causality.

Jung used the concept in arguing for the existence of the paranormal. A believer in the paranormal, Arthur Koestler wrote extensively on synchronicity in his 1972 book [The Roots of Coincidence](#). The problem is that scientific based studies in synchronicity almost inevitable slips over in pseudoscience.

*The Lord of the Ring* is chock-full of divine providences. And that must be seen in the light of Tolkien’s Christian faith. In fact, if there is any one particular religious doctrine that is at large as a continent in *The Lord of the Rings*, this is it. It is “like the sky, spread over everything”. Kreeft says he could write an entire book on this theme alone.

The most remarkable examples surround evils, events that seem very bad when they occur, yet which turns out to have been for the best, just as Romans 8:28 asserts. For instance, Frodo rightly sees his finding of the Ring as the worst thing that has ever happened to him: “I was not made for perilous quests. I wish I had never seen the Ring. Why did it come to me:” (LOTR, p. 60). Yet Gandalf sees the providential good even in this evil, in fact, especially in this:

*“It was not Gollum, Frodo, but the Ring itself that decided things. The Ring left him...There was more than one power at work, Frodo. The Ring was trying to get back to its master...[but behind] that there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. I can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, and not by its maker. In which case you also were meant to have it. And that may be an encouraging thought” (LOTR, pp. 54-55).*

Kreeft asks us to note, in this passage (1) how the interplay between the intentions of Gollum, Bilbo, Frodo, Sauron, and the Ring itself are all instruments of the intentions of “something else at work”; (2) how the presence of this “something else” (divine providence) is sensed even when not named; (3) how much more effective it is for Tolkien not to name it, not to tell but to show, to give us just the back side of the tapestry, not the cause but the effects, not the explanation but just the data; and (4) how “encouraging” this is, if this “something else” is good rather than evil.

Tolkien himself interprets the climax of the plot providentially: “Frodo had done what he could and spent himself completely (as an instrument of divine Providence) and had produced a situation in which the object of his quest could be achieved. His humility (with which he began) and his sufferings were justly rewarded by the highest honour; and his exercise of patience and mercy toward Gollum gained him Mercy: his failure (at the Cracks of Doom) was redressed” (*Letters*, no. 246, p. 326).

In *The Lord of the Rings* there are literally hundreds of providential “coincidences”. Yet they are not preachy, contrived, unbelievable, forced, or allegorical. They are not a jimmying of the plot, as in the pious potboilers of Frank Perretti or Tim LaHaye. And this narrative credibility, this naturalness, is itself a strong argument for the truth of the doctrine. It is “true to life”, as Kreeft says. This is one of the ways in which literature can persuade us more powerfully than logic.

Closely connected to the idea of providence is the puzzle of free will and its relation to fate, or destiny, or predestination. (“Destiny” seems the most generic term, “fate” having more specifically pagan and “predestination” more specifically Christian connotations.) It is one of the most obvious and most often-asked questions in philosophy.

*The Lord of the Rings* is dense with destiny. Though the events are surprises to the reader, as to the protagonists, they also form a pattern, and we eventually see that they all “had” to happen that way. None of the endings, happy or sad, are

unconceiving, unnatural, or unbelievable (though they are unpredictable). Sauron *had* to fall. At least some of the Hobbits *had* to rise to the heroic occasion. Sacrifices *had* to be made. Battles *had* to be fought. And it was predictable that the unpredictable would happen.

On the other hand, the protagonists made hundreds of free choices, some large, some small; and even the small ones make large differences. For instance, just one page after Frodo leaves Bag End, singing his Road song, he hears a horse on the road. Apparently Gandalf is coming. But Frodo suddenly desires to hide. At this point Frodo does not know the danger of the Black Riders; but had he not hid, the Quest would have ended then and there. The Rider would have captured Frodo and the Ring, delivered both to Sauron, and Middle-earth would have become Hell on earth.

Nearly everyone believes in free will, at least until he meets arguments against it, either from social scientists who claim that all our choices can be explained by heredity plus environment, or from philosophers who begin with the false assumption that a human choice must be either (1) caused, and thus determined, and thus necessitated, and thus unfree, or else (2) free and thus uncaused – but something uncaused is unintelligible. The answer to both is that “free causality” is not a self-contradiction but a uniquely human kind of causality.

Sometimes philosophers can help. Kreeft presents two philosophical arguments to explain how both of these ideas can be true without contradiction.

The first is the principle that divine grace, in dealing with anything in nature, does not suppress or bypass its nature but perfects it and works through it. (A human author does the same thing with his characters.) Therefore, divine predestination preserves human free will, because God invented it. As Aquinas says, man is free *because* God is all-powerful. For God not only gets everything done that He designs, but also gets everything done in the right way: subhuman things happen unfreely, and human things happen freely. Just as in a novel, the settings are not free and the characters are.

The second philosophical argument (from Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*) is that since God is not in time, destiny does not mean *predestination*, like pushing dominoes. This is the argument I myself is closest to.

Kreeft’s book on Tolkien can be used to explore the very close parallel between Tolkien and the British novelist, poet, academic, medievalist, literary critic,

essayist, lay theologian, broadcaster, lecturer, and Christian apologist, C.S. Lewis. Most of the parallels are not due to direct influence, either way, but to a common familiarity with and respect for the same sources in the great tradition, that is, pre-modern Western literature, philosophy and religion. Kreeft says that Lewis summarizes the second philosophical arguments as clearly as anyone has done:

*God is not in Time...He has all eternity in which to listen to the split second of prayer put up by a pilot as his plane crashes in flames...*

*God is not hurried along in the Time-stream of this universe any more than an author is hurried along in the imaginary time of his own novel. He has infinite attention to spare for each one of us...You are as much alone with Him as if you were the only being He had ever created. When Christ died, He died for you individually just as much as if you had been the only man in the world...*

*[I]f God foresaw our acts, it would be very hard to understand how we could be free not to do them. But suppose God is outside and above the Time-line. In that case, what we call "tomorrow" is visible to Him in just the same way as what we call "today." All the days are "Now" for Him. He does not remember you doing them, because, though you have lost yesterday, He has not. He does not "foresee" you doing things tomorrow; He simply sees you doing them; because, though tomorrow is not yet there for you, it is for Him. You never suppose that your actions at this moment were any less free because God knows what you are doing. Well, He knows your tomorrow's actions in just the same way – because He is already in tomorrow and can simply watch you."*

Let's look at this argument in relation to what we already have investigated.

The Ego's partial consciousness is part of a greater Wholeness, which is the Now, life itself. And life itself is the life in the Now, where you are present and active using the pure awareness, the innermost in you, and using the heart-fullness, which is the whole of yourself; what we could call your spiritual essence, your Soul, because the life-fulfilment, which life itself contains is so absolute, so complete, that there herein is something eternal and endless.

The concept of karma (sin and divine providence) has therefore primarily to do with the development process of your Soul (the Inner Side) - and only secondary and indirectly with the Ego's process; that is: with your personal time and life-situation (the Outer Side). Admittedly it is the Ego's actions out on the scene, which leaves karmic tracks. Karma is the unconscious consequences of the Ego's

actions. Each time the Ego acts - and thereby changes the balance in the Wholeness – then the structures and power lines in your Soul changes, in the unconscious. And the Wholeness of course also includes past and future.

When your Soul is sleeping, karma is automatically. The Ego's pendulum swings in one life out in an extreme. Hereby gathers in the Wholeness, in your Soul, momentum to, that the pendulum in a future life will swing out in the opposite compensatory extreme. This is the automatic compensatory karma (original sin and personal sin: destiny, fate or predestination). In one life ascetic, in the next libertine, then inhibited and expelled, thereupon sybarite etc. with no end, because the Ego has freedom continual to give new momentum and new course - within the karmic possible; that is to say: heredity and environment - to the Ego's pendulum.

However, when the Ego decides to use its free energy, its existential option to begin to awake, then the karma structures changes. Then you begin to use and work with your spiritual dimension, your Soul. This dimension is not subject to the karmic structure, it *is* it, or it is over it. The Wholeness (God, Brahman) is over, is transcendent, in relation to the laws and mechanisms, which regulate the infrastructures of the Wholeness. The Wholeness is not subject to the laws and energy transformations, which rule between the constitutive parts of the Wholeness. It is from here the free will comes.

When your Soul begins to dream, when the Ego-consciousness begins to bloom, to open itself, you discover the karmic lawfulness and can therefore relate to them. When your consciousness in extended state begins to sense the karmic structures, which after all not only rule between the many lives of your Soul, but all the same are known psychological mirrored from the Ego's dreams and the Ego's life - then you can change attitude.

Instead of swinging with the laws you can *choose* to observe. Instead of identifying yourself with impulses and incentives, emotions and thought tendencies, you can separate yourself, become a witness, become alert. And hereby you can break the karmic automatism (the automatism of personal sin and original sin, destiny, fate or predestination).

Seen from the energy aspect lawfulness rules: your body is subject to the physical laws of nature, your psychic system is subject to the lawfulness of the energy fields and of the energy transformations (this is the area of past and future, destiny, fate and predestination). Seen from the consciousness aspect, then a human being

seems to be akin to the Wholeness, to be transcendent in relation to these laws (a human being is created in the image of God; it is unfolded from the Inner Side).

Human beings are in that way, seen from the point of view of the ordinary ego-consciousness, inserted in two dimensions: 1) a continuum, which streams are subject to laws (the Outer Side); and 2) a discontinuum, for which leaps laws not seem to be effective (the Inner Side). The Wholeness, your Soul, or spiritual essence, is normally the discontinuous aspect; normally, because this is of course seen from the point of view of the ego-continuum. Seen from the point of view of your Soul, then the ego-continuum, with its sleep and awake, life and death, is the discontinuous aspect, and the Soul the continuous aspect. But the parts, the Ego and its evaluations, is normally the continuous aspect.

It is this double-aspect of a human being that solves the problem of free will in relation to fate, or destiny, or predestination. Fate, destiny, or predestination (compensatory karma) belongs to the energy-aspect of man. Freedom belongs to the consciousness aspect. That will say that man can use his free will to create new compensatory karma (fate, destiny or predestination) since this changes the balance in the Wholeness (and therewith also past and future) – so that the structures and power lines in your soul changes, in the unconscious.

But you can also use your free will to begin a spiritual practice. When your Soul begins to dream and the continuum of the Ego-consciousness breaks and expands in a discontinuum (into the superior continuum of the Wholeness – or your Soul; the Inner Side), then the cosmic structure-pattern changes. Instead of mere compensatory karma (personal and original sin), a progressive karma (divine providence) will now be effective. That, which you through existential achievement have reached of spiritual contact in one life, will form a progressive karma, an opening for special providence.

All in all: The use of the word Soul is entirely an expression of that the spiritual essence of humans, the consciousness aspect of a human being, is akin to the Wholeness (God), and therefore transcendent in relation to the laws of the energy aspect. The Soul aspect becomes hidden when the consciousness identifies with the energy aspect.

To readers or critics who insist that *The Lord of the Rings* is not a religious book, and therefore the question of God's existence is irrelevant to it (which Patrick Curry seems to suggest), Tolkien himself replies that the main character of *The Lord of the Rings* is God, and the main issue is God's honor:

*In The Lord of the Rings the conflicts is not basically about “freedom,” though that is naturally involved. It is about God, and His sole right to divine honour...Sauron desired to be a God-King...If he had been victorious he would have demanded divine honour from all rational creatures and absolute temporal power over the whole world (Letters, no. 183, pp. 243-44).*

So the most fundamental conflict in *The Lord of the Rings* is religious? “Of course!” Kreeft answers. “Why else is Sauron’s desire to play God by using the Ring evil unless it is contrary to reality, that is, unless God is real and only God is God? It is a very simple and obvious point, and an absolutely central one to the story and to its central symbol, the Ring. Yet it will sound shocking to those who cannot admit loving anything “religious” but cannot help loving *The Lord of the Rings*.”

According to Kreeft: “if the antireligious person loves this story, he must unconsciously love the Christian story, not because *The Lord of the Rings* is an allegory of Christianity but because its author’s mind and philosophy are one with that of the Author of the Christian story.”

## 6. Quest Dreams

We all, like Frodo, carry a Quest, a Task: our daily duties. They come *to* us, not from us. We are free only to accept or refuse our task – and, implicitly, our Taskmaster. None of us is a free creator or designer of his own life. “None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself” (Rom 14:7). Either God or fate or meaningless chance has laid upon each of us a Task, a Quest, which we would not have chosen for ourselves. We are all Hobbits who love our Shire, our security, our creature comforts, whether these are pipeweed, mushrooms, five meals a day, and local gossip, or Starbucks coffees, recreational sex, and politics. But something, some authority not named in *The Lord of the Rings* (but named in *The Silmarillion*), has decreed that a Quest should interrupt this delightful Epicurean garden and send us on an odyssey. We are plucked out of our Hobbit holes and plunked down onto a Road. That gives us our fundamental choice between obedience and disobedience. And if life is war, obedience is essential. It is the first virtue for a soldier.

Let’s look at the view of life as a pilgrimage, by looking at our dreams. Dreams namely expose the fundamental metaphysics we have discussed: that Life is a pilgrimage, both through the Outer Side and through the Inner Side. There are

spirits all around us, all of the time. The spiritual practitioner realizes this on some level and can see, feel, or sense spirits in most places. A fairly skilled spiritual practitioner will also naturally draw spirits to him due to his practice, which has awoken him from sleep to dream. Simply put, he notices them, and so they notice him.

To understand this we must again use the image of the Inner Side. Let's imagine a nightlight. We have our normal everyday reality (the Outer Side), which most of us can perceive. We will think of this as daylight. But in reality we have many worlds, many layers compressed on top of one another that would be considered the spiritual realms: the Inner Side. We can liken the Inner Side to nighttime. As a spiritual practitioner, you are a nightlight in this spiritual dark, a physical being who operate not only in the everyday reality, but to some level on the Inner Side.

How bright, or awake, of a nightlight we are depends on the depths of our spiritual practice. If we are mildly skilled, we may be a very small nightlight. If we are moderately or highly skilled, we are a bigger and brighter nightlight, meaning that we both perceive more in terms of spiritual abilities and spirits and the spiritual realms notice us more – in general, the brighter nightlight we are, the more open and able we are to perceive and the more others perceive us.

Along with moderate skilled spiritual practitioners come deep spiritual understandings. This can be like the mildly skilled, in which there is a heightened noticing or looking for messages or synchronicities (progressive karma, divine providence, spirit help) that have special meaning. The moderate skilled may also notice some of the patterns and symbols that shape our world. This can also be understandings about the nature of the universe, the human condition, healing, plants, animals, artwork, or many other topics. Whereas mildly skilled individuals seek out material and recite books, teachers, and the messages of others, the realization (awakeness) of the moderate skilled stem from self – from meditations and direct experience of being someone in the world with spiritual abilities.

One of the major indicators of being a moderately skilled spiritual practitioner is the number of dreams people in this category experience, and their intensity. Although intense dreams can certainly be an indicator of too much intake of food, drink, drugs, or physical/psychological issues in anyone, in the moderately skilled practitioner, the dream quality and sensations associated with the dreams are quite different.

The practitioner may find themselves having dreams about lands, times, or events that have no connection to their inner psyche. They be like a filmstrip or flashes of images, sounds, and memories that do not stem from their experiences. It is also likely, to link to the above-mentioned quest theme in *The Lord of the Rings*, that there will be quest dreams, meaning that there is a specific goal in mind for the dream. The inhabitants of quest dreams may or may not be you or concern you at all.

Dreams are also likely to involve spiritual teachers, healing sessions either given or received, or interactions with energy, spirits, beings, or creatures of all types. This is, of course, generally predicated on how spiritual the individual is: the more intense the dreams, the more open or advanced the practitioner typically is. Once the practitioner is skilled, they will be able to work with their dreams, protect themselves if necessary while they are dreaming, or simply call for a night off from having intense dreams.

Dreams are a primary indicator of moderately skilled spiritual practitioners because they represent the night aspect, the Inner Side, of our waking world. We are more open to freely interacting in dreams, and it is more rare that we would block ourselves, or know how to block ourselves, from receiving input, symbols, or other meanings during dreamtime. We are free from our physical bodies and are our true essence; this means that we do not have to concern ourselves with the physical restraints of our physical bodies, and what we think to be true about them. We also do not have the rigid ideas of what is commonly referred to and can be seen as the “real” or agreed-upon world and can be ourselves without wearing a mask.

Dreams are also a meeting ground. It is a space where worlds meet, and it is easier for spirits and other energies to get through. As spiritual practitioners, we not only gain access to our subconscious in dreams but also to other energies, dimensions, and worlds. It is here you most obviously can experience help from spirit guides. It is typical for the moderately skilled practitioner to have a great deal of difficulty with their dreams in an unskilled state, either feeling as if they want to constantly sleep and never feeling rested due to “traveling” or being unable to sleep due to disruptive dreams or energies in or around them.

Dreams are the gates between the Outer Side and the Inner Side, and both traditional Shamanism and Tibetan Dream Yoga, are practices that aim at training the individual in navigating in dreams. The fascinating perspective is that we all

seem to be in the same kind of enchanting quest as in *The Lord of the Rings* (about dreams, see my article [What is Dream Yoga?](#)).

Tolkien's Middle-earth, you could say, is in the same way as quest dreams filled with many dangers, and after the newly-formed Fellowship leaves the comforts of Rivendell, the participants are beset by snowstorms high atop Caradhras, and orcs within the Mines of Moria. Before they escape the Mines, the members of the Fellowship suffer their greatest loss, as their guardian wizard and mentor Gandalf falls into darkness at the bridge of Khazad-dûm. But just when all seems lost for the weary band of travellers, they reach Lórien, a magical forest where elves live and sing in the treetops. Like Rivendell, Lórien is a place for spirits to rise. It is the safe haven of the Now. The highly skilled spiritual practitioner knows that such places also exist in the world of dreams, which also is the worlds we meet after death. Also places like Pandora in the movie *Avatar*, reminds about the enchanting places you can meet in lucid dreaming and astral travels.

Tolkien believes that meaningful happiness does not come from ignoring the dangers but from facing the pain and still affirming life. As we read Tolkien's famous essay on the author of "Beowulf," we get the distinct impression that Tolkien might be speaking of himself. He discusses the artistic impulse, "looking back into the pit, by a man learned in old tales who was struggling as it were, to get a general view of them all, perceiving their common tragedy of inevitable ruin, and yet feeling this more *poetically* because he himself removed from the direct pressure of its despair."

Living through two world wars, Tolkien himself had seen his share of despair and ruin. *The Lord of the Rings* was written during the years 1936-1949, among the darkest years in England's history.

Galadriel has a darker side to her as well. Galadriel had tried to make Lórien "a refuge and an island of peace and beauty, a memorial of ancient days," but she was now "filled with regret and misgiving, knowing that the golden dream was hastening to a grey awakening." What has so filled the strong and seemingly ageless Lady of the Wood so with regret?

Perhaps the cause of Galadriel's growing unhappiness is that she remembers too much. She never really forgets the curse hanging over her from ages long gone. Though Frodo and Sam see only settled bliss, Galadriel feels the burden of being a stranger in a strange land. She can never be fully happy in Lórien, because she can never entirely let go of the past. Tolkien judges this clinging to the past to be an

“error,” a futile attempt to “embalm time.” Holding on to perfection in an imperfect world is an ultimately tragic attempt by the elves to “have their cake without eating it.” As long as Galadriel harbors an irrational desire to turn back the clock, her songs are mournful and slow. Her curse reminds about Karen Blixen’s fate.

We have looked at The mythologist Joseph Campbell’s theory of the monomyth (The Hero’s Journey). And as we have seen, Campbell is in the same way exceedingly conservative and founded on a deep nostalgia: for him, the cure for modern problems is found by returning to earlier notions of spirituality and moral virtue. In promoting a “living mythology,” Campbell harkens back to a lost “golden age” from which we have fallen, but to which we can return with effort and guidance of a “sage.” This might have to do with the inspiration from Jung. It is a reductionism, a psychologism. And herewith there is the danger of ending in idealism, and the same psychologizing, emotionalizing and therapeutizing ideology of our society, which New Age and Self-help stand for.

I have therefore supplied this with my own metaphysical naturalism, and with this a philosophical principle, namely to examine, whether the karmic talk and experiences of the experts and clients remove their energy-investments in the actual reality. If focus is displaced backwards, then the collective time has taken over and spiritual seen there therefore happens an escape. Such an escape is seen both in Freud, Jung, Rank, Grof, Janov, rebirthing, regression. None of these people and theories can therefore be said to work spiritual. And if they use the karma idea in that way, it is no longer a spiritual help, it is a collective displacement of the focus backwards in time and therewith out of reality and into the unreality of the collective time.

The genuine karmic structures do not lie in the collective time, but in the universal time, which works in synchronism with the Now. If the karma idea is used spiritual seen correctly, then the focus, instead of being projected out in something afar (past lives, a guru, birth, the future), will be present in something very near, namely only in the most intensive experiences of this actual life, and after that: in this actual Now with its possibility of realizing your innermost. It is your awareness in the now that will find the progressive karma (the inner Soul Map), and this awareness you can of course only practice yourself.

The existence of Elves, or something like Elves, is widespread in pre-modern cultures. (And over half of the world’s most literate nation, Iceland, still believes in them; that’s why their wilderness roads take sudden turns, to avoid disturbing

them.) When the word is used today, most people snicker. But most pre-modern accounts are far more angelic, more transcendent, more wonderful, more *formidable*, than the silly Tinkerbells of modern literature.

Tolkien writes that “they represent really Men with greatly enhanced aesthetic and creative faculties, greater beauty and longer life, and nobility – the Elder Children, doomed to fade before the Followers” (*Letters*, no. 144, p. 176). Nobility, but not perfection. In *The Silmarillion*, the Elves’ history, like ours, is mainly war, tragedy, and darkness. They envy us our mortality, as we envy them their immortality. (Kreeft believes that envy is one of the stupidest of sins, the only one that never caused a single moment of even false joy.) Though Tolkien is both temperamentally and politically conservative, the Elves are bad conservatives: they want to embalm the present. Seeing the downward slant of the present, they try to preserve the past. They are not *evil* like Sauron, who always wants to sing “I Believe in Yesterday”. We too are foolishly Elvish when want to hold onto our youth, or the initial experience of falling in love, or when we seek the enoughness of eternity that we innately long for in places where it can never be, somewhere in time.

The progressive karma, our special providence, our inner Soul Map, is our inner light. And that is also the bright side of Galadriel, her rational and wise side. Tolkien teaches us to trust that inner light and be strong enough to leave old problems behind. That’s the anarchist side of Tolkien. When Frodo freely offers Galadriel the One Ring to rule them all, the very Ring that Galadriel has coveted throughout the ages, she refuses, knowing full well that with the refusal comes her own demise. Though the Lady of the Wood has stayed too long, she can still find happiness by remembering who she is, while walking away from the pronouncements of her past. “‘I pass the test,’ she exclaims. ‘I will diminish, and go into the West, and remain Galadriel’”.

More than any other character in the tale, with the possible exception of Tom Bombadil, Lady Galadriel is imbued with the philosopher’s affirmation: *Think for Yourself!* As Frodo leaves the friendly borders of Lórien, she presents him with the symbolic light, a crystal phial, and says:

*“Farewell Frodo Baggins, I give you the light of Earendil our most beloved star. May it be a light to you in dark places when all other lights go out.”*

And perhaps that is all that is meant by Tolkien's imaginary elves. The elves find happiness when they trust in themselves. This self-confidence helps them sing throughout the darkest night, and leave the shores when the music ends.

On September 2, 1972, Tolkien also went into the West, but he gave us Middle-earth. He will be remembered as we remember Homer, Dante and Shakespeare.

By penning *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien set a framework for fantasy literature that countless authors have attempted to recapture over the years. The creation of Middle-earth, from its languages to its poetry to its rich cultural history and varied peoples, was an astounding feat of imagination that no one had managed before with such detail and ardent care.

It denotes a particular status as a writer to have your name instantly associated with an entire genre, and indeed, it is impossible to call up the names of science fiction and fantasy authors and not include Tolkien. He intended with his works to create stories that entered our mythic consciousness, a feat that he accomplished in every sense. Though we may never glimpse Rivendell, Lórién, or the peaceful Shire for ourselves, it is enough that he left his world to us, and that we will always be able to journey there... and back again. May it be a light to us in our own dark places.

***From my own pilgrimage:***

[My Life as a Vagabond](#) (introductory article)

[My Life as a Vagabond](#) (blog category. Links to stories from my life as a vagabond, a bohème, and a forest pilgrim in a broad sense: the whole world as a forest, a spiritual twilight zone).

[My Facebook Profile](#) (photography and newer stories)

***Related online book:***

[Philosophical Counseling with Tolkien](#) (free Ebook. This is a complete depiction of my "Quest and Adventure Philosophy").

***Related books on pilgrimage:***

[The Hero's Journey](#), by Joseph Campbell

The monomyth, or the hero's journey, is the common template of a broad category of tales that involve a hero who goes on an adventure, and in a decisive crisis wins a victory, and then comes home changed or transformed.

[The Hero with a Thousand Faces](#), by Joseph Campbell

In these pages Campbell outlines the Hero's Journey, a universal motif of adventure and transformation that runs through virtually all of the world's mythic traditions.

[The Songlines](#), by Bruce Chatwin

Bruce Chatwin's ventures into the desolate land of Outback Australia to discover the meaning of the Aboriginals' ancient "Dreaming tracks".

[The Pilgrimage](#), by Paulo Coelho

In this gripping story, Paulo Coelho is on a conquest for the ultimate in self-knowledge, wisdom and spiritual mastery. Guided by his mysterious companion Petrus, he takes the road to Santiago, going through a series of trials and tests along the way – even coming to face to face with someone who might just be the devil himself.

[The Art of Pilgrimage: The Seeker's Guide to Making travel sacred](#), by Phil Cousineau

A well-written guide to finding spiritual resonance in everyday travel.

[Pilgrim at Tinker Creek](#), by Annie Dillard

An eloquent meditation on life, death, and nature, set in the Virginia wilderness. Related to my own photo album *Rold Forest*, which you can find on my [Facebook profile](#) (read the album description). *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* is a 1974 nonfiction narrative book. Told from a first-person point of view, the book details an unnamed narrator's explorations near her home, and various contemplations on nature and life. The title of the book suggests a pilgrimage, and yet the narrator does not stray far from her home near the creek: the journey is metaphysical. The same was the case with Henry David Thoreau in his book *Walden*, and the same is the case with my pilgrimage in *Rold Forest*.

[The Way of the Traveler: Making Every Trip a Journey of Self-Discovery](#), by Joe Dispenza

A book about using travel for spiritual growth and deeper life experience.

[The Snow Leopard](#), by Peter Matthiessen

This account of Matthiessen's 1973 journey into the Himalayas is a Zen-flavored travel classic.

[The Road Within: True Stories of Life on the Road](#), by Sean O'Reilly, James O'Reilly, and Tim O'Reilly

A collection of spiritual travel writing from authors like Annie Dillard, Barry Lopez, and Natalie Goldberg.

[One Thousand roads to Mecca: Ten Centuries of Travelers Writing about the Muslim Pilgrimage](#), edited by Michael Wolfe

An anthology of writings about the biggest spiritual travel event in the world – the Muslim's pilgrimage to Mecca – as seen through the eyes and hearts of the people who've made the hajj over the last thousand years.

***Idle travel books:***

[Vagabonding: An Uncommon Guide to the Art of Long-Term World Travel](#), by Rolf Potts

With a new foreword by Tim Ferriss: "Vagabonding easily remains in my top-10 list of life-changing books. Why? Because one incredible trip, especially a long-term trip, can change your life forever. And Vagabonding teaches you how to travel (and think), not just for one trip, but for the rest of your life."—Tim Ferriss, from the foreword. A lot of references to great vagabonders like Walt Whitman.

[Vagabonding in Europe and North Africa](#), by Ed Buryn

In the 1970s, when counterculture excesses threatened to degrade Jack Kerouac's ecstatic road visions into a self-indulgent caricature, Ed Buryn's offbeat travel guides redeemed independent travel for everyday vagabonders. Mixing inspiration with down-to-earth advice, Buryn's Vagabond in Europe and North Africa and

Vagabonding in U.S.A. inspired a generation of travelers to disregard the clichés of fashion and seeks the simple joy of direct experience on the road.

Raised in New Jersey and Florida by Polish-immigrant parents, Buryn has over the course of his life been a sailor, a professional photographer, a publisher, a writer, an editor, a designer, and a poet.

In *Vagabonding in Europe and North Africa*, Buryn underscored that long-term travel is not the exclusive realm of rebels and mystics but it is open to everyone willing to embrace the vivid textures of reality: “We all have stuck in us deep somewhere a keenness for excitement, a savoring for the kooky, a leap-for-life outlook. From this comes the catalytic impetus, without which all other requirements mean nothing. Everyday types are as likely to have this *sine qua non* as the obvious icon-kickers. The person who strikes off for himself is no hero, nor necessarily even unconventional, but to a greater degree than most people, he or she thinks and acts independently. The vagabond frees himself the latent urge to live closer to the edge of experience.”

[The Colossos of Maroussi](#), by Henry Miller

Like the ancient colossus that stood over the harbor of Rhodes, Henry Miller’s *The Colossus of Maroussi* stands as a seminal classic in travel literature. The book Miller would later cite as his favorite began with a young woman’s seductive description of Greece. Miller headed out with his friend Lawrence Durrell to explore the Grecian countryside: a flock of sheep nearly tramples the two as they lie naked on a beach; the Greek poet Katsmbalis, the “colossus” of Miller’s book, stirs every rooster within earshot of the Acropolis with his own loud crowing; cold hard-boiled eggs are warmed in a village’s single stove, and they stay in hotels that “have seen better days, but which have an aroma of the past.”

Lawrence Durrell is the author of [The Alexandria Quartet](#), at heart a sensuous and brilliant evocation of wartime Egypt. Durrell made Miller discover, that the dream and the reality, the historical and the mythological, were so artfully blended in Greece, and that this confusion is real and not due entirely to the poetic faculty.

[The Air-Conditioned Nightmare](#), by Henry Miller

Miller’s stories and essays celebrate those rare individuals (famous and obscure) whose creative resilience and mere existence oppose the mechanization of minds and souls. In 1939, after ten years as an expatriate, Henry Miller returned to the

United States with a keen desire to see what his native land was really like—to get to the roots of the American nature and experience. He set out on a journey that was to last three years, visiting many sections of the country and making friends of all descriptions. Across America, coast to coast by car. *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* is the result of that odyssey.

[The Great Railway Bazaar](#), by Paul Theroux

First published more than thirty years ago, Paul Theroux's strange, unique, and hugely entertaining railway odyssey has become a modern classic of travel literature. Here Theroux recounts his early adventures on an unusual grand continental tour. Asia's fabled trains -- the Orient Express, the Khyber Pass Local, the Frontier Mail, the Golden Arrow to Kuala Lumpur, the Mandalay Express, the Trans-Siberian Express -- are the stars of a journey that takes him on a loop eastbound from London's Victoria Station to Tokyo Central, then back from Japan on the Trans-Siberian. Brimming with Theroux's signature humor and wry observations, this engrossing chronicle is essential reading for both the ardent adventurer and the armchair traveler. Graham Greene said about the book: "In the fine tradition of purposeless travel for fun and adventure".

[Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World](#), by Mark Twain

Mark Twain toured the British Empire in 1895, during which time he began concocting a travelogue about the experience that was published in 1897. Twain's narrative spans the globe, from Australia to Hawaii. Full of tall-tales and real-life criticisms of imperialist arrogance, "Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World" is written with Twain's characteristic wit and enthusiasm for a good, entertaining story.

***Hippy travel books:***

[Jack Kerouac: Road Novels 1957-1960: On the Road / The Dharma Bums / The Subterraneans / Tristessa / Lonesome Traveler / Journal Selections \(Library of America\)](#)

The raucous, exuberant, often wildly funny account of a journey through America and Mexico, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* instantly defined a generation upon its publication in 1957: it was, in the words of a New York Times reviewer, the clearest and most important utterance yet made by the generation Kerouac himself named years ago as 'beat.'

Written in the mode of ecstatic improvisation that Allen Ginsberg described as spontaneous bop prosody, Kerouac's novel remains electrifying in its thirst for experience and its defiant rebuke of American conformity. In his portrayal of the fervent relationship between the writer Sal Paradise and his outrageous, exasperating, and inimitable friend Dean Moriarty, Kerouac created one of the great friendships in American literature; and his rendering of the cities and highways and wildernesses that his characters restlessly explore are a hallucinatory travelogue of a nation he both mourns and celebrates.

Now, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Kerouac's landmark novel, The Library of America collects *On the Road* together with four other autobiographical road books published in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

*The Dharma Bums* (1958), at once an exploration of Buddhist spirituality and an account of the Bay Area poetry scene, is notable for its thinly veiled portraits of Kerouac's acquaintances, including Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, and Kenneth Rexroth.

*The Subterraneans* (1958) recounts a love affair set amid the bars and bohemian haunts of San Francisco.

*Tristessa* (1960) is a melancholy novella describing a relationship with a prostitute in Mexico City.

*Lonesome Traveler* (1960) collects travel essays that evoke journeys in Mexico and Europe, and concludes with an elegiac lament for the lost world of the American hobo. Also included in Road Novels are selections from Kerouac's journal, which provide a fascinating perspective on his early impressions of material eventually incorporated into *On the Road*.

***Related articles on the map of the spiritual journey:***

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*All articles and books referred to are available in free PDF Versions. Links can be found on my blog: [www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com](http://www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com)*

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