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Zásady pro vypracování

Bakalářská práce se bude zabývat filosofickými koncepty, jež utvářejí fiktivní svět Arda J. R. R. Tolkiena. Pozornost bude věnována zejména etickým a mravním otázkám, pojetí smrtelnosti a vztahu k smrti či problematice determinace a svobodné vůle. Cílem práce je analyzovat tyto prvky v Tolkienových dílech (Silmarillion, trilogie Pán Prstenů a Nedokončené příběhy) a nabídnout tak nový důkladnější pohled na zákonitosti Tolkienova univerza. Současně se práce pokusí ukázat, do jaké míry je struktura Tolkienova fiktivního světa ovlivněna koncepty a systémy světa reálného.

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Abstract

The subject of the thesis revolves around the research concerning the motifs of good and evil in Tolkien's works and their comparison and applicability to established systems of philosophy. Each individual element of the motifs is analyzed according to three prevailing theories of ethics identifiable in the writings: Manichaeism, Augustinian and Boethian approach to morality, and Aristotle's virtue ethics. Based on the results, the implementation of moral themes is evaluated in regards to the complementarity of its elements.

Keywords

Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings, The Silmarillion, good and evil, Aristotle, Manichaeism, Augustine

Název

Filosofie fiktivního světa Arda podle J. R. R. Tolkiena

Anotace

Předmětem této bakalářské práce je studie motivů dobra a zla v Tolkienových dílech a jejich přirovnání a aplikovatelnost vůči již zavedeným filozofickým systémům. Jednotlivé prvky těchto motivů jsou zkoumány z pohledu tří převažujících etických teorií, jež je možné nalézt v Tolkienově díle: manicheismus, etika svatého Augustina a Boethia a aristotelské etiky. Na základě výsledků se vyhodnocuje využití morálních motivů z pohledu komplementarity, tedy do jaké míry se jednotlivé prvky doplňují.

Klíčová slova

Tolkien, Pán Prstenů, Silmarillion dobro a zlo, Aristoteles, Manicheismus, svatý Augustin

List of Abbreviations

FR – Fellowship of the Ring

TT – Two Towers

RK – Return of the King

L – The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien

S – The Silmarillion

UT - Unfinished Tales of Númenor & Middle-Earth

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Introduction

Over the years, Tolkien's works have acquired a substantial amount of renown from critics and readers alike. It is mainly his style of writing, accompanied by his dedication to his craftsmanship and his works, which mesmerizes the audience of his stories. The ability to express and describe meticulously crafted characters, environments, and storylines in a coherent yet complex fashion earned him a significant position among authors of fantasy and fiction genres in general.

One of the key features of Tolkien's writing is the inclusion of mythology. According to Shippey, an academic expert on the works of Tolkien, this inclusion is not accidental – instead, it laid a familiar foundation for the world he sought to describe (Shippey 12-17). Tolkien himself believed the fantasy to be true, though not through the lenses of history, but rather as an extension of our own myths (Interview 1965). Similarly to the mythology of our world, the actual account of the events is easily refuted in terms of authenticity, yet the myths hold undeniable value with regards to folklore as a particularly effective tool to teach about difficult to grasp values and the nature of our existence. In other words, through the adherent advantages of storytelling (most notably its ease of apprehension) the myth assists in the description of complex concepts such as bravery, fear of death, value of devotion and love, etc. In this regard, the myth follows a comparable path as philosophy.

Among modern thinkers, a general consensus has been reached that there is a connection between mythology and philosophy. For instance, A. Camus, H. Jonas and the Frankforts are of the opinion that the mythology precedes the philosophy as a method of giving meaning to the abstract notions. (Segal 40-44) Therefore, it stands to reason to approach mythological texts with a more serious and analytical stance rather than conceding to the trivial appearance of the narrative without any elaboration.

Furthermore, one of the key features of the fantasy genre is the ability to conceive a situation where the circumstances differ significantly from our reality, in essence providing a scenario which is unlikely to occur ordinarily. For instance, the possession of a powerful artifact granting the power of invisibility, illustrated by Tolkien's concept of the Ring, is certainly improbable in our world, and yet the thought entices the reader's imagination with possibilities of either wielding or abusing such power. The competence to surmount the limitations of reality and present a novel thought is integral to both fantasy and philosophy.

Therefore, assuming the potential benefit of the analysis of Tolkien's works, the thesis aims to investigate the philosophical motifs concealed within the story. However, such an endeavor held holistically would surely surpass the scope of the thesis, hence, the focus is instead placed on the moral philosophy in the sense of understanding the notions of good and evil. In addition to the analysis of the characters and concepts, an attempt is made to compare the philosophical comprehension of Tolkien's creations with the concepts detailed in our world, figuratively bridging the moral viewpoints between the fiction and the reality. The drawn similarity may be mutually beneficial for both instances: the reader's perspective of the characters may be enhanced by the aforementioned knowledge (e.g. appreciating the loyalty of Samwise Gangee on a deeper level for embracing the virtue wholly), and by contrast the "thinker" may find themselves present among the ideas described beforehand mostly in treatises and textbooks, at the moment symbolized in an alternative manner via storytelling. In other words, the thought-provoking nature of Tolkien's works certainly induces the yearning for further understanding of the world which, with respect to the overall acclaim for the quality of the writing, lays itself naturally to additional research.

Concerning the theme of good and evil, the first assumption that comes to mind when interpreting Tolkien is the classical dichotomy of two opposite forces. What else is the story of Arda other than an epic story of good characters, overcoming the endless incarnations of evil? This interpretation is highlighted in many passages of the text, from art, naming conventions, diversity of races to the direct opposition of conflicting factions. While this dichotomy may seem morally simplistic for the purpose of storytelling, there is a similar concept in philosophical and theological thinking, namely Manichaeism. Rooted in the cosmology and the metaphysical order of the world of Tolkien, the two opposing sides, Good represented by the God, Eru Ilúvatar, and Evil portrayed by the fallen angel Melkor, provide an analogous view to Manichaeism. As such, the first section of the thesis is devoted to this concept of ethics.

Secondly, plenty of moral beings are presented in a different manner, as their goodness or wickedness stems from their enforcement of freedom. Most of the characters are directly responsible for their moral affiliation by their own actions which they decided to pursue. In other words, the moral judgment of whether the individual is good or evil emanates from their desires to achieve something. St. Augustine coined a fitting term *inordinate desire*, which describes the craving for temporal things in an excessive manner, instead of adhering to the good of God. While Tolkien's characters rarely revere a higher power directly, there is a

transcending level of understanding of what good means in regards to the creation of the world. Most of the evil derives from the desire to oppose the idea of the God, Eru Ilúvatar, such as the attempts of Sauron to elevate himself to godhood. For more frivolous beings the evil deeds often stem from the desire over power or position of which they are undeserving. The second section of the thesis is dedicated to the analogy of St. Augustine's moral principles in the world of Arda.

Lastly, yet another layer of ethics can be observed in Tolkien works. Following the principle of Aristotle and virtue ethics in general, there are a few characters whose actions are not purely dictated by a desire or an anticipated consequence but rather a consistent adherence to certain virtues. For instance, Samwise Gamgee, Frodo's companion, is an ideal example of a person armed with practical reason. As such, Sam displays a consistent understanding of moral adequacy not by following a strictly specific doctrine on what ought to be right, but instead by the consistency of performing certain virtuous acts. In other words, the morality of character stems from the practice and adherence to the virtues which in turn affect the actions of the individual. The third and last section of the thesis is devoted to the virtue ethics in Tolkien's Arda.

The three systems of philosophy are elected for analysis due to their corresponding factors. Manichean elements are interwoven in most of the overarching mythology and the main conflict and are generally viewed as a predominant theme of Tolkien, thus the consideration is based on the quantity of thematic evidence. Augustinian and Boethian approach is instead based on the opinions of the author himself, as is demonstrated in many of his letters where he discusses morality through the scope of choice, free will and God's inherent good nature.¹ Lastly, virtue ethics motifs are the most highlighted by the narrative of the story, being written in a form of epic stories and journeys where the character development is center stage. Nevertheless, it stands to reason that other systems of philosophy may be employed; however, due to the scope of the thesis, other systems are not employed as the goal of the thesis is to analyze depth and complexity of Tolkien's morality, not to holistically outline the application.

¹ L 131, 181, 183 and fragmentarily in others

1. Tolkien as an Author

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was one of the most influential authors of the 20th century, known predominantly for his high fantasy prose *The Hobbit* (1937), *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), and *The Silmarillion* (1977). Furthermore, among the academic community he was a well-known philologist specialized in medieval languages and a translator – being the person who contributed significantly to the Oxford English Dictionary. As a hobby, Tolkien preferred studying and reciting old English and Norse myths and legends, which certainly contributed to his desire to write. According to Carpenter, there were three forces which guided him towards writing: Tolkien's taste of inventing languages, a profound desire to express feelings in poetry, and the desire to create a mythology for England (Carpenter 90).

The culmination of the abovementioned forces came into existence during the Great War when Tolkien began to write down his first drafts of his vision, *The Book of Lost Tales*, later called *The Silmarillion*. There Tolkien established the fundamental mythology central to his work – the creation of the world, the arrival of the first Elves and Men and many other myths (Carpenter 91). Contrary to the other authors of fantasy of the time, Tolkien opted not to create a different world to welcome his creation; instead, the story of Arda is situated in our own world, though be it in a pre-historic era² (Carpenter 92). As such, the world of Tolkien is seen with a tangible sense of familiarity. While the similarities to our own myths and legends provide credibility of such stories, the more fantastical elements, such as demonic Balrogs³, mighty dragons, and others, are used to captivate the imagination. While *The Silmarillion* was one of the first stories conceived and chronologically precedes the others, nonetheless, Tolkien's dedication to perfection and the urge to repeatedly redraft the story led the work to be published posthumously by his son Christopher (S vi).

In this regard, both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* have achieved greater success – both in terms of popularity and completeness. Whereas *The Silmarillion* outlines millennia worth of mythology, accumulating dozens of individual stories somewhat loosely tied, the story of the above-mentioned works are noticeably more confined. Tall tales of mythical heroism and grandiose events are instead focused on an adventure of the smallest of the people – the Hobbits. A paradox perhaps to the typical heroes' journey, as the mightiest of

² The term is meant to be taken almost literally – it notifies the age before the historical evidence, even archeological, thus any attempts to scientifically prove the existence of Arda is a dubious endeavor. Instead of the factuality of the matter, the attention ought to be placed on the myths themselves as an account of how people experienced history/or how they seek to provide reason and meaning to their existence.

³ A creature akin to demons, an evil spawn of immense power.

characters are not in the focus of the story but instead the small Hobbits who, through their courage and determination, triumph over insurmountable obstacles put ahead of them.

Before commencing with the proper analysis of Tolkien's works, it stands to reason to identify the possible influencing factors affecting Tolkien's writing. While there is no general consensus on what those might be definitively, there are two main factors appearing predominantly: his love for medieval history and languages, and his lifelong devotion to the Catholic belief.

Tolkien's appreciation of history is ever present throughout all his works. As mentioned above, the era of his interest was centered around the Middle-Ages, more specifically the age of the Anglo-Saxons and Norse civilizations. Among his peers, Tolkien reportedly relished in reciting poems such as *Beowulf* or *Völsungasaga* and even preferred Latin or Greek literature over by then sought-after Milton (Carpenter 47). The influence is made apparent in many instances: the lyrical poems (the *Battle of Felagund* and *Sauron* (S 200) and many others), the description of the environment (stratification of the population, the state of nature), the level of technology employed, etc. Most notably, the mythological elements present are often of Germanic, Celtic or Norse origin – be it dragons, wizards, or even the name of the continent itself.

“The First of the ‘legends’ that make up *The Silmarillion* tell of the creation of the universe and the establishing of the known world, which Tolkien, recalling the Norse *Midgard* and the equivalent words in English, call ‘Middle-earth’.” (Carpenter 92)

Concerning the attitude towards the languages, it would be reasonable to assume that the impulse to begin writing originates predominantly in his enthusiasm for learning and, more importantly, creating new languages. Tolkien stated that ever since his childhood he had been inclined to experiment with the language: a practice he cultivated further over his life as a professor of English (L 131). And whenever Tolkien coined a new expression or a name, the need for the story emerged as a necessary step for complexifying the newfound language. Consequently, Tolkien's writing was initially propelled by the invention of his languages, be it Elvish, Orcish or others. Such stories were inspired by the literature Tolkien consumed, forming the typical character of his writing resembling the old Anglo-Saxon or Norse epics (Interview 1965).

In other instances, especially later during the creation of *The Lord of the Rings*, the process was reversed: Tolkien would go through numerous iterations of names before being satisfied with the result. This meticulous attention to the craft is an appraised feature of Tolkien's works for its consistency and ease of comprehension, fashioning a design where the names of Orcs, Elves, Dwarves and others are easily distinguishable by the naming convention (Interview 1965).

The second thread to follow is his attitude towards faith. Tolkien followed in the footsteps of his mother, converting to Catholic belief, which led to a general disdain in the extended family (Carpenter 25). Despite such tribulations, Tolkien remained true to his faith for the rest of his life. However, there is a general disagreement with respect to the scope of the influence of Catholicism on his writing (Parsons 6). Scholars such as Carpenter and Shippey consider the influence significant. "The *Silmarillion*⁴ is the work of a profoundly religious man. It does not contradict Christianity but complement it." (Carpenter 93) The opposing viewpoint is held by Spacks, who instead consider the stories secular for the lack of the acts of worship in the story (Spacks 82).

Disregarding the question of scope, the influence of Christianity is still apparent. The first song of the Ainur in *the Silmarillion* (*Ainulindalë*) depicts the creation of the world where the God (Erú Ilúvatar) with the aid of Valar (angel-like beings possessing angelic attributes and functions) shapes the world into being. Among the Valar, there stands a corrupted, fallen one named Melkor who instead wishes to sow disharmony, akin to Satan in Christianity (S 1-12).

Parsons instead highlights the character of Gandalf as one of the possible examples of the religious influence. Throughout *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf is introduced as a powerful wizard, capable of magical, almost unnatural deeds and yet the respect he commands does not arise from the power but from the human-like characteristics he possesses: compassion, dedication. Gandalf represents a being of supernatural origin, which is apparent to all denizens of Middle-Earth. Despite being of the spirits (Maiar, lesser spirit), his role is similar to an angel in Christian viewpoint – not to solve the struggle for the mortals, but instead offer a guiding hand through the tribulations. For it is not up for the Maiar to decide the fate of Middle-earth but instead up to its denizens: Elves, Men, Hobbits and many alike (Parsons 6-8).

⁴ Applies to all Tolkien's works, not just *The Silmarillion*.

Nevertheless, the majority of scholars have reached a conclusion that Tolkien's stories are not of a religious character in its intent. According to Parsons, the Catholic influence functions as a setting rather than a lesson to be taught; and should there be a motif prevalent in the story itself, it seldomly manifests as preaching. Instead, the motifs are given the form of a helpful remark or a perplexing idea (Parsons 8-9). Moreover, the influence extends to the bedrock of virtue and values, for most scholars consider the main theme of Tolkien's work to be the importance of love, hope, redemption and companionship: the themes which are essentially in alignment with Christian belief (Zimbardo 107). In other words, the influence of religion is certainly tangible and maintains a significant weight in Tolkien's writings, yet the manifestations are subtly interwoven in the narrative itself rather than being the dominant part of the story. This standpoint is later confirmed by Tolkien himself:

“The Lord of the Rings is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like 'religion', to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism.”

(L 142)

Both of the influencing factors are undoubtedly important to Tolkien's style of writing, however, it is difficult to measure the level of impact on the ethical foundation of his world. The inquiry of the influencing factors instead serves a different purpose: it may be considered as an insight into the author's choice of moral representation, such as in the example of Augustinian ethics being influenced by Tolkien's Catholic upbringing. The speculative nature of this argument limits the applicability of the assessments, however, it still ought to be considered worthwhile in terms of feasible presuppositions. In other words, such influences could have affected the choice of ethical systems employed by Tolkien though it cannot be definitively proven.

Furthermore, in order to fully outline the encompassing themes and motifs of good and evil, further inquiry into Tolkien's attitude towards allegory is required to avoid as many potential pitfalls that may arise during the analysis. One such pitfall is centered around the use of allegory – should a similarity to a certain moral system emerge, would it be feasible to label it an allegory?

For instance, the issue arises during the analysis of the character of Gollum in regards to the corruption of the One Ring. As the One Ring lays in the possession of Gollum for years, slowly twisting and bending his mind into madness where only the detrimental desire for the Ring remains (FR 15-16), it may stand to reason to question the intention of such description whether the meaning is meant to be taken as is, symbolically or allegorically. Thus, the corruption of Gollum could be understood as the narrative drive behind Gollum's personality, a symbol for the destructive obsession over the things which are causing one's harm, or even a hidden comment on the extent of degradation a modern person is eager to follow through in order to achieve their goals. In other words, a moral description or a dilemma may not serve only to form the character but also reveal hidden meaning within the text to a keen reader.

One such example arose after World War 2, the notion of the One Ring being an allegory for nuclear weaponry. Taking into consideration the similarities, the Ring is a powerful weapon capable of great destruction and sorrow, binding the fate of the people regardless of whether it is used or not. A hanging power waiting to be unleashed, should it ever be acquired by the wrongdoer, and even for the good-aligned the temptation to use it would be deadly (FR 348-350). Hence, people mistakenly considered it to be a commentary on the dangers of the Cold War, especially with the escalation in the 60s during the Cuban Missile Crisis (Interview 1964).

The mistake of the above-mentioned example is made apparent due to the chronological sequence of when the One Ring was established in Tolkien writings. As a matter of fact, the One Ring first appeared in 1937 with the release of *The Hobbit*, therefore the allegory for the weapons of mass destruction would not be possible for it predates it for at least 7 years. Tolkien himself would consider allegory distasteful, though admits that mythological writing necessarily invites the use of allegorical language (L 131). Carpenter suggests that certain elements like elves could be allegorical in nature to "fairy folk" such as leprechauns, but later concludes that the differences and the originality of the invention would be against such a depiction (Carpenter 93-94). Furthermore, Tolkien reportedly clearly differentiated the terms allegory and applicability, the former being in the possession of the author to denote hidden meanings whereas the latter is reserved to the freedom of the reader to apply (Carpenter 191).

Therefore, it is fitting to approach Tolkien in such a manner where the presumptions are made solely based on the text provided rather than to seek out allegorical explanation outside the work. Thus, any observed and recognized moral themes are to be considered as notions present within as the integral part of the characters and story, contrary to the alternative of them being considered an allegory to the later-mentioned moral systems. Conceptually, the moral elements hidden in the story are not crafted specifically to provide an interpretation of the systems, instead, they are simply applied with respect to the need of the narrative. Following this principle alleviates the issue of insufficient adherence to the to-be-determined moral systems in its absoluteness, which the allegory would certainly allude to; and is more aligned with Tolkien's outlook.

2. Manichaeian strife of Good and Evil

“He (Melkor, the fallen Valar) began with the desire of Light, but when he could not possess it for himself alone, he descended through fire and wrath into a great burning, down into Darkness. And darkness he used most in his evil works upon Arda, and filled it with fear for all living things.” (S 23)

The constant struggle of Good and Evil⁵ is laid centerpiece in the world of Arda. For all living beings are almost forcibly subject to the cause, aligning to either of the fighting sides. As a matter of fact, the conflict is almost universally the driving force for the majority of the stories as it permeates into the setting, the environment itself and the decisions of the characters. When Gandalf the White stands on top of the battlements of the human city of Minas Tirith, the last bastion of Men of Gondor, he awaits the arrival of the armies of the Enemy whose sole purpose is the destruction (RK 1083). The conflict is not of two opposing sides failing to arrive at a compromise of how the world is to be envisioned; instead, the clear distinction of morality is established: the Enemy desires nothing more than absolute destruction and domination for all that is Good whereas the forces of Gondor encapsulate the desire of civilization and order. No attempts of a diplomatic solution were initiated, for it would be contrary to the nature of such forces: the forces of Good would never be allowed to thrive fully in the presence of the Enemy whose innermost aspiration is to diminish the influence of Good. Thus, an eternal struggle is born.

⁵ The capitalization here is intentional as the ethical standpoints are manifested within the world of Tolkien. As such, both of the terms exceed their philosophical counterpart solely on the basis of existence.

Most notably, the principal quality of the conflict is essentially metaphysical. The clash of the forces is inevitable on the level of the natural order of things rather than on mutual disagreement as it would be representative in our own world. This notion stands as one of the most criticized aspects of Tolkien's writing, for it is considered a simplification for the motivations of the conflict (Kreeft 178). The Orcs, the bread and butter of the forces of the Enemy, are oftentimes viewed as a mindless force of destruction to a point of certain dehumanization which in turn provide a straightforward justification for the opposition whose remaining options are exclusively either resistance or death (Shippey 305-315). However, the general consensus among the scholars of Tolkien work points to a radically different conclusion: the ethical structure of Tolkien displays a level of complexity and variety worthy of careful analysis, whereas the above mentioned reduction is a product of the simplification notion by the reader, not the author (Kreeft 173-178).

For instance, the point of contention is centered on the absolute nature of morality: the good and evil are clearly and absolutely distinct. As such, a good deed would inherently showcase goodness; similarly, an evil deed would be a profound proof of badness. Kreeft suggests that Tolkien was a moral absolutist:

“(…) no person is absolutely good or evil; but goodness and evil themselves are absolutely distinct.” (Kreeft 178)

Therefore, there is little contradiction in the ethical judgment typical of moral relativism where the moral conclusions are subject to context and viewpoint. (e.g. The hunt for the Uruk Hai by the protagonists Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli in an attempt to save their fellow companions from torture and death (TT 421-426): multiple possible ethical interpretations are possible. Either the hunt is ethical as they are trying to rescue their friend from the hands of the enemy, or perhaps it is morally dubious as to the motivation of the rescue being to prevent the information about the Ring-bearer reaching the Enemy.) The complexity thus is not expressed by the seemingly limitless available approaches to moral judgment (following the principles of moral relativism) but instead via freedom to choose the course of action. However, as it shall be seen further, certain beings of Arda are exempt from such freedom.

The majority of beings, called the Children of Ilúvatar, which encompasses the races of Men, Elves, Dwarves⁶ and Hobbits, are given a gift of free will, granting them the power of choice (S 7). While the rest of the beings such as the animals, Ainur (the higher beings akin to gods, angels and spirits) and many others are in a possession of a will and a consciousness, their existence is inherently a priori linked towards one side of the morality hence why a good-willed Balrog, a demonic creature of Evil and Shadow, is nonexistent in Arda. The result of such pre-attribution is the world where both of the moral representations are directly manifested.

Moreover, Shippey and others recognize the structure of Good and Evil laid in Tolkien's works as Manichaeism in nature (Shippey 132-138) though with certain disagreeing acknowledgements (which are addressed later in the following part of the thesis). The resemblance is fairly straightforward; Manichaeism teachings revolve around the duality of the world where two opposing matters (Good and Evil, Spirit and Material, Light and Darkness) are locked in an eternal struggle against each other. Apart from the human soul, which figuratively stands on the battlefield between the two sides, all things are the manifestation in accordance to the original force, thus, even natural forces act as ambassadors of the fight (Baker 14, 98). Thus, the world is both spiritually and materially divided between two irreconcilable factions of equal strength and determination to topple the other. The similarities presented could paint a fairly convincing picture of the ethics employed in Arda, although it is vital to mention that the connection is, regardless, fairly imprecise due to the lack of symbolism, religious practices, etc. Therefore, Arda is not to be taken as an allegory of Manichaeism but rather as a product of inspiration, retaining several key features of the system. The Manichaeism concepts of relevance are the pre-deterministic nature of existence (morality of certain beings is given based on the predispositions as they represent a manifestation of corresponding force), the (lack of) ability to change moral allegiance through the decisions given by free will, and the importance of conflict between Good and Evil with regards to both soul and physical existence.

⁶ Dwarven origin is slightly different than that of humans and elves and, strictly speaking, dwarves are not of a creation of Ilúvatar. Instead, they were created in secret by another Valar, Aüle, for he wished to create. Eru Ilúvatar, being the One then pardoned the attempt of Aüle, allowing the dwarves to exist and granting them a gift of free will (S, 38-39)

The Morality of Ainur

The extent of the influence is evident in the mythological establishment of higher powers called Ainur. As it has been mentioned in the chapter about the influence on the author, Tolkien was profoundly inspired by the Norse and Germanic epics to design the mythology in a similar manner. Formally, the mythology of the universe is fully monotheistic for the only deity present Eru Ilúvatar is the father of all the Ainur – spirits, angels, demigods. Strangely enough, there is no system of worship for the deity because Ilúvatar is detached from the universe itself, seldomly influencing the events from afar.

In regards to the powers and morality, Ilúvatar closely resembles the Christian interpretation of God; Tolkien himself hinted at the idea that Ilúvatar and the God describe the same entity, though the connection is intentionally left vague (L 153). Thus, Eru Ilúvatar represents the Good in its most absolute matter – not only his intentions are good (which holds a major significance due to the fact he manufactured and designed the fate of the Universe) but also his creations. This is mentioned in the Music of the Ainur, the creation of the Universe when Melkor, the greatest of the Ainur, tried to defiantly subterfuge the process:

“And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined.” (S 5-6)

The position of Melkor in the story is fundamental not only to the narrative but to the metaphysical struggle that is analyzed in this chapter. In the beginning of the myth, Eru Ilúvatar's thoughts gave birth to the Ainur, the immortal spirits who later became instrumental to both the creation of the world (The Music of Ainur) and its subsequent rule over as physical manifestation of the will of Ilúvatar. Despite being of the same origin, not all Ainur were made equal in terms of power, knowledge, influence, etc. The mightiest of them all are called Valar (the greater spirits, analogous to gods of Germanic beliefs or angels), and others, called Maiar (still powerful spirit-like beings who were able to manifest within Arda in any shape desired), are mostly servants or companions to Valar (S 15-24).

Melkor, as mentioned above, is the mightiest and the greatest of the Valar and due to his ambition he wished to forge an universe of his own design, a feat reserved for Ilúvatar only. Consequently, Melkor rebels against the rest of the Valar and the One⁷ by sabotaging the process of creation. As seen in the extract, Ilúvatar is not in all threatened by the display of

⁷ An alternative name for the God, Eru Ilúvatar.

Melkor's disobedience, for all the evils of the world conceived are ultimately good in inevitability of the predetermined End. For instance, when Melkor's lieutenant Sauron rallied an immense army to conquer and dominate the continent of Middle-Earth and almost succeeded, the response from the denizens of the opposing factions brought about a showcase of immense hope and companionship, which not only dismantled Sauron's attempt but also provided an opportunity to organize a more powerful and stable state. Thus, should the consequences of all evil actions be judged with the perspective of the entire history (a knowledge available to Ilúvatar), all of them would be revealed positively.

Therefore, the rebellion against Ilúvatar is seemingly pointless, or at least illogical, for Melkor especially since he is aware of the ultimate Fate. And yet, Melkor is compelled to assume the position of the master of Evil, being the main villain of the story for the majority of the history of Arda, standing as an ever present opposition to the forces of Good. It is unclear what causes Melkor to continue in his futile quest for destruction, however, as the One is seemingly detached from the universe physically, it may be speculated that the inevitable defeat in the future does not deter Melkor from assuming the reign of the world in the present. For what Melkor knows, Ilúvatar's edict may not come to fruition in thousands or millions of years, providing an opportunity for his vision to temporarily succeed.

In practice, Melkor's rebellion was not only against Ilúvatar but other Valar simultaneously. Powerful beings such as Manwë, the King of the Winds, Ulmo, Lord of the Water, Mando, the Judge of the Dead and others, materialized on Arda in order to guide the world and its population towards the Will of Ilúvatar as beneficial spirits. As the names suggest, all the fourteen of Valar are in possession of power of almost god-like level, analogous to Germanic or Norse mythology, e.g. Manwë is in command of the winds and storms, Tulkas the Strong is unparalleled in terms of physical prowess, etc. In their unity, they banded together to create a pantheon⁸ who would oppose the ambitious Melkor. Consequently, the struggle of Good and Evil is manifested in both the spiritual and the material levels of existence, which is simultaneously a key element of Manichaeism. Both Melkor and the remaining Valar represented the physical and spiritual manifestation of the respective forces, transforming the conflict from purely abstract and ideological to immanent, present in the existence.

⁸ Strangely enough, they never claimed the title of "Gods" for themselves, perhaps as it would in defiance to the true god Eru Ilúvatar. However, they still were revered and venerated by the Elves who decided to stay in Valinor in an almost religious devotion.

Despite the clear distinction of the affinity, the Valar would behave in such a manner deemed generally stern and commanding rather than benevolent by the relativistic viewpoint. Throughout the entire story of the *Silmarillion*, the Valar issued several prohibitions, banishments and oftentimes would lack an expected level of sympathy and charity towards the people they govern. While the exceptions to the rule exist, such as the mercy for Beren and Luthien in their quest for mutual love (S 220-221) or the plead of Eärendil for the intervention of Valar in the war against Melkor (S 305-307), the history of the Arda was written by its denizens instead of the supreme powers of Valar. The opposite is true for the forces of Evil and Melkor; while the Orcs, the numerous pawns of the Evil, were instrumental in the wars of the Arda, it was predominantly the Ainur, who decided to follow Melkor (and subsequently, Melkor himself), whose will and actions determined to course of the evildoing. In other words, the responsibility for the development of Arda is contradistinctive: whereas the Good manifests mostly by the mortal inhabitants (Elves, Dwarves, Men and Hobbits), the Evil's influence is driven by the mightiest available, most often the corrupted Ainur such as Balrogs. This would be in accordance with the influence of Germanic and Norse mythology as it is a common theme of a mortal surmounting the adversaries far more powerful with the help of cunning, determination, valor and other virtues.

As it is apparent, the ethical structure of the higher powers is predetermined as if, figuratively speaking, the pieces on the chessboard have been sorted. The same principle applies to the rest of the Ainur called Maiar, the lesser spirits, who have been aligned to either of the factions with almost adamant loyalty. A number of Maiar would play an instrumental role in the history of Arda, such as Melian, the fairest of the beings in Beleriand⁹ and a being mother for the line of Beren and Luthien (subsequently forging a line of heroes such as Eärendil, Elrond, Aragorn) or the Wizards (the Istari) who would help in the plight of the mortal races, namely Gandalf, Saruman¹⁰, Radagast, Alatar and Pallando. Melkor's grandeur and promise of power also beguiled several of the Maiar who would become the lieutenants of his army: mighty devil-like beings balrogs among them Gothmog the Mighty, and Sauron the Deceiver would play a decisive role as the addition adversaries and villains. The affiliation of Maiar is put forth in the beginning of the universe, the only example of the paradigm shift occurring for the wizard Saruman, who ultimately became tempted by the power of the Evil.

⁹ The region of the mortal races before it was reduced to sunder by the War of Wrath against Melkor and ultimately destroyed by the Eru Ilúvatar edict of the division of the world.

¹⁰ Saruman is the only exception of a Maia changing allegiance and not representing the former faction.

“We may join with that Power. It would be wise, Gandalf. There is hope that way. Its victory is at hand; and there will be rich reward for those that aided it. As the Power grows, its proved friends will also grow; and the Wise, such as you and I, may with patience come at last to direct its courses, to control it. We can bide our time, we can keep our thoughts in our hearts, deploring maybe evils done by the way, but approving the high and ultimate purpose: Knowledge, Rule, Order; ...” (FR 259)

At first, the choice of Saruman to align with the Enemy may seem purely pragmatic, for the approaching war with Sauron is both inevitable and potentially disastrous. Yet the motivation of Saruman is revealed further: it is not the fear of losing or death but instead the desire to control and dominate the world of mortals to suit his vision, a similarity to Melkor and Sauron. Interestingly, among the Ainur, the example of the fall of Saruman is unique, thus the motifs of fall and redemption are almost exclusively reserved to the races of Arda.

As such, it is reasonable to assume the allegiance of the Ainur is predefined with only a single exception and, therefore, forms an overarching structure of Good and Evil in its struggle. As the higher beings are manifested into the world with an inevitable alignment to either side of morality, the remaining beings are subsequently driven to follow in their footsteps. As a matter of fact, the only two beings who are unaffected by the war are the god, Erú Ilúvatar, and Tom Bombadil (who shall be examined in the last chapter) (FR 123-124), and neither of them could be described as truly neutral; both of them are the representation of Good but opted to not to intervene in the conflict. The inherent dichotomy of such forces is truly reminiscent of Manichaeism both in effect and in scope.

Races of Arda

As has been mentioned beforehand, the position of the races of Arda is significant in the terms of the ethical possibility and general alignment. There is a nigh limitless amount of species distinguishable throughout the Universe (Tolkien surprisingly provided a substantial account on both flora and fauna of his universe as seen in the book *The Nature of Middle-earth*) from which humanoid-like entities emerge with a certain privileged position: they were intently tied with the fate of the world. In *The Silmarillion*, during the creation of the Universe and the world of Arda, Eru Ilúvatar, the One among the Valar wielding the power of foresight and creation, prophesied the coming of the Children of Ilúvatar, mortal race of people who shall shape and inhabit the world of Arda until its final days (S 3-12). Regarding the metaphysical contest of Good and Evil, the morality of the individual is as important as the affiliation of the

higher powers because the individuals maintain the ability to affect the world in a significant manner. In other words, the battle of Good and Evil is thought predominantly over the souls of the inhabitants of the world.

Before commencing with the analysis of the individual, it stands to reason to inquiry about the racial predetermination: whether the race of the individual presupposes ethical inclination or even determination. Out of the analysis of Tolkien's works, three possible outcomes emerge.

First, the race is overpowering in the sense of morality. This tends to be true for the majority of the fauna as well, for instance, eagles, tree Ents, satyrs are naturally inclined towards Good whereas being twisted by Melkor's desire the dominate such as dragons are naturally Evil. The feature of significance is the absoluteness, for there is not a simple exception to the rule: finding a good-natured dragon or malevolent Ent is an impossible task. Moreover, there is one race of humanoid species who are inherently bound to their faction of origin: Orcs. While most of the beings of Evil accepted the corruption of Melkor voluntarily, the origins of Orcs is instead is filled with torture, manipulation, and outright enslavement. Melkor, despite all his power, could not create in the same manner as Eru Ilúvatar could thus he either convinced or captured the arriving Elves (S 47) (the story of the Children of Ilúvatar is expanded later). Tolkien further elaborates on the nature of the alignment to Melkor:

“They would be Morgoth's¹¹ greatest Sins, abuses of his highest privilege, and would be creatures begotten of Sin, and naturally bad. (I nearly wrote 'irredeemably bad'; but that would be going too far. Because by accepting or tolerating their making – necessary to their actual existence – even Orcs would become part of the World, which is God's and ultimately good.)” (L 153)

As such, the perception of Orcs is twofold: either they are viewed as victims of the machinations of the evil of Melkor, serving as unwilling slaves to do his evil biddings; or they are seen as the result of his corruption and thus being almost irredeemably evil even in the absence of direct control. Regardless of the view, in the vast majority of the story, Orcs serve as a demonstration of the forces of Evil to the extent of symbolism. The hordes of Orcs form the main bulk of the armies of Evil and even in the instances of the victory for the factions of Good, they are almost always mercilessly driven from their homes or outright killed. (RK, 949, 1094-1098). Furthermore, the cruelty of orcs is one of the prevailing themes of the story as seen in the capture of Pippin and Merry, two of the members of the Fellowship. The Orcs

¹¹ The alternative (Elven) name for Melkor.

would not only contemplate harming the Hobbits for satisfaction and entertainment, but also displayed a moderate aggressive behavior targeted at each other (TT 444-460). Since there is no account of an Orc who would at least attempt to oppose the Evil, it is reasonable to assume that Orcs were by the nature of their creation, corrupted in such a manner that predetermines their affiliation.

Second, the inclination to a certain faction is predetermined, however, the individuals are in the possession of free will. (The topic of free will is extensively discussed in the following chapter; for the necessity of the argument, a brief summary should suffice. Free will is a gift from the Eru Ilúvatar to the races of Arda, including Elves, Dwarves, Men and Hobbits, allowing them the ability to choose and alter their behavior and fate without any restriction.) The only example of this category would be Elves, the first race to come to the world of Arda.

During the Creation of the universe, Eru Ilúvatar prophesied the arrival of two races who would shape the fate of the world: Elves and Men as they would be known as the Children of Ilúvatar. The Valar, the manifestations of Good in the world of Arda, awaited their arrival and offered guardianship against the powers of Evil and Melkor. While many Elves either refused or were incapable of following Valar into Valinor, the Undying Lands, the race in general was still considered the closest to the image of Valar. Therefore, Elves naturally inclined towards the acts of Good, either due to the influence of the guardianship of Valar or by the direct link to Eru Ilúvatar himself (S 43-53).

The differentiating factor between the affinity of Elves and Orcs in this regard is exactly the gift of free will. The nature of the Elves was naturally good, however, they still were in possession of the option to rebel and to act contrary to the force. Such instances were sporadic in nature and are usually presented as edicts of doom or ill-fate. For instance, when Melkor deceives one of the elven craftsmen, Fëanor, and steals the priceless treasure of Silmaril, enraged Fëanor went against the will of Valar and pursued Melkor to reclaim what had been lost. In the process, Fëanor opted to seize the ships of the neighboring elves Teleri by force, leading to the event of The First Kinslaying. The reaction of the Valar was drastic:

“(…) [Manwë’s] voice was heard speaking the curse and prophecy which is called the Prophecy of the North, and the Doom of the Noldor¹² (…) and the Valar will fence Valinor against you, and shut you out, so that not even the echo of your lamentation shall pass over the mountains. On the House of Fëanor the wrath of the Valar lieth

¹² The tribe of Elves who followed Fëanor into the Beleriand despite the will of Valar.

from the West unto the uttermost East, and upon all that will follow them it shall be laid also. Their Oath shall drive them, and yet betray them, and ever snatch away the very treasures they have sworn to pursue. To all end shall all things turn that they begin well;” (S 94-95)

In essence, the choice of the Elves to disobey and turn to Evil was dooming in many regards, for the threats of Valar eventually all proved true. In the end, all the Silmarils were inevitably lost, their kindred staggered and toiled. However, the ethical relevance of the events is substantial because the Elves have an ability of choice. Even though there may be a strong inclination towards a certain faction of morality (which is in accordance with Manichaeism manifested directly in the world) the Elves have an option of independent thought and act.

Third, the races which are ostensibly free of any influence and are free to devise their own decision unimpaired. Those would include the race of Men, Dwarves and Hobbits. The proof of such a division is numerical: the amount of Orcs deflecting to the other side approaches zero; for the Elves, the amount is miniscule but has been highlighted with great importance. The documented cases of the remaining races are significantly more varied to a point of impracticality. In other words, it is impossible to determine the ethical affinity based on racial or demographical elements for the ethics are often ambivalent. Considering the examples of Men, they are people fighting on the side of Good but are in character evil and vice versa. Furthermore, the themes of fall and redemption in terms of ethics are commonplace to the point that it would be folly to generalize an ethical standpoint upon the race.

As it is apparent from the previous points of the inquiry, there is strong evidence for the elements of Manichaeism in works of Tolkien. The struggle lays center piece in regard to the conflict of the narrative and serves as a driving force for many of the inhabitants of Arda. And yet, most of the scholars reached a conclusion that the outlined Manichean principles are either marginal or outright non-existent. Kreeft suggests that Tolkien expertly avoided the Manichean error of based on the inequality of the forces (Kreeft 173-174), Davison disagrees the notions of Manichaeism based on the absence of the absolute Evil (Davison 99-101) and Shippey, though he acknowledges certain elements of the story resembling the theme, argues that Tolkien would oppose the descriptor “Manichaeian” for the driving ethics were further nuanced (Shippey 133-138). How is that so?

The main point of contention refers to the scale of the influence. Although the struggle described by Manichaeism is central and integral to the story, its relevance is reserved predominantly to the overarching setting rather than being the decisive factor for the characters of Tolkien. Seldomly are the actors put into such a position where the metaphysical will of Good or Evil is enforced upon them. (Though it is certainly not unheard of, for instance, through the command of the Valar Ulmo to Tuor, a human hero, who would be instrumental for the future of Eärendil and other half-elves (UT 38-43).) As such, the Manichaean interpretation is valid mostly to the theoretical and mythological outskirts of the universe rather than being the cogent system applicable in the ethical dilemmas.

Therefore, while it would be reasonable to assert the position of dismissal in regards to the influence of Manichaeism, as several scholars of Tolkien did, I believe it to be an incorrect course of action. As the analysis proved, the elements resembling the system of Mani are apparent in the texts and, to a certain degree concerning the myth and the general setting, indeed contribute to the overarching moral system at large. Thus, the dismissive standpoint would omit an important component of the ethical system; instead, the role of the Manichean influence is complementary to the others. Figuratively speaking, the Manichean interpretation is only a piece of the puzzle rather than the solution and thus further analysis is required.

3. Augustine, Boethius and Free Will

“‘Why are you so unfriendly?’ said Boromir. ‘I am a true man, neither thief nor tracker. I need your Ring: that you know now; but I give you my word that I do not desire to keep it. Will you not at least let me make trial of my plan? Lend me the Ring!’

‘No, no!’ cried Frodo. The Council laid it upon me to bear it.’

‘It is by your own folly that the Enemy will defeat us,’ cried Boromir.” (FR 399)

The Manichaeian analysis has shown a critical weakness in its description: the ethics of the individual. While it may be tempting to label all living beings in agreement with their affinity to a faction, the result would be overly simplistic and would not be reflective of the ethical struggle all the characters encounter. In fact, the vast majority of the ethically significant actions are made by choice rather than some form of predetermination.

This is apparent by the analysis of the opening quote. Boromir, a fighter and a companion to Frodo, the Ring-bearer, deeply desires the One Ring for its power to potentially aid in the battle against Sauron. After the attempts to persuade Frodo using both logic and cunning, Boromir proceeds with the use of threats and violence (FR 398-401). There is no external force acting upon Boromir to make such a choice; instead, the motivation for the deed is internal, that is, the desire for ownership of the One Ring. And thus it was Boromir's choice that signified the ethical judgment; and the reader is undoubtedly made aware of the wrongdoing of the individual.

As has been mentioned in the chapter about Manichaeism, Tolkien was a moral absolutist. The goodness of the good is distinct and apparent and so is the evilness of the evil; in other words, the intention and the ethical conscience is signaled in an obvious manner, dispelling any interpretation of moral ambiguity. When the king of Rohan Theoden rushed in defense of Gondor against the armies of Sauron, the act is considered good beyond any doubt for both reader and characters within the story are aware of the intentions and motivations of the king (TT 791-794). The ethical disposition is therefore an accessible resource to all; a conclusion that is substantially different from our own system of ethics. The assumption is following: Due to the fact that all beings are of Ilúvatar origin (thus good in its very essence), they wholly comprehend the phenomenon of goodness based on familiarity linked to their metaphysical nature. St. Augustine upholds a similar standpoint on the matter that humanity understands the notion of good (as given by God), yet the temptations and desires are often in contrast to what the good ought to be (Williams 105-110). Consequently, all beings inherently

comprehend the ethical consequence¹³ of their actions thus being able to discern the right from wrong regardless of the viewpoint of the individual.

Comparatively, Saint Augustine of Hippo arrives at a similar conclusion that our comprehension of goodness stems from the inherent relationship with God. Both Tolkien and Augustine did not believe in the existence of absolute evil, instead evil was always secondary good and the evil deeds were not of God, who is inherently benevolent, but our own due to the lack of goodness within (Davison 102-105) (Confessions VII. ch. XII). The distinction gains relevance in the query of responsibility and apprehension: is the individual accountable for their actions? Augustine believes that the responsibility sticks with the individual who commits the deed rather than God, who by the grant of free will allows us to choose regardless. Furthermore, Augustine dispels the argument of gift of free will as a cruel trick upon humanity¹⁴, for the link between the intention of God and of the individual is not equal in design; The fault leading to committing crimes is not upon God whose intention is the salvation of humanity, but rather our inadequate interpretation and judgment free will. In other words, while the evil stems from the execution of the gift of free will, the folly is purely of human origin (On the Free Choice of the Will II).

The consequent argument of Augustinian ethics is twofold. First, moral judgment is inherently tied to the exercise of free will (either in accordance with the goodness of God or the opposite) for which the individual holds full responsibility. As such, the ethical question is directly linked to the universal ability to choose a course of action. Augustine believed that no matter the circumstance or limiting factors, the absolute nature of the free will always enables the choice of either of the ethical spectrum (e.g. even in the face of death a person can commit to the morally right course of action) (On the Free Choice of the Will II).

Second, the evil of the world is necessarily dependent on the good, for the evil is always inherently self-destructive without it (Enchiridion ch.III. 11). Augustine coined the term *Inordinate desire* for the main source of motivation for the conduct of evil: placing the cravings for other valuables in front of the desire for God. In other words, the morally reprehensible deeds are motivated by the desire for something the individual is undeserving

¹³ Not to be confused with the actual consequence of the action, e.g. a heroic charge in the defense of a lady may be inherently good (disregarding the standpoint of moral relativism) yet the actual consequence may be the death of both the hero and the lady.

¹⁴ The argument stands upon the presumption that a good God would not stand to allow evil deeds to come to fruition due to a design flaw of humanity. Should God have not given free will the evil presence would be eradicated.

of. According to Augustine, by aligning to the will of God the structure and objective of our life is made apparent, yet by the design of the free choice, humanity is tempted by the desires which are “out of order”, e.g. accumulating financial wealth, gaining power in the political system. As such, the evil of the world is of human origin for it is the individual who in their pride desires, for possessions or social positions which they ought not to pursue. Instead, through the process of seeking God, one’s position within the world is revealed (On the Free Choice of the Will III).

In addition to Augustinian motifs, Shippey recognizes another possible influence: Boethian (Shippey 128-132). While Augustine’s argument is predominantly theological, Boethius arrives at similar conclusions using philosophy, resulting in similar arguments such as the dependance or obscure existence of evil, ethical framework determined by the ability of choice, etc. (Consolation IV-V) The focal point of Boethius’ philosophy lies in the interpretation of evil, especially concerning ethical judgment in the direct influence of the factors of luck and instability. For instance, being in the possession of prized items is inherently unstable (as it could be either lost, stolen or destroyed) and is therefore self-limiting for the life of the individual:

“Again, I say that naught can be a good thing which does harm to its possessor. Am I wrong? "No," you will say. Yet many a time do riches harm their possessors, since all base men, who are therefore the most covetous, think that they themselves alone are worthy to possess all gold and precious stones. You therefore, who now go in fear of the cudgel and sword of the robber, could laugh in his face if you had entered upon this path with empty pockets.” (Consolation II.p.V)

Consequently, evil stems from the desire for possessions which are prone to change by nature. Boethius introduces the goddess Fortune who mercilessly decides the level of fortune one might receive, leading to both addiction and avoidance of each respectable conclusion. In other words, the desire to experience fortunate outcomes (such as in the field of material possession, social status, physical pleasure) propagate the individual to orient themselves in such a manner that those fortunate states are achieved, despite their inherent nature of instability and uncertainty. Instead, the optimal, good, life would surmise to the pursuit of the permanent such as philosophy, introspection, devotion to God et cetera (Consolation II-III).

Free will and the Power of Choice

In Tolkien's writings, the choice is the fundamental force propelling not only the story but also the ethical character of individual actors; when a hobbit Bilbo stands above a malevolent yet tortured creature Gollum, he is faced with the decision whether it would be merciful to kill him or spare his life. As Bilbo chooses the latter, not only is the fate of Bilbo and his nephew Frodo set forth on a certain path but also the protagonist's character is altered. Such is acknowledged by both the reader and the characters alike (H 101-102).

While Bilbo's choice is deemed as one of the most important in the history of Arda (or at least to Frodo and *The Lord of the Rings* in general), there are a multitude of such decisions made by the vast majority of the characters. Given the importance of the choice, an inquiry into free will is relevant.

As was mentioned in the chapter about Manichaeism, *the Silmarillion* offers several valid insights into the issue of predestination and free will. In the creation of the Universe, the races of Arda had received the gift of free will from God, Eru Ilúvatar. In addition, the inhabitants of the world were given an important role in the Fate of Arda, for it would be them who would ultimately assist in shaping of the history as the ultimate Fate was tied to their actions (S 6-12). Figuratively speaking, it would be the Elves, Men, Dwarves, Hobbits, and others who decide how the world shall be. And while there are other forces who would wrestle the predominant position in the history and mythology, the prevalent position of the races of Arda is undisputed based on the significance and plurality of participation. Simply put, almost all events of relevance were either decided or seriously altered by decisions of the mortal races.

However, as an ostensible contradiction, Ilúvatar is attributed with the knowledge of the Fate of the world. During the creation, this omniscience is expressed numerously by Ilúvatar himself, prophesying the eventual Doom's Day (S 6-9). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that given the omniscience of Ilúvatar, the gift of free will is exclusively an illusion put forth to provide a sense of reason and responsibility for actions. Should Ilúvatar orchestrate not only the beginning of the world but also its end, the choices then made by mortals may be seen as insignificant in the grand scheme.

In this regard, Tolkien is in agreement with both Augustine and Boethius such that the omniscience of God is not a sign of predetermination of his creation. The deciding factor is the relevance of the perspective. While God's omniscience concerning time and events may be true, it is of no consequence for any other who would not possess the same knowledge; for God's comprehension of reality exceeds all. Instead, the decisions made by mortals are consequential in both spiritual and material aspects, affecting them and the reality they inhabit. As such, the cause and responsibility of the action is always personal due to the gift of free will as it is evident by the causality; God's omniscience only presupposes the knowledge of the action not the forceful fulfillment put upon the individual. Therefore, God does not enforce actions of the individual but instead is only fully aware due to omniscience.

Accordingly, as the individual is in possession of free will, the decision they made are relevant in both the ethical and factual consequence; when Beren, a human hero, is tasked to reclaim the jewels of the highest beauty, Silmarils, from the grasp of Melkor – a journey that is meant to be his ultimate peril – a vital decision is made as he confidently laughs at the challenge which would most likely result in loss of his life. The consequences of this action are numerous: not only would he succeed in his quest but also impact a multitude of other characters and events (the Redemption of Finrod Felagund, the first defeat of Sauron, Second kinslaying of Elves etc.) (S 189-221). Furthermore, the ethical consequence of the decision is highlighted: Beren's decision is right regardless of the actual outcome due to the affecting sources of motivation present (in this case unconditional love for Luthien, the daughter of the quest giver Thingol). While in the majority of decisions the moral and the actual consequence align (an act of bravery or compassion is frequently rewarded), there are a few instances where the discord is significant.

For instance, during the conversation between Frodo and Gandalf in the mines of Moria, the fate of the creature Gollum is discussed. Returning to the act of compassion of Bilbo sparing his life, the duo argues over the alignment of Gollum and whether a merciful death would be more morally adequate; an act which Frodo finds deserving due to Gollum's corruption and apparent vileness. Gandalf, on the other hand, expresses a much different thought:

“Frodo: ‘He deserves death.’”

Gandalf: ‘Deserves it! I daresay he does. Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then do not be too eager to deal out death in judgement. For even the very wise cannot see all ends. I have not much hope that Gollum can be cured before he dies, but there is a chance of it. And he is bound up

with the fate of the Ring. (...) and when that [the End] comes, the pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many, yours not least.” (FR 59)

Gandalf is insistent that even the wisest cannot foresee the full consequence of their actions and yet the decision to spare Gollum is considered morally right regardless. Ultimately, the redemption of Gollum is indeed a failure and together with the Ring falls into fires of Mount Doom (RK 946-947). Despite the factual final outcome of the decision (of either Bilbo's or Frodo's), it is still considered being morally right for it affected the entire narrative in arguably a positive manner (such as the Gollum's guidance to Mordor, which would otherwise be a strenuous task).

The conclusion of the ethical decision is therefore emphasized for Tolkien followed the example of Augustine that ethically correct course of action would eventually be right. This notion dispels a common consequence of morally right choices that the act leads to a momentary disappointment or unintended evil, illustrated by Gollum's treachery towards the end. And yet, Tolkien upholds the belief that in the long-term the ethically right choices come into fruition, while the opposite inevitably induces either destruction, decay or catastrophe. According to Davison, the nature of evil is inescapably destructive and competitive, seeking an opponent to challenge. As such, while the good is able to conceive something new and progressive, the machinations of evil are always of decay (Davison 99-110).

This is mirrored by the elven queen Galadriel, and her vision of Sauron winning the war in which the world falls under absolute dominion where only strife exists. Consequently, the evil of the world would then consume itself in endless infighting rather than capitalizing on being the victor (FR 363-364). Such notion stems from inherent need of evil for possessing more than it is deserving of (as explained by Augustine with Inordinate desire) In case of Boethius or Augustine, the knowledge of what we ought to deserve is gained through introspection and devotion to God, whereas Tolkien's idea of Good and Evil permeates through intuition and thus is available to all. If there was an absence of desire for more, people of Arda would naturally act in accordance to good as set by the example of Ilúvatar. However, the reality of the setting is radically different because a plurality of beings showcase feats characteristic of evil such as general distrust, xenophobia, hostility, etc.

Davison suggests the reason for the inordinate desire is inexorably linked with the exercise of free will (Davison 99-110). The option of choice naturally invites the possibility of misinterpretation or at least internal discord between personal and moral motivation. Despite

the inherent understanding of good, people of Arda are naturally inclined to act in accordance with their short-term interests through the temptation to achieve more than they need/ought to have. The most common theme in Tolkien's writings would be the temptation of power and greed, personified by the greed of the possession of the One Ring. Both the examples of Boromir and Saruman failed to resist the above mentioned temptations despite the fact that owning such power would not be in congruence with their character. Tolkien himself commented on the issue: "In *The Lord of the Rings*¹⁵ the conflict is not basically about 'freedom', though that is naturally involved. It is about God and His sole right to divine honour." (L 183) In this regard, the motif of evil is comparable to both Augustine and Boethius as mentioned above.

The principle of being content with what is deserving is best exemplified by Tom Bombadill, a monk-like figure resembling the philosophy of Boethius. He has no need for physical possession nor is he driven by ambition to become something more. Instead, Tom is content with the reality he has forged for himself – being the lord of the forest, the ever-singing helpful being. The complete absence of the *inordinate desire* is shown when he attempts to wear the One Ring despite its corrupting nature.

"Then Tom put the Ring round the end of his little finger and held it up to the candlelight. For a moment the hobbits noticed nothing strange about this. Then they gasped. There was no sign of Tom disappearing!

Tom laughed again, and then he spun the Ring in the air – and it vanished with a flash. Frodo gave a cry – and Tom leaned forward and handed it back to him with a smile." (FR 133)

The ring had no effect on Tom as he was void of the *inordinate desire*, for all his desire has already been fulfilled. Akin to Boethius, Tom's choice to pursue unchangeable goals, such as being internally happy regardless of the circumstances, ultimately would be considered ideal and ethically good. Such is highlighted in the end by the extended visit of the wizard Gandalf, one of the wisest beings in Arda, for the purpose of learning (RK 996).

¹⁵ Including other works of Tolkien, not limited to the Lord of the Rings.

4. Aristotelian Quality of Character

Lastly, several individuals such as Samwise Gangee, Frodo Baggins and Aragorn showcase an alternative approach to ethics. While Manichaeism is concerned with predetermination and distinct division of good and evil and Augustinian approach is focused on the importance of free will and subsequent decisions, virtue ethics evaluate the consistency of the character by their adherence to certain virtues such as courage, modesty, truthfulness etc. Skoble suggests that the analysis of characters themselves rather than their actions is morally much clearer, given the fact that there may be disharmony between the intention and the outcome . As such, virtue ethics may be employed as an alternative to more consequence oriented schools of thought, such as utilitarianism or even above mentioned Augustine's approach (Skoble 110-112).

The difference between the approaches is best highlighted by individuals who are considered virtuous. For instance, a human hero Aragorn, member of the Fellowship of the Ring, shows the act of courage and bravery throughout the whole story in numerous ways; by defending his companions and providing guidance, being willing to accept the role of a leader despite having doubts, and by making himself a threat in the Eye of Sauron and thus alleviate pressure from the Ring-bearer. While the ethical adherence to certain virtue could be understood as a series of decisions made by the actor (in accordance with Augustine's viewpoint on morality), virtue ethics may be more descriptive in terms of clarity and fundamental practices employed by the character. In the case of Aragorn, the actions are seldomly portrayed as intentional decisions but instead are natural to perform. The integrity of Aragorn's character is the determining element in terms of decision making rather than the opposite, as he instinctively *knows* through experience and practical knowledge the optimal response – a typical feature of virtue ethics.

Concerning the system of virtue ethics, although there are several modern interpretations of virtues and their implementation in ethics, the closest resemblance in applicability is reserved for Aristotle, one of the founding fathers of the field of ethics (Skoble 110). As the aretaic turn (a renaissance of virtue ethics in modern times) follows after the creation of Tolkien's works, it stands to reason to approach Aristotle as the scientific analysis for Tolkien himself might have been under his influence. Similarly to the other systems analyzed in the thesis, Tolkien's interpretation is not allegorical and does not fully encapsulate the intricacies of Aristotle's system; instead, a few concepts are highlighted.

Firstly, the notion of virtue being the chief motivation for decisions as has been demonstrated by the example of Aragorn. According to Aristotle, the exercise of virtuous acts eventually cultivates the character of the individual in a manner that the ethically right decision is effortlessly apparent by *phronêsis* (practical wisdom) (Nicomachean Ethics 1103a15-1103b25). Simply put, the virtuous individual would necessarily behave ethically right as the state of virtuousness presupposes being ethically right. Furthermore, practical wisdom is acquired by habituation, the consistent repetition of virtuous acts, thus resembling a skill requiring constant practice (Nicomachean Ethics 1103b26-1104b1). Therefore, being virtuous not only requires but also demonstrates consistency in virtuous acts.

Secondly, Skoble suggests the importance of role models.

“The phronemos, or person of practical wisdom, is someone to be observed and learned from. Such a person is not the same as a teacher, for one cannot teach virtues the way one teaches the alphabet. (...) To learn virtue, one must study the fundamentals (...) observe those who live well, and practice.” (Skoble 104)

According to Aristotle, the observation of the individuals of virtuous character is vital for acquiring full comprehension of the virtues. As such, the virtuousness is highlighted for the individuals who possess the qualities (Nicomachean Ethics 1140a25-1140b29). While in reality this is accomplished by a careful observation and judgment of character, in the story the author has various literary means to express the same.

Lastly, the virtue is not to be confused with the extreme states of the corresponding field of observation. Aristotle claims that the distinction between virtues and vices is the extent of the desired aspect of the character, the most desirable state being the *mean*, avoiding either of the extremes. Such is illustrated by the example of bravery: being a brave person is the intermediate state of the soul for its extremes are considered vices for their alienating nature. The extremes are either deficiencies or excesses to the ideal states; a cowardly person would not act accordingly to presenting danger while a rash person would senselessly endanger themselves and neighboring people without any regard. As such, both cowardice and recklessness are undesirable for the achievement of bravery (Nicomachean Ethics 1108b11- 30). It is this balance of extremes which in practice is proven to be the most arduous and, yet the acquisition of virtues is essential to living *eudaimonia*, the flourishing life. For the purpose of this thesis, the description of such life shall be explained briefly. *Eudaimonia* is a self-reliant fulfilling life in terms of internal happiness and overall capabilities, such as providing for the society, achievement of virtue, arts, etc. (Nicomachean Ethics

1097a-1099b8). In other words, a state of internal happiness and fulfillment of the individual potential derived from existence – living happily and fully.

On Bravery and Love

For the majority of characters in Tolkien's writings, the achievement of virtuousness is seldomly claimed. Considering the scope of successful adaptation of virtues, it would not be unreasonable to disregard the Aristotelian approach altogether for there are seemingly only a handful of people who could be assessed as virtuous while the vast majority are either ethically flawed or insufficient in their pursuit of virtue. This is, however, in accordance with Aristotle, who considered the virtuous individuals to be rare, praiseworthy and fine (Nicomachean Ethics 1109a27-30). Therefore, should a truly virtuous character emerge, due to the difficulty of achieving virtues they would appear almost unique in their appearance, meanwhile vices are frequently highlighted for the agents of Evil. (e.g. the greed and cunning of Sauron, envy and ambition of Melkor) For the virtuous beings, two emerging types can be identified based on the method of description: acknowledged (such as Melian whose wisdom is appraised in description only (S 54-55) and earned. As the acknowledged possess little room for analysis and are innately dependent on the brief description the narrator provided, the analysis shall therefore be focused on the instances where the recurrent performance of virtuous act is expressed.

Although the amount of virtues present in Tolkien is substantial, the vast majority of them are not exercised sufficiently as to have a representation of a fully virtuous character. Kreeft identifies two major groups of virtues: hard and soft. While the hard represent the attitude towards the outside such as bravery, duty and justice, the soft correspond to love, hope, mercy and humility (Kreeft 192). This distinction is hold significance for its resemblance to duality of storytelling in *The Lord of the Rings*; while the narrative about the war effort captures the essence of the high-heroic where the hard virtues play a critical role, the *Hobbits* journey instead encapsulates the interpersonal struggle against for the purity of the character. Therefore, it is no surprise that the topic of virtues is perhaps the most tied to the objective of the narrative, given the fact that the virtuous beings are predominantly praised by the critics and readers alike.

Before proceeding with the analysis of each individual virtue, it must be acknowledged that no virtuous character in the story emanate only a single virtue in which they dominate – for instance, Sam, known mostly for his devotion to his friends and loyalty, showcase an enormous amount of courage throughout the story, or Aragorn, known for his bravery and sense of duty, is deeply affected and forged by love and compassion not only towards Arwen, the love of his life but to all his future subjects. The complexity of the actors is at a level where a simplification to a single virtue would be overly reductive; and yet this line of argument is valid for the reason of role modeling mentioned beforehand. As such, Sam would in this instance serve as a “paragon” of loyalty, while Aragorn’s example would surmise the characteristic of bravery. The objective of the analysis is not to provide a detailed investigation of the individual character holistically, but instead to highlight the importance and representation of the virtues present in the story in such a manner where the effect of virtues is the most powerful.

Regarding the hard virtues, bravery and courage emerge as the prominent excellence, considering the themes of war and struggle being in the forefront of all history as it is described in the chapter about Manichaeism. While being brave is implied for many individuals, the most prominent and well-known would be Aragorn who embarked on a journey to protect the Ring-bearer and the realms of Men. The account of bravery is illustrated in several instances, such as the muster for defense against the skirmish of Amon Sûl led the wraiths Nazghûls, leading the defenses of both Gondor and Rohan in the battles of Pelennor Fields and Helm’s Deep and opposing Sauron directly in the assault of the Black Gate. It is important to mention that each of those instances would not necessarily imply being courageous, but it is the consistency and seemingly effortlessness of the conduct of bravery that validates such a description.

Moreover, the act of bravery is generally natural to his character and seldomly requires a meaningful decision even when alternatives are present. During the Council of Elrond, Aragorn is the third to join the Fellowship of the Ring (proceeding after Frodo and Sam), despite the prospect of death being almost a certainty. In fact, he follows with a pledge of the return of the true king of Gondor as he is the last rightful heir, inherently endangering the entire line of royalty for the goal of destroying the Ring (FR 276).

Furthermore, Aragorn serves as a source of inspiration for plenty of people such as the Rohan princess Éowyn, captains of Gondor Faramir and Boromir, and others due to his sheer

dedication and determination. The revered position is not earned by a pre-established notion of superiority in terms of race, social status or skill in general, but instead is achieved through the repetition of virtuous acts, the consistency of the character to act in accordance with bravery. Lastly, the eagerness of Aragorn to get involved in dangerous activities is neither lacking nor overbearing thus Aragorn's character is devoid of cowardice and recklessness, contrary to Boromir for example who has repeatedly shown both cowardice (by confronting Frodo for the Ring only when he is separated from the rest of the Fellowship) and recklessness (the argument over the Ring in the Council of Elrond) (FR 267-269, 396-400).

Similarly to the case of Aragorn, Frodo and Sam, the duo of Hobbits and companions on the journey to destroy the Ring, encompass a virtue of love although each through different means. In the case of Sam, the prevalent characteristic is the loyalty and kindness towards his companions, the attitude being heightened for Frodo specifically. Throughout the whole journey, Sam's loyalty is countlessly tested. And yet the perseverance of Sam to accompany Frodo and tend to his needs is a motif appraised by many critics of Tolkien, stating that the reason for success of the Quest for the destruction of the Ring is mainly Sam's consistent loyalty and love (L 184). The loyalty to Frodo is apparent when Sam is forced to keep the Ring for himself due to the capture of Frodo in the orcish tower of Cirith Ungol. Against all odds, Sam not only rescues Frodo but also returns the Ring despite the temptation to keep it (a task many failed beforehand) (RK 911-912). The importance of the decision to surrender the Ring lies in the manner of how it was achieved, for it was not an arduous choice but rather a habitual offer of help derived from his character.

“I [Frodo] must carry the burden to the end. It can't be altered. You can't come between me and this doom.”

‘That's all right, Mr. Frodo,’ said Sam, rubbing his sleeve across his eyes. ‘I understand. But I can still help, can't I? I've got to get you out of here.’” (RK 912)

As such, Sam's love and devotion were enough to overcome the temptation of the Ring, a significant feat. With respect to the extent of the virtue, Sam likewise showcases the mean state of virtuousness, not being indifferent nor obsessive over Frodo as was, for instance, Gollum who would alter his entire self-worth and behavior to appease Frodo in an attempt to re-establish his character.

Contrary to Sam, Frodo's exercise of love is radically different. Tolkien provided an account for the motivation of the character: “Frodo undertook his quest out of love – to save the world he knew from disaster at his own expense, if he could; and also in complete

humility, acknowledging that he was wholly inadequate to the task.” (L 246). As such, the love was instead directed to all living beings, to the world itself to be preserved in a naturally flourishing state. This metaphysical desire for the goodness of the world is not selfishly motivated, and while others pursued a similar vision of the world, Frodo’s willingness to forgive, to deliver mercy and compassion were instrumental for the development of the world; a feature that prevented the corruption of the Ring up until the final confrontation at Mount Doom. Scholars such as Zimbardo consider the theme of love to be the ultimate positive power in Tolkien’s stories for it permeates and deeply affects the vital parts of the narrative (Zimbardo 100-108).

Nevertheless, it is critical to mention that those are not the only representations of virtues present; in fact, the majority of virtues can be identified as having a significant influence over the story of Tolkien. Instead, the examples given are provided as evidence for a different approach to ethical judgment. Contrary to the previous systems, the ethics are not predetermined by the circumstance or state of being, nor is it influenced by the choice of the individual to do either good or bad; instead, the ethical judgments emanate from the quality of character. This is a key argument of Aristotle’s ethics, as the virtuous quality necessitates ethically right action. Therefore, the focus of ethics is placed on the character instead of the individual action (Nicomachean Ethics 1444a 5-8). All the mentioned actors display such quality as their actions are consistent with their personality and virtue foundation. While their action could be understood as a series of individual decisions (following the principles of Augustine), the immediacy, consistency and effortlessness of those acts suggest a different approach in philosophy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Tolkien's works demonstrate a substantial range of possible and descriptive interpretations of the morality of the characters and other elements. The prevailing modes of ethical comprehension are the following: the pre-deterministic evaluation of the struggle between Good and Evil, the significant position of free will and the ability to choose the ethical outcome, and the quality of the character encouraging the behavior towards certain ethical ideals. Such concepts correspond to the ethical conclusion of Manichaeism, Augustinian, Boethian and Aristotelian ethics, although imperfectly. As Tolkien did not intend to write a philosophical treatise or an allegory for a certain concept of thinking, the elements of the systems described are not fully adherent to their formal representation. Instead, it is reasonable to assume the ethical motifs present in Tolkien's writings are fragmental and of the origin of influence rather than a result of a direct implementation. Despite the fact, the beings in Tolkien are still expertly crafted regarding their morality, as is apparent by the complexity and variety of plausible ethical interpretations.

In regards to other ethical systems, it is not unreasonable to analyze the texts through different manners, as demonstrated by for instance Blount's analysis of Nietzsche's influence.¹⁶ While Tolkien is discouraging in the allegorical understanding, the applicability of the elements is seemingly limitless. Due to the scope of the thesis, the three predominant theories were chosen based on popularity and author's opinion to reflect the variety and complexity of Tolkien's ethics instead of carefully outlining the issue completely. As such, further inquiry into the ethics is required in order to encapsulate the topic holistically.

Lastly, it is beyond reasonable doubt that Tolkien's characters are considerably more nuanced in terms of ethics than they might appear initially. According to Manichaeism, there are certain factors of predetermination which could either limit or predict the ethical options given to the individual such as race or affiliation towards the manifested forces of morality. Furthermore, the moral image could be influenced by the exercise of free will via the decision between the right (given by God's intention) and the wrong (motivated by the selfish desires) as demonstrated by the Augustinian and Boethian theories. The third instance of nuanced morality can be expressed by the quality of the character as the virtues themselves aid in navigating the arduous moral landscape with unparalleled precision, while vices could be seen as the source of evil behavior, described by Aristotle and Virtue ethics. The agglomeration of

¹⁶ In *Überhobbits, Tolkien, Nietzsche and the Will of Power*.

the views indicates the complex yet fulfilling nature of the ethics in Tolkien's work as the motivations, moral viewpoints and result of any actions could be understood in various seemingly contradictory ways. In the majority of cases, however, the application of ethics is multi-layered as demonstrated by people such as Aragorn, Boromir or Saruman where multiple theories can be applied simultaneously in a complementary manner. As such, the diverse analysis of ethics may be employed to enhance and complement the comprehension of the narrative and its actors in regards to depth and meaning.

Resumé

Tématem této bakalářské práce jsou motivy dobra a zla v dílech Johna Ronalda Reuela Tolkiena a jejich následná analýza z pohledu tří filosofických směrů: manicheismu, etiky svatého Augustina či Boethia a aristotelské etiky ctností. Cílem práce je prozkoumat a vyhodnotit morální komplexitu v Tolkienově díle a zjistit, do jaké míry se jednotlivé etické prvky vzájemně doplňují. Mezi zkoumaná díla patří *Pán prstenů* (1954), *Silmarillion* (1977) či *Nedokončené příběhy* (1980), z nichž jsou analyzovány eticky relevantní prvky textu, jako jsou jednání či popis jednotlivých postav.

První kapitola se zabývá autorovým životem se zvláštním přihlédnutím ke způsobu jeho tvorby. Tolkien byl ve značné míře ovlivněn svou rodinou – v převážně protestantské Anglii jeho matka konvertovala ke katolicismu, což způsobilo rozkol v celé širší rodině. Navzdory tomu však Tolkien zůstal věrný této víře. Dle odborníků na Tolkienovu práci, jako jsou například Humphrey Carpenter či T. A. Shippey, je zřejmé, že jeho dílo vychází z jistých křesťanských základů, ale není s nimi v konfliktu a naopak je doplňuje. Tolkiena dále ovlivnily jeho vlastní motivace, z nich vyplývající ambice, a také profesní aktivity. Zajímal se o středověkou historii a o žánr vysoké epiky. Jakýmsi spouštěčem vlastní tvorby byly jeho touhy: jednak po vytvoření vlastního jazyka, jednak po vytvoření nové mytologie. Vytvořil tak základní prvky světa, kterému se tato práce věnuje. Dále se práce zabývá Tolkienovým vztahem k alegoriím, které nepovažuje za přínosné svému tvůrčímu úsilí. Z tohoto důvodu není vhodné považovat morální poznání za alegorii k příslušnému etickému systému.. Namísto toho Tolkien fragmentárně využívá jednotlivé prvky etiky k vytvoření charakteru postav a podkladu pro svou mytologii.

Základními principy, které je možné pozorovat v celém Tolkienově díle, jsou například dichotomie dobra a zla. Tyto síly jsou výrazně odlišeny nejen ve svém etickém působení, ale i v samotné manifestaci, jež je pro manicheismus typický. Práce pak následně analyzuje jednotlivé struktury, které jsou touto manifestací poznamenány. Za ztělesnění můžeme považovat nejen živé bytosti ale i přírodní jevy jako jsou například Stín, bouřková mračna aj. Jednotlivé živé bytosti často jeví prvky predeterminace – mají určitou, předem danou afinitu (příklon) vůči jednomu z těchto morálních stanovisek. Některé z bytostí (například Valar, čarodějové, skřeti, balrogové či enti) jsou inherentně buď dobré, nebo zlé, toto předurčení je jim dané. Druhou skupinou jsou ty bytosti, které mají silnou afinitu vůči jedné ze sil, přesto mají bohem daný dar svobodné vůle (sem patří zejména elfové, kteří mají

silnou náklonnost k dobru, ale přesto se mu mohou vzepřít). Do třetí skupiny pak patří rasy jako lidé, trpaslíci či hobiti, které mají jen nepatrný příklon k jedné či druhé straně, tudíž jsou ve své podstatě z hlediska možnosti výběru nejvíce svobodné. Predeterminací a nekonečným konfliktem mezi dobrem a zlem, které je přímo manifestováno ve světě, se zabývá manicheismus. Manicheismus vychází z věčného boje dobra proti zlu a tento neustávající konflikt prostupuje celým Tolkienovým dílem. Důkazem tohoto boje je vzpoura antagonistů Melkora a Saurona vůči bohu Eru Ilúvatarovi a jeho výtvorům: konflikt, který prostupuje celou příběhovou linkou.

Ve třetí kapitole jsou oproti obecným manicheistickým tezím zkoumány Augustinovy a Boethiovy náhledy na svobodnou vůli. Zabývá se tedy především postavami, které mají možnost se rozhodovat svobodně. Nejdůležitějším prvkem zde je svobodná vůle a schopnost rozhodování se. Dle Augustina postavy nesou přímou zodpovědnost za rozhodnutí, která udělají. To znamená, že se nemohou odkazovat na předem afinitu vůči dobru i zlu, pokud udělají něco morálně špatného či pochybného, nemohou se odvolávat na někoho jiného. Zároveň se svobodnou vůlí přichází větší zodpovědnost. Jedinci mohou mít touhy, na které nemají právo, které se vymezují vůči bohu nabízející správnou cestu. Mezi tyto touhy patří například touha po dominanci či chamtivost. Naopak vyzdvihování vlastností postav je pak rozhodování v souladu jejich vlastní intuicí dobra, která je inherentně dána stvořitelem světa. Tím se Tolkien značně liší od Augustina či Boëthia, kteří správnou cestu hledají v kontemplaci a obratu k bohu. V této kapitole se též zkoumá otázka predeterminace z pohledu svobodné vůle, tedy zda vědění a předpověď boha předurčuje jasně daný kurz událostí. Obdobně jako Augustin či Boëthius dochází Tolkien k závěru, že jak morální, tak i faktické úkony jsou v přímé kompetenci jejich aktérů, a ti tak tudíž sami vytváří pomocí vlastních rozhodnutí obraz světa. Božská omniscience v tomto případě pouze převyšuje poznání obyvatel světa a nikterak nepředurčuje jednání smrtelných bytostí.

Alternativní přístup pak nabízí Aristoteles. Dle něj primárně nezáleží na tom, jak se jedinec rozhodne, důležitější je naopak kultivace charakteru jakožto řídicího orgánu vedoucího k eudaimonii (naplněný duševní život) a k morálně správnému životu. Tento prvek je možné pozorovat zejména u postav, které se konzistentně chovají v souladu s určitou ctností, kterou reprezentují. Mezi tyto jedince patří například Sam, Frodo či Aragorn. Existují určité podmínky, které tyto postavy splňují: zaprvé k získání ctností vede habituace (neustálé opakování ctnostných činů), zadruhé je ctnost nutně dobrá a vykazatelná vůči ostatním bytostem či čtenáři (jednotlivé ctnosti získávají výsostné postavení v etickém hodnocení

jedince), za třetí ctnostný člověk inherentně dělá eticky správná rozhodnutí. To je základ, na kterém stojí aristotelská filosofie – nejsou důležitá jednotlivá rozhodnutí, nýbrž charakter, který za nimi stojí. Analýza v této části dokazuje přítomnost takových ctností a ctnostných postav na základě výše zmíněných podmínek; v souladu s Aristotelovým pojetím však takových případů není mnoho. Statusu ctnostného člověka z pozice Tolkienova universa se dostává pouze několika jedincům, ti však zastávají důležitou roli z hlediska narativu. Často se tedy jedná o hlavní postavy, které mají prostor růst v průběhu celého díla. Opakem ctnostných postav jsou postavy, které buďto nedosahují kvality charakteru či jsou vyloženě neřestné. Důležitým prvkem nastává “střední bod” mezi jednotlivými neřestmi, tedy v případě ctnosti odvahy jedinec není ani zbabělý ani lehkovážný. Vzhledem k faktu, že tohohle stavu dosahuje relativně malý počet postav v Tolkienově světě, je uplatnění etiky ctností zdánlivě nevhodné. Analýza věnovaná charakterovým vlastnostem ale dokazuje, že se zde prvky Aristotelovi etiky v textu nachází a tudíž je vhodné je začlenit při celkovém zkoumání motivů dobra a zla.

V závěru, který hodnotí komplexitu a komplementaritu jednotlivých morálních hledisek v Tolkienově díle, je zjevné, že jednotlivé prvky nejsou v kontradikci, ale naopak se vzájemně doplňují. Etika a morálka jsou mnohvrstevnaté a jednotlivé systémy mohou být využity k hlubší interpretaci a silnějšímu pochopení Tolkienova díla.

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