

EXTANT

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#2

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SCROLLS OF HONOR

"I have participated to no small degree; let this be noted upon my scroll of honors!"

vol. 21, page 557

Over 250 people are listed in the volume 44 work credits. In my capacity as VIE Editor-in-Chief (a title of honor bestowed upon me by Mike Berro, the man who launched the VIE), I take it upon myself to create these *Scrolls of Honor*. I do this to satisfy a hunger for justice, or 'giving to each what he deserves'. Though all VIE volunteers are aristocratic persons worthy of praise and admiration in themselves, the project's 100 mightiest champions deserve special recognition.

The LANARCK Scroll of Honor

MIKE BERRO
ARTHUR CUNNINGHAM
NICK GEVERS
JOHAN VAN GIJSEGEM
ALUN HUGHES
DAVID ROSE
BOB NELSON
ED WINSKILL*

The ROY BARCH Scroll of Honor

DEREK BENSON
RICHARD CHANDLER
PATRICK DUSOULIER
CHUCK KING
ROBIN ROUCH
JOHN A. SCHWAB
STEVE SHERMAN
JOHN VANCE
SUAN HSI YONG

The GYL TARYOC Scroll of Honor

CHRIS CORLEY
DEBORAH COHEN
ROB FRIEFELD
MARCEL VAN GENDEREN
JOEL HEDLUND
BOB LUCKIN
JOEL RIEDESEL
THOMAS RYDBECK
TIM STRETTON
NORMA VANCE
HANS VAN DER VEEKE

The MAZTRIAN THE MAGICTIAN Scroll of Honor

JOEL ANDERSON
IAN DAVIS
JOHN A. D. FOLEY
ANDREAS IRLE
BOB LACOVARA
PAUL RHOADS
MAX VENTURA
KOEN VYVERMAN

*Arthur Cunningham is editor at the British Library and provided invaluable technical advice and moral support. Nick Gevers was the first head of TI. Johan Van Gijsegem was the first manager, and launched actual work. David Rose was an early behind-the-scenes operative without whose prudent actions the early project would not have survived. Bob Nelson donated legal services.

The KTRTH GERSEN Scroll of Honor

ERIK ARENDSE
RON CHERNICH
DAMIEN JONES
KARL KELLAR
DAVE KENNEDY
ROBERT MELSON
TILL NOEVER
DAVE REITSEMA
JEFFERY RUSZCZYK
DAVE WORDEN

The EUSTACE CHILKE Scroll of Honor

NEIL ANDERSON	STÉPHANE LEIBOVITSH
CARINA BJORKLIND	CHRIS MCCORMICK
ANGUS CAMPBELL-CANN	MICHAEL MITCHELL
MATTHEW COLBURN	GLENN RAYE
MICHAEL DUNCAN	SIMON READ
HARRY ERWIN	JOHN RICK
KURT HARRIMAN	BILL SCHMALTZ
YANNICK GOUR	MICHAEL J. SMITH
TONY GRAHAM	MARK J. STRAKA
EREK GRIM	WILLEM TIMMER
JASPER GROEN	RICHARD WHITE
LUCIE JONES	

The JEAN PARLIER Scroll of Honor

DONNA ADAMS	PETER IKIN
MARK ADAMS	JURRIAAN KALKMAN
MICHEL BAZIN	BOB MOODY
MALCOLM BOWERS	JIM PATTISON
MARK BRADFORD	ERRICO RESCIGNO
MIKE DENNISON	JOHN ROBINSON JR.
ANDREW EDLIN	BILL SCHAUB
ROB GERRAND	RUSS WILCOX
BRIAN GHARST	FRED ZOETEMEYER
EVERT JAN DE GROOT	

150 other volunteers, by a collective contribution without which the project would have failed, though not listed here, are indited upon the:

The BRAVE FREE MEN Scroll of Honor

They will find their names, and the jobs they performed, listed in volume 44. Of this they may boast with pride! Bravo to all, and particularly the packers upon whom we must still rely, as well as the indefatigable Stefania Zacco, our *Woman in Milan* who, though she is being paid for her work, has been as dedicated and energetic as any volunteer and whose patient guidance and efficacious oversight have been indispensable.*

The Venetian painter Tintoretto, famous as a colorist, declared that the most beautiful colors are white and black, the former because it gives light, the latter because, by reinforcing shadows, it throws light into dramatic brilliance. It would therefore be a fine thing to also have a special:

AILA WOULDIVER

'I Have Participated to no Degree'
Scroll of Dishonor

The GLAWEN CLATTUC Scroll of Honor

MIKE BARRETT	CHRIS REID
ANDREAS BJORKLIND	AXEL ROSCHINSKI
TOP CHANGWATCHAI	MIKE SCHILLING
ROBERT COLLINS	LUK SCHOONAERT
ED GOODING	BILL SHERMAN
MARC HERANT	MARK SHOULDER
PER KJELLBERG	GAN UESLI STARLING
ROB KNIGHT	GABRIEL STEIN
RODERICK MACBEATH	PETER STRICKLAND
BETTY MAYFIELD	DIRK JAN VERLINDE
JOHN McDONOUGH	BILLY WEBB
DAVE MORTIMORE	

for the champion VIE stinkers. If the punishment should fit the crime uncomfortable public ignominy such as Zamp inflicted upon bumptious Baron Banoury, his overweight spouse, and the rest of their self-important entourage (see: vol. 19, page 183) is what, to coin a phrase, 'they so richly deserve'. The positive thing which may be said of our erbs and lucomorphs is that by making an already almost impossible task even more so, they augmented the heroic eclat of those who saw the project out of Iucounu's Maze of Mirrors and across the Mountains of Magnatz. Some of these *poseurs* and loud-mouths operated anonymously, but brazen or craven, and with the aid and abetment of their motley cheering-section, they scared away volunteers and subscribers, caused months of delay, provoked loss of sleep

* I recently learned that, due to special circumstances, Stefania, in fact, is not being paid for all her work. This is scandalous in one sense. In another sense she thus becomes a full-fledged VIE volunteer, with all the privileges and honors involved.

on several continents and brought tears to the eyes of good women. These achievements they may relish, muttering together in ill-tempered conclave.

But such ugliness is, now, best covered by the veil of silence and the distance of forgetfulness. Meanwhile, until their memory dissipates 'like a bad smell', and so that upon appropriate occasions they may be jeered in a style worthy of true Vance readers, I propose a toast: *Down with the goons: may they get pebble for coin and barley-water for beer!*



THE VANCIAN THEOLOGICO-POLITICAL ATTITUDE

PREFACE

The following remarks concern what we may glean from Vance's fiction about his attitude toward the 'theologico-political' problem, or the interaction of revelation and rationality, which is to say belief and religion on the one hand, and logic and pure reason on the other, in the context of what is sometimes called the 'real world'. I am not seeking to elevate Jack Vance to the rank of great philosopher. I regard him as an important artist, a rank equally exalted but different in nature. Vance is important because of the exceptional power—and thus, in my unapologetically anti-modernist view—exceptional truth of his work, in the artistic sense. Artistic truth is not philosophical truth. The appearance, flavor and texture of food is not the same thing as its nutritive value measured in grams of vitamins, proteins, lipids and other such terms. This does not mean philosophy cannot be artistic, as Plato triumphantly shows, or that art cannot be philosophical, as Vance shows, also triumphantly. But, I emphasize: in my opinion Vance neither has nor defends a philosophical thesis. He makes no argument and refutes no counter position. He proceeds as an artist. He does not provide vitamin pills and a catalogue of their nutritive value, he serves us a meal—with plenty of beer to wash it down and make us gay.

Vance's œuvre is not only large by word count, it is large metaphorically. It seems to cover human experience in an encyclopedic manner. Almost any question we ask of it finds echo, if not actual response. His attitude is never narrow or systematic. He can be nailed down to no ism, and is remarkable for independence of mind. To an exemplary extent, relative to other 20th century artists, Vance resists the temptation of modernist enthusiasms. This resistance seems neither deliberate nor total. It is not artistic to resist ideas or attitudes, just as it is not artistic to champion them. But art, and our era, being what they are, such resistance has artistic importance. The modernist attitude is unique; it boasts rationality but, in an amazing act of self-castration, infects its disciples with a contempt for practical reality comparable only to the most delirious and primitive mystical excess of animist religiosity. As for art, disregard of reality degrades it first into mere (as opposed to noble) decoration,

and then into senseless solipsism. Vance is therefore not only one of the great artists, but one of the few true artists of his time.

THE GREATEST GENERATION

Vance's theologico-political attitude seems typical of the theologico-political attitude of American manhood of what has come to be called 'the greatest generation'; that which won the second world war. There is nothing extravagant or original or even stunningly admirable about this attitude. In 1940, despite the spread of the Soviet empire, the Hitler-Stalin pact with its division of Poland and Hitler's takeover of most of Europe and alliance with Mussolini, Americans remained majoritarily isolationist. At that crucial moment the same men who were soon to be heroes and martyrs of liberty were 'intent upon their own concerns'. But, roused by Japanese bombs, and despite years of defeat and disaster, they persisted, at long last decisively out-performing their militarist-hegemonist enemies, right up to the collapse of the USSR in 1989, a triumph presided over by the same generation in the person of Ronald Reagan, with the crucial help of two European anti-modernists: Margaret Thatcher and John Paul II.

Vance made his contribution to victory in World War II, braving Japanese torpedoes in a liberty ship projecting America's industrial might, the factor which famously won the day. In this he was like the majority of his generation. More telling is his support of the Viet Nam war. In the artistic-intellectual elite to which he *de facto* belonged this was a rare act of brave independence for which he still pays the tax of narrow-minded condemnation by the chattering class. Rather than sharing a fashionable attitude Vance clove to the unfashionable attitude of Nixon's 'silent majority'.

Though born into one of the first families of 19th century San Francisco high-society, Vance's branch fell to poverty when he was a young boy. Perforce he developed proletarian roots. Like any ambitious and self-respecting American, following the example of Abraham Lincoln, he got some higher education. But he had to engage in much manual labor. This was not just during his early years; until his fifties Vance was unable to make his whole living as a writer. A proletarian root, or manual labor, however, is no antidote to elitist attitudes. Plenty of 20th century artists and intellectuals voluptuate in them despite proletarian backgrounds. Attitudes and ideas are like fashions and habits: we pick them up as fast as possible from our surroundings. Vance's famous reluctance to move in the swelter of literary circles where careers are advanced probably helps account for his limited fame; he probably was moved by an instinct to preserve his independence of mind, that quality often hypocritically praised, compounded by the intractable closedness of fashionable orthodoxy.

I do not mean to suggest, however, that Vance escaped conformity to elitist attitudes only to remain mired in lower-class or 'moral majority' attitudes. Though subject, like everyone, to the influences of his time and situation, I think he retained a proud and tranquil critical distance. I

do not think he used that distance to create his own doctrine or compare and analyze the others, but to allow them all to percolate freely through his soul. If some marked him, if he enjoyed toying with others, his mode of apprehension was not philosophical: he did not 'search for truth'. His mode was artistic: he felt and observed. It was the atmosphere of the attitudes that intrigued him or, one might say, their beauty.

[...] life and time were inexorable; the moment must pass . . . Here in fact was the very essence of his yearnings: he wanted to control that magic linkage between the real and the unreal, the felt and the seen. He wanted to pervade himself with the secret meaning of things and use this lore as the mood took him.

Wyst (vol. 31, page 25)

GEOMETRICAL PASSIONS

Jack Vance rejects the jargon of modern political discourse, such as 'left', 'right', 'capitalist' and so on. Though a profound commentator upon the phenomena these terms are supposed to designate, his rejection of them—they do not appear in his work—suggests their inadequacy.

The terms 'left' and 'right' come from the French revolution, specifically the places various groups happened to gather in the hemi-cyclical amphitheater where certain debates took place. Roughly speaking the men grouped on the right side of the room favored king and church while those on the left side were anti-Christian republicans.* As anyone with the faintest awareness of contemporary politics can see, the link between 'left' and 'right' and these 18th century French allegiances has, to say the least, 'evolved'. Not only that, over the centuries they have been variously reinterpreted for use not as descriptive but tactical labels. The most obvious recent examples of this are how, ever since 1945, the left, by defining fascism as 'right-wing extremism' has maintained a link between Nazism and the 'right'. By the same token, after 1989 with the fall of the Berlin wall, there was much scrambling on the 'left' to avoid taint by now discredited communism which, by sheer parallelism, could be labeled 'left-wing extremism'. An older and forgotten example, though still functioning, is how the left claimed for itself the honor of 19th century 'social progress', when most of this (public education, care for the indigent and sick, ending slavery) was the work of Christians and people labeled 'conservative'. 150 years ago the Democratic party, not the Republican party of Lincoln, was pro-slavery.

Ideological battles related to these polymorphic terms rage—splashing over even into the pages of an obscure publication like COSMOPOLIS—touching such surrealist questions as the relative evil of Nazism and Communism because of how such matters effect the meaning of 'left' and 'right', and in particular the ignominy or glory attached to those to whom these labels can be affixed.

A hemi-cyclical room may be pleasingly proportioned and convenient to civic debate. The French Revolution may be a crucial event of modern history. There may be some sort of cosmic symbolism whereby what is physically *droit*—which, as in English, means 'right' both in a spatial and legal sense but in French also means 'straight', 'true' or 'up-standing'—

* In a republic power is held not by a king but officers elected by the citizenry.

and what is *sinistra* which, as in this Italian word for 'left', means 'devious' and 'threatening'. But even granting such absurdities there still can be no justifying the extravagant idea that the political 'left' and 'right' have an actual geometric relation so that 'moderates' are in some sort of 'middle', with corresponding 'extremes' 'farther' to right and left as if a compass were prolonging the curves of the hemi-circle to eventually 'meet', presumably somewhere behind the lectern.

It is like the ptolomaic festival of epicycles. How did the historical accident of the shape of a certain building generate a geometrical theory of human passions? Were this grotesquely pristine metaphor not universally accepted, like the pre-ptolomaic flat earth, it would not even need to be laughed into impotence, it would be rejected instantly as a weird, vapid, cold and useless fantasy, lacking even the power to intrigue or amuse.

Jack Vance, whose manly clarity of mind is astonishingly rare, has no use for it.

RELIGION AND MATERIALISM

Theologically speaking it is roughly useful to define Vance's attitude as 'anti-clerical'. His anti-clericalism is not the anti-Catholic European variety however but closer to the American type. The latter, an aspect of the Reformation, is much older than the former. Rather than suspicion of an institution it is a conviction that relations between man and God should be direct, without the intervention of a priestly class.*

There are neither priests nor creed, which makes for a simple and honest worship. . .

The Green Pearl (vol. 37, page 30)

This sort of anti-clericalism finds its full expression in such Protestant branches as Quakerism where all hierarchy is banished. In the American context it may be seen as an aspect of rugged individualism, or even a thoreauian back-to-nature attitude.**

I believe Vance picked up a rationalist prejudice, or enthusiasm, in his university days of the 1930s. It never, as far as I can tell, takes on an anti-Catholic flavor. In one of the Bain stories there is some 'anti-Catholicisms'†, but there is 'anti-Protestantism' in other places.‡ Vance also does not appear to have any particular animus toward Christianity itself—a prevalent contemporary form of the anti-clerical passion—as opposed to other religions.

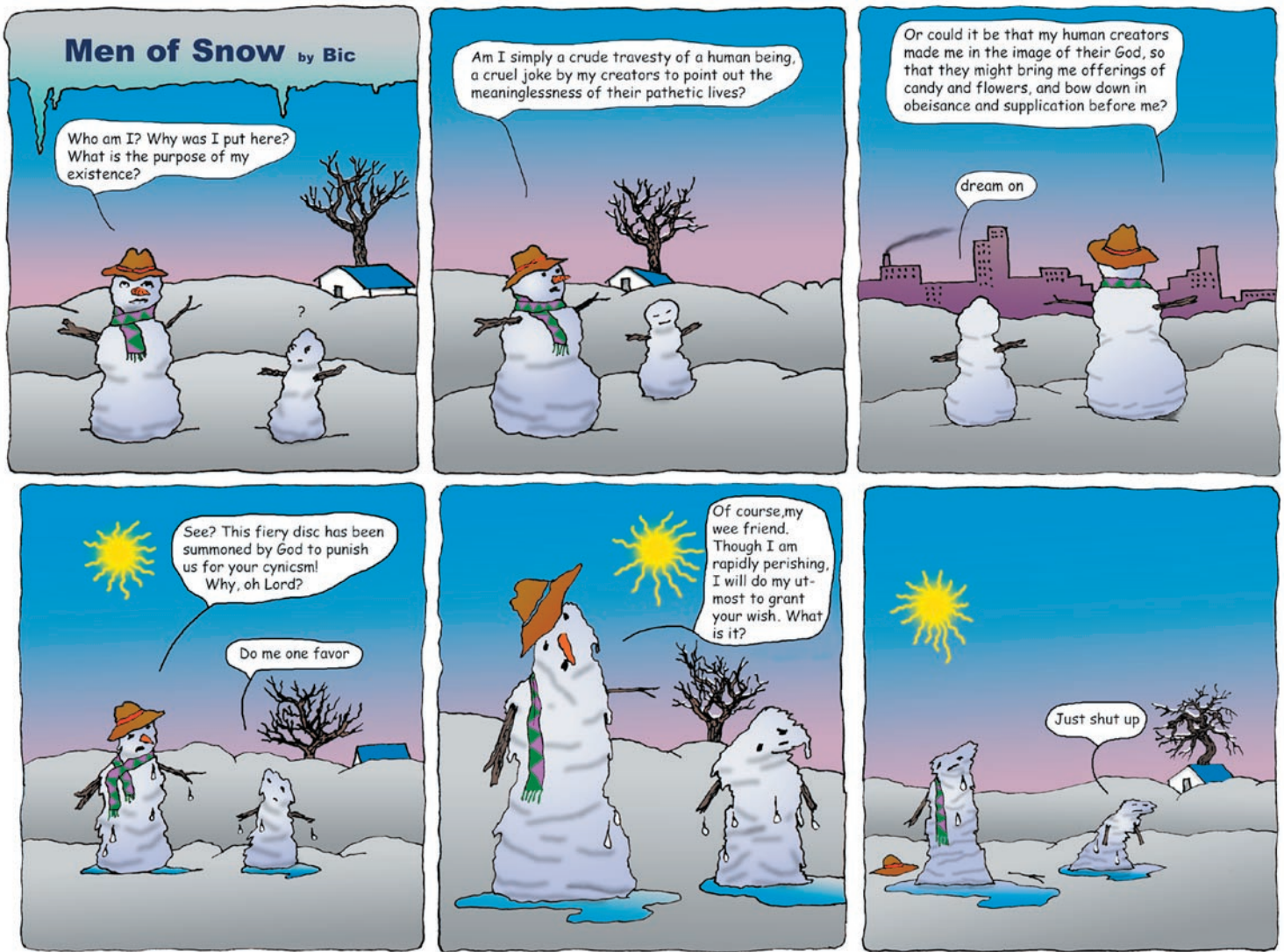
By comparison with the crisp French distinction between Catholicism and Protestantism, in America such differences are vague. Despite the persistence of European style anti-

* See Cosmopolis 41, page 15. Voltaire, probably the most famous anti-cleric, was an exemplar of the later type. His type of anti-clericalism was anti-Catholic by suspicion of that supra-national institution. With the French Revolution it resulted in an official national religion dedicated to the 'Supreme Being'. Tallyrand was a priest in this official cult which organized elaborate rituals.

** I am not familiar enough with Emerson and William James to state this positively, but I imagine they are advocates of direct communion with God, and thus 'anti-clerical' in the American sense.

† 'anti-Catholic' in the very limited sense that certain characters, speeches or situations present Catholic characters or Catholicism unfavorably. This should properly be seen from an artistic point of view and not as anti-Catholicism, but some anti-Catholics will be glad to seize upon it as comforting their attitude; thus my own loose usage. One may point to the sympathetically represented Catholic priest in Dark Ocean: VIE volume 12, page 432.

‡ See Parapsyche, vol. 3.



Catholicism among certain groups, America's pullulating Christian branches tend, with a few exceptions, to be somewhat indistinct. Americans change churches with a certain ease. Inter-cult hostilities are muted, forgotten or non-existent.

If it is fair to label Vance 'atheist', this should be limited to meaning he does not worship the universal creator-god of Judeo-Christian fame—the old man perched on a cloud, with white beard, white robe, crown and halo. More than that, I say, it becomes problematic to claim. Vance, for example, is no materialist†, a doctrine almost necessarily associated with atheism. Furthermore he is not repulsed but fascinated by religion, but also by all manner of 'spiritual' or non-material, phenomena.

For a time he was involved in Scientology.‡ In the 1960s, when atheism was much fresher than it is today, Scientology was an avenue of 'spiritual search' for the bohemian-artist-intellectual class. This is true even if Scientology is a materialist religion, and materialists by definition should not waste time in 'spiritual search', since there is nothing spiritual to search for.

† A materialist is someone who believes that matter is all that exists, that there is no 'spirit' or 'mind'. Thoughts or feelings must be explained as material phenomenon, perhaps involving patterns of electrical impulses.

‡ I do not hold this against him, particularly as I myself was exposed to this misguided sect during the same period of its initial flowering.

VANCIAN SKEPTICISM

If Vance can be labeled 'anti-clerical', he can also be labeled 'anti-science'. In Mazirian the Magician we read:

Pontecilla the Pious, then ruler of Grand Motholam, put Phandaal to torment, and after a terrible night, he killed Phandaal and outlawed sorcery throughout the land. The wizards of Grand Motholam fled like beetles under a strong light . . .

(vol. 1, page 9)

Here we have religion, in a spanish-inquisitional guise, expulsing science. Is it fair to equate magic with science? In *Rhialto the Marvellous* we read:

Magic is a practical science, or, more properly, a craft, since emphasis is placed primarily upon utility, rather than basic understanding. This is only a general statement, since in a field of such profound scope, every practitioner will have his individual style, and during the glorious times of Grand Motholam, many of the magician-philosophers tried to grasp the principles which governed the field.

In the end, these investigators, who included the greatest names in sorcery, learned only enough to realize that full and comprehensive knowledge was impossible. In the first place, a desired effect might be achieved through any number of modes, any of which represented a life-time of study, each deriving its force from a different coercive environment.

The great magicians of Grand Motholam were sufficiently supple that they perceived the limits of human understanding, and spent most

of their efforts dealing with practical problems, searching for abstract principles only when all else failed. For this reason, magic retains its distinctly human flavor. . .

(vol. 34, page 3)

'Science' is often confused with 'technology'. Technology is different from science, even if often related to it because certain machines are based on new scientific discoveries. There is nothing 'scientific' about a hoe and a rake but, strictly speaking, these tools are no less 'technology' than a microwave oven.

Likewise in Vance, as we see above, the word 'magic' designates both technology and science. Magicians tend to be technologists, turning to science, or research, only when the technology they command is not adequate to their needs. Wernher Von Braun was a rocket 'scientist' in the strict sense, but also a rocket engineer, or technologist. In Vance therefore—with, of course, due respect for context—'magic' may fairly be equated with 'science'.

For anti-clericalists science and scientists are good. But in Vance magicians are not good. Instead they are as adept at spanish-inquisitional methods as anyone else:

*"Consider, you might crush the little dragon under your heel."
Turjan looked up. "I would prefer to crush your neck, Mazirian."
Mazirian was unperturbed. "Tell me, how do you invest your vat creatures with intelligence? Speak, and you go free."
Turjan laughed, and there was madness in his laughter.
"Tell you? And then? You would kill me with hot oil in a moment."
Mazirian's thin mouth drooped petulantly.
"Wretched man, I know how to make you speak. If your mouth were stuffed, waxed and sealed, you would speak! Tomorrow I take a nerve from your arm and draw coarse cloth along its length."*

(vol. 1, page 7)

To the above example could be added many more; the turpitudes of Lucounu, Tamurello, Carfilhiot, Visbhume or Hache-Moncour, to say nothing of the merely truculent Hurtiancz. It might be objected that Vance also presents good magicians, at least one or two. But Shimrod, is not 'good' in the sense that he goes about doing good deeds. Like everyone else he is mostly concerned with his own affairs, following out his fantasies and pleasures. If his nature were evil, rather than easy-going, his powers would make him a public danger.

Shimrod is a 'scion' of Murgén. Until he solidified into independence he was Murgén's way to experience normal life while his basic self was absorbed by Joald. Does Murgén's devotion to this mission make him a force of 'good'? If the answer to this question is 'yes' it still does not demonstrate that magic/science is 'good'. Murgén is so absorbed in the protection of Hybras that he has no time to succor the widow and orphan, or even assure that his friends may reach his front door in safety. He is like an American president so absorbed in warding off the Soviet atomic threat he has no time for any other aspect of public welfare.

In the end Murgén fails. We witness the partial destruction of Hybras but its final destruction also occurred; the sea west of Aquitaine is now empty.

A further consideration: in the Gaeen Reach the exemplars of science, the Institute and the Historical Society, can not be called 'good'. By the same token we should not call them 'bad'. The Breakness institute (*The Languages of Pao*, vol. 7) is a similar example. Science is itself a 'technology', a tool.

It is good or bad as it is used. The Historical Society's famous 'impartiality' gives it a sinister look to the ordinary view. The Institute's campaign to save humanity from self-destruction though urbanism is a neo-rousseauian social-darwinist manipulation which not only seems sinister but is actually promoted with lies and assassinations. The Institute's motto is:

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing; a great deal of knowledge is disaster.

Star King (vol. 22, page 115)

The Institute is not anti-science. It reserves science to itself. In the view of the Institute this is benevolence. If the Institute should not be called evil it is certainly anti-democratic. Aristotle, like Churchill, said democracy was the worst regime. Unlike Churchill, and before the invention of Marxism, Aristotle thought all the other regimes were better. The anti-democratic attitude of the Institute is shared by Aristotle and therefore not necessarily stupid. The Greeks claimed that wisdom is goodness.

Vance is no more pro-science than anti-religion. Such categories are not appropriate analytical tools in his case, or in the case of any true man.

METAPHYSICS

The universe functions and persists. It evolves or permutes according to laws, or perhaps habits, of a mechanical nature, or else according to the caprice of a demiurge or coterie of demiurges. The process is no less real for being obscure; something is occurring. Whatever this something may be, the universe, whatever it is, is a certain way.

An idea or belief about this situation is a metaphysic. This word comes from the Greek for 'beyond the physical'. Aristotle wrote a book entitled with the word. For Aristotle it does not designate a non-material or 'spiritual' realm beyond or parallel or additional to the material world but fundamental phenomena underlying or englobing perceivable reality the way the Gaeen Reach is a jewel floating in the infinite Beyond, or as, for certain imaginative souls, the universe is a mechanism floating in a temporal and spatial infinity of chaos.

Plato wrote a famous passage (in *The Republic*) where Socrates wonders by what power each class of thing has its class identity. The class of chairs for example; what is it about a particular chair that makes it identifiable as a chair? What is chairness? Socrates suggests that the provenance of chairness is an ideal world, a world of ideas, an invisible non-place more real than the merely physical world because the latter is derivative of it. Physical chairs are more or less pale reflections of the ideal chair, or 'the idea of the chair'. The Platonic ideal world is not 'spiritual' in our sense. It is also not merely non-material because just as it is the source of physical things it is also the source of what we call spiritual things, like Truth, Beauty and Goodness. We recognize the chairness of objects we call chairs; likewise we recognize goodness in acts we call good, or beauty in things we call beautiful. Chairness and beauty are qualities, or ideas. They are not physical objects in themselves. They are real, even

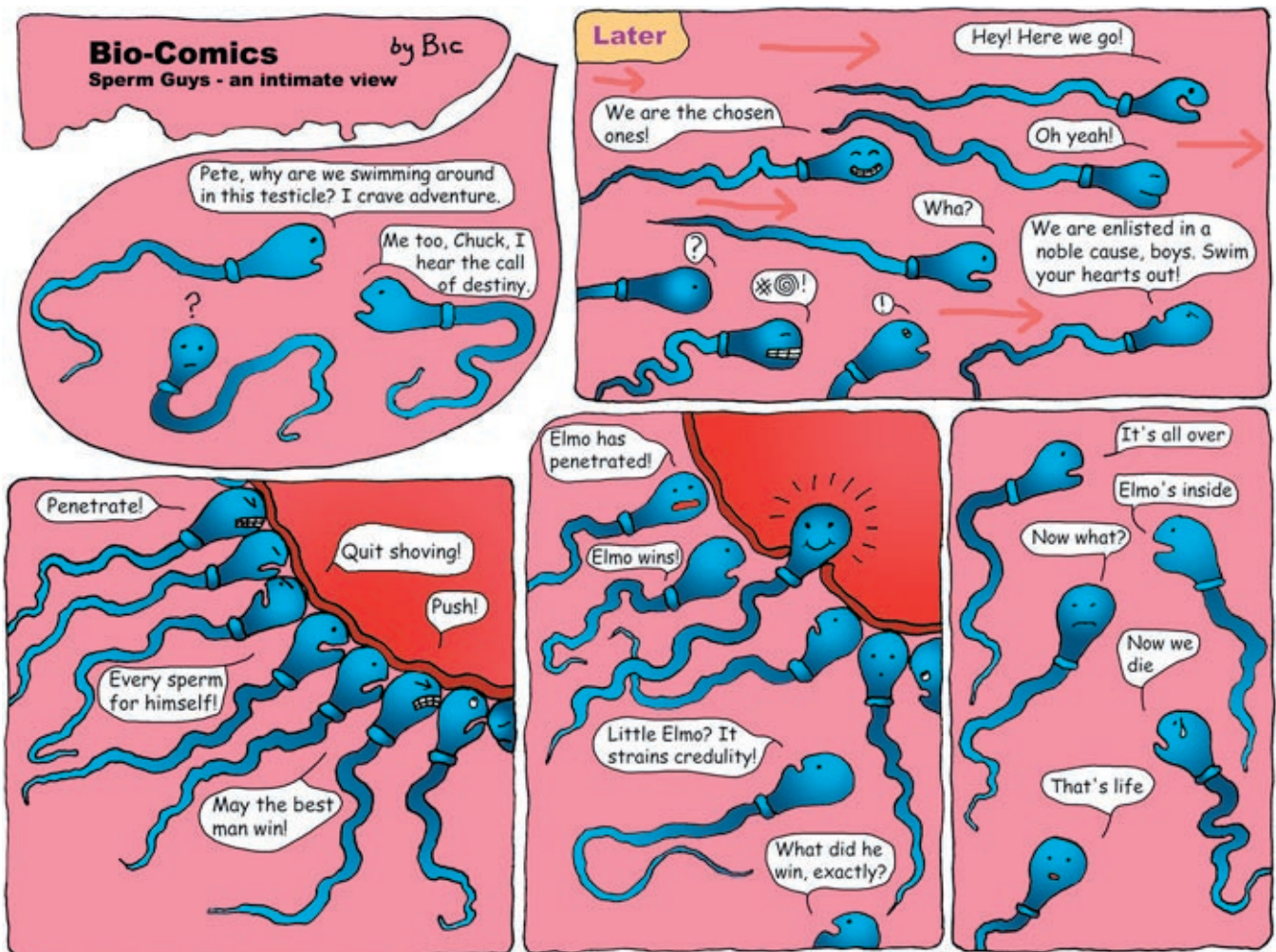
if we cannot look at or touch them directly. But, as we can explore a chair with our eyes and hands, so we can explore chairness with our minds.* Our minds are a portal into the ideal world. Again; Plato's ideal world is not a spiritual world. It is not some meta-place floating freely in another dimension. It is an integral aspect of the familiar universe. The underworld of normal or 'physical reality' is in a dynamic relation with the ideal world without which it would not exist. Without chairness there are no chairs.

Plato's ideal world of *The Republic* is a famous Greek metaphysic. The Christian metaphysic is different in two respects; the ideal world as source of our world is replaced by God who generates and maintains reality, but God also runs a program of salvation. Salvation is not a particularly Greek concept, but one could say that its place in Platonic philosophy is occupied by two things; the existence of ideals like Goodness and Truth, and the Platonic assertion that

* A Platonic concept like 'Ideal beauty' is generally misunderstood. It is sometimes referred to as an 'absolute'. But since it can never exist physically it is only 'absolute' in a narrow 'spiritual' sense. Ideal beauty can be approached in the physical world but never achieved not because of some quality of 'absoluteness' but because the physical world is radically inferior to the ideal world. Of two chairs one may be better because it is more chair-like, because it approaches more closely the ideal of chairness. But no chair can be the ideal chair because the ideal can never be particular; things in our Underworld are always particular. The same applies to ideal Beauty. Something can be more beautiful than something else only because there is an ideal which may be approached. If such an ideal does not exist then no basis for comparison exists and we fall into relativism, and beauty itself fades into non-existence. To put this another way, the ideal world is so noble, so magnificent, that its relation to the physical world is like the relation of the Overworld to Smolod. (See: *Cugel the Clever* vol. 15, chapter 1).

the highest type of human life is devotion to search for Truth, or contemplation of the ideal world. Since God, in the Christian metaphysic, is the source of reality there is a similarity between the Christian quest for salvation, or prayer, and the Greek quest for Truth, or contemplation of the ideal world. The Greek quest is not as rooted in metaphysics as the Christian quest because even if ideal Truth is real there is no dire consequence to not seeking it, while it is integral to the Christian metaphysic that we should seek God—failure to do so having dire, long-term consequences. The Platonic search for Truth is recommended but is only an enhancement. It is the noblest sort of life but other sorts of lives are also worth living; we will be happiest, here and now, searching for Truth rather than searching for fame, wealth, power or physical pleasure. But search for the latter will not result in eternal damnation.

The materialist metaphysic is different from both. There is no 'ideal'—or 'spiritual' or 'invisible'—reality of any sort. What you see—in the microscope—is what you get: electrons, mesons and quarks in motion. It is a metaphysic which, one might say, excludes metaphysics; beyond the strictly physical there is 'nothing'. It is therefore contradictory to speak of a materialist metaphysic, but since it is an important and influential species of comprehensive view the terminology must be accepted. We should not, however, forget its special quality. There are differences between Greek (or pagan), Platonic, Aristotelian and



Christian metaphysics, differences one would be tempted to call dramatic if they did not fade into insignificance by contrast with the Materialist view.*

All other metaphysics retain the concept of beyondness implicit is the suffix 'meta'. Materialist 'meta'-physics replaces the beyond with vast, or even infinite, quantities of nullity. The concept of 'nothing', upon which the materialist metaphysic depends, is like the famous Islamic zero. Vance offers a useful gloss:

A linden leaf clung to the front door of Rhialto's manse, pinned by a thorn. A prank of the wind, thought Rhialto, and brushed it aside. His new servant Puiras, however, picked it up and, in a hoarse grumbling voice, read:

NOTHING THREATENS MORREION

"What is this regarding Morreion?" demanded Rhialto. Taking the leaf he inspected the minute silver characters. "A gratuitous reassurance." Rhialto the Marvellous (vol. 34, page 185)

11 pages later we have:

Herark the Harbinger held up a black-enameled forefinger. "My habit is to make each problem declare its obverse. The first message, 'NOTHING THREATENS MORREION', becomes 'SOMETHING DOES NOT THREATEN MORREION'; and again, 'NOTHING DOES THREATEN MORREION'."

"Verbiage, prolixity!" grumbled the practical Hurtiancz.

"Not so fast!" said Zilifant. "Herark is notoriously profound! 'NOTHING' might be intended as a delicate reference to death; a niceness of phrase, so to speak."

"Was Xexamedes famous for his exquisite good taste?" asked Hurtiancz with heavy sarcasm. "I think not. Like myself, when he meant 'death' he said 'death'."

"My point exactly!" cried Herark. "I ask myself: What is the 'Nothing', which threatens Morreion? Shruë, what or where is 'Nothing'?"

Shruë hunched his thin shoulders. "It is not to be found among the demon-lands."

"Vermoulain, in your peregrine palace you have traveled far. Where or what is 'Nothing'?"

Vermoulain the Dream-walker declared his perplexity. "I have never discovered such a place."

"Mune the Mage: What or where is 'Nothing'?"

"Somewhere," reflected Mune the Mage, "I have seen a reference to 'Nothing', but I cannot recall the connection."

"The key word is 'reference,'" stated Herark. "Ildefonse, be so good as to consult the Great Gloss."

Ildefonse selected a volume from a shelf, threw back the broad covers. "'Nothing'. Various topical references . . . a metaphysical description . . . a place? 'Nothing: the nonregion beyond the end of the cosmos.'"

* The triumph of Materialist metaphysics has, naturally, generated a class of materialist priests; the 'social scientists', for whom good and evil are relative, or political activists who condemn any reference to 'evil' as a barbaric and obscurantist hold-over from the dark ages. Such doctrines, however, entangle their proponents in self-contradiction. For example, to replace evil they propose 'anti-social behavior'. So-called 'criminals' are no longer evil but victims of society—a notion encapsulated in a line from *West Side Story*: 'We're depraved 'cause we're deprived'. But the theologians of materialism are incapable of defining 'social' (read 'good') as a standard by which 'anti-social' behaviors can justifiably be 'corrected' or 'cured' (as opposed to punished).

In our standardless society we change sex, marry homosexuals and celebrate multiculturalism by elevating grunts to the rank of Mozart, and elephant dung dabbings to the rank of Renoir, wading deeper and deeper into what the late pope, John Paul the Great, called the culture of death. As a result western society, in vancian style, is now experiencing 'conservative back-lash', including resurgent Christianity.

Zero, a place-holding glyph, lacks positive value. It has none-the-less taken on a shadowy semblance of positive indication. 'Nothing' has become a metaphysical 'something', like anti-matter or the negative dimensions reached through black holes. This somethingish nothing is necessary to materialist metaphysics because only minds of angelic purity, not to say naïveté, are satisfied with the emptiness of the materialist universe. So much absence, such extensive no-thingness, through a process of spiritual fermentation, or meta-rot, takes on a sort of squirming substance. Vance, a solidly incarnated personality, and a hearty eater, seems to reject empty nothingness in favor of the infinite somethingness of the Greek and Christian approaches.

This is only half a joke. What really interests materialists is subtracting God from the cosmos. One may wonder at this anti-deist passion. No one is forcing them to believe in anything and, if the pope is to be believed, even evolutionary theorists have nothing to fear from the Church. I suppose they just don't want God meddling in their private affairs, their bedroom doings in particular, and getting rid of him is easy enough—the method is detailed in the first book of the Bible where the *modus operandi* is explained by the snake. But what to do with the heaps of leftover nothing? Something must be made of them. The metaphysical efforts of the Materialists, such as they are, must focus on this problem.

The oddest aspect of materialist metaphysics, however, is its silence—and it can be nothing but—regarding goodness. Platonic and Christian metaphysics point to goodness as a constituent of reality, a real thing. As the chairness of a particular chair can be measured against the ideal chair, the goodness of particular humans, or particular human acts, can be measured against ideal goodness. Or, in the Christian view, God says what is good and commands us to behave accordingly. To find out what God has commanded one may refer to his famous list of ten points; for conformity to these each person's acts may be measured. As it turns out, however, even such a simplified system is too much for human beings, so even though goodness is an integral and foundational aspect of reality, and everyone, believers and unbelievers alike, are obliged to cope with it, God has promised/threatened to make the final judgements himself. These, according to the system, will be 100% accurate because God, in his omniscience, sees to the bottom of each human soul. Justice will be done—if not immediately. In vindication of its reality Good will triumph.

In materialist metaphysics goodness is a ballet of electrons in human brains provoking, as a secondary or tertiary effect, a sort of dream. Electrons are neutral motes. They do not care how people behave. Goodness does not have its root in a quark. But unlike quarks the Materialists do care how people behave, even if they lack a good metaphysical reason to do so. This betrays either the poverty of their conceptions or the very irrationality which, above all, they pretend to reject.

But Goodness must be accounted for, if only as the mechanics of an illusion; the materialist solution is to reduce goodness to morality. Morality is very different from goodness because there is nothing essentially 'good' about it. It is a set of cultural attitudes specific to a given place and time. Its goodness is relative. In the Christian or

Greek context when two people disagree about the nature of goodness either one is right and the other is wrong or both are wrong. In the context of Materialism when two people disagree about the nature of goodness, both are right. Morality is no more metaphysical than preference for Pepsi over Coke. It is a hypnotic force exerted by local conditions, sometimes called 'social pressure'.

Materialist true-believers are an elite among contemporary Westerners. Most Near and Far Easterners, Africans, Oceanics and South Americans (not counting Asian Communists) use the metaphysics of Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity or some animist religion. In fact Materialists (with the exception of asiatic Communists) continue to live by the tenets of 'christian morality' or, as the phenomenon is sometimes expressed, live off their cultural heritage as parasites. Neitzche corrects this pusillanimity. According to him large minds may liberate themselves from the hypnotic influence of morality by placing themselves 'beyond good and evil'. Such people are the neitzchean 'Super-men'. By the act of self-liberation from hypnotic constraints they realize their full human potential. Neitzche is correcting impoverished Materialism by restoring an Aristotelian element: 'teleology'.

Teleology means having a natural goal, a sort of ambition by nature. The teleology of an acorn is to become an oak tree.* The teleology of humans must take into account their most human part, self-awareness. In Platonic metaphysics the natural (or as the Greeks would say, the noblest) end of man is Truth seeking. This is his teleology because it is the highest activity of his highest part: the mind. In Christian metaphysics it is the search for salvation, or the highest activity of what is the highest part in the Christian view: the soul. Without teleology man is adrift. In the Greek view he thoughtlessly seeks pleasure and avoids pain. In the Christian view he heedlessly risks earthly unhappiness and jeopardizes his soul's chance for eternal joy. The Materialist rejects teleology but is incapable of suggesting what man should do. Why not live to the creed of killing grandmothers? The Materialist may not like that philosophy but he can only offer a narrowly utilitarian argument against it: it is better to avoid killing grandmothers so that, when you yourself become a grandmother, you won't get bumped-off by your imitators. Whatever the ultimate worth of this argument it gets no support from the Materialist's metaphysics. The quarks-in-motion which make up our situation, including the grandmother, are no better or worse off after she is strangled, or chopped up with an axe, than before. We do not go into a dither when a cumulus cloud changes from a smiling man-shape into a barking dog-shape. In the Christian metaphysic grandmother killing is a 'crime' not because grandmothers are sacred cows to be worshiped, but because killing anyone

makes the angels weep, and God stipulates, on his little list, that this is in the 'no-no' category. In the Platonic metaphysic killing grandmothers outrages Goodness, and is therefore a particular expression of the ideal of Badness. In the materialist metaphysic any human passion or ambition is senseless. Absence of emotion and lethargy is equally senseless.

Neitzche notes that everyone but the supermen fall under the hypnosis of local culture. The supermen escape it. They go beyond good and evil to a realm of freedom which is man's highest state, because it is there that man's highest part may be exercised: his creativity. Ordinary men imitate, supermen create. What the super-men create will be as senseless as what they escaped, but at least they are fulfilling themselves by fully exploiting their human potential, or realizing themselves. This is Neitzchean teleology.

Neitzche also corrects materialism by adding an element of platonic Truth. According to pure materialist metaphysics 'truth', or knowledge, has no human significance, being restricted to the understanding—which is to say the observation and description—of physical phenomena. Anything else, such as the attitude man might have regarding these physical phenomena, is parasite-brain-wave phantasmagoria of the same dignity as static, or any other rogue phenomenon blemishing the smooth raveling and unraveling of cosmic stuffs. One can build up utilitarian moralities designed to favor, say, the prolongation of human existence but materialist metaphysics provides no answer to questions like: why prolong human existence? The proudly genuine materialist Metaphysician will say: "What difference does it make that occasionally, and purely by chance or the mindless permutations of swirling motes, the form we call 'human being' comes into brief existence? Why should these forms, even if they are us, be permitted a rank superior to other phenomena awash with us in the plasmic tide, like specks of dust? Our boasted self-awareness may, for all we know, be shared by the gas clouds of Andromeda, or lizard-things on the 4th planet of Zubenelgenubi.* We may make no claim, therefore, to any importance associated with uniqueness—if 'importance' is even an allowable concept." Unsurprisingly such discourses are never heard. Man is incapable of regarding himself as other than supremely important, first individually and then collectively. Might this be an intimation of a metaphysical horizon?

Heideggerian metaphysics both builds upon and contradicts netzschean metaphysics. As Nietzsche restores something Platonic to the flat-footed 19th century scientism which is the heart of Materialist metaphysics, so Heidegger restores something Christian; a human metaphysical horizon. In Christianity the human metaphysical horizon is indicated, to say nothing of other things, by the limits established by the ten commandments. In Nietzsche's improved Materialism rejecting the injunction to honor one's parents is an act of self-liberation which raises the rejecter to 'super-man' status. For Christians failure to obey the fourth commandment degrades our humanity not because parents are idols which much be worshiped but because sinning makes us less human, because our human

* Another teleology is mamalian sexuality. Mammals are differentiated and when mature come together for procreation. The process involves not only a comically elaborate and bizarre physical mechanism but impulses inexplicable without teleology for, in almost any variation one can imagine, the proposition of inserting an appendage into an orifice opening into another person's body is repellent. Were it further proposed that we should by this process deposit or receive a quantity of some bodily excretion, the matter becomes alarming. Only very special perverts dream of inserting their third right toe into the left ear of a significant other, and even then they don't dream of thus injecting pancreatic juice into the lateral lobe. Assert human freedom and sneer at Aristotle as you will; teleology rules. You may ignore it, deny it, or otherwise consign it to the already overcrowded materialist nowhere; you are only adjusting your mental blinkers.

* Alpha 2, of course.

destiny (teleology) is eternal joy in the love of (obedience, submission to) God.

Compared to the open-ended or blank and amoral beyondness which is the realm of the neitzchean Super-men, heideggerian metaphysics offers a differentiated, and therefore more colorful but also more restrictive alternative. Heidegger thinks our humanness is predicated upon the 'spiritual' or 'invisible' reality which Neitzche thinks the super-men are responsible for creating. This reality is called 'culture'. Heidegger may agree with Materialists that cultures are relative in relation to each other, but this agreement is of little significance since he also thinks the super-mannish escape from culture is a condemnation to non-being, or a slip back into animal-like non-self-awareness.

Neitzche emphasizes the creator of cultures, a Super-man or god-like artist. For Heidegger there is no question of creating culture only of *being* within it. He therefore emphasizes 'cultural expression' or the pre-neitzchean non-superman artist. Human self-awareness is a 'gift of culture' or a function of it. To put this another way; our humanity is generated by our art; stripped of our cultural roots, the feeling and knowledge of our society, we slide back toward an proto-cultural state of instincts and peristaltic reactions.*

Multiculturalism is the soft-headed or vulgar version of heideggerian metaphysics. The Multiculturalist celebrates culture as an absolute horizon but does not draw the serious heideggerian conclusions. He sees each person as exalted or realized by their culture, as well as trapped in it, but this leads him to a goody-goody conclusion: all cultures must be respected. The cultures are reduced to a motley festival of clownish equals. Heidegger might agree with the Multiculturalist that there is no standard by which to compare or rank the cultures, because 'goodness' is defined differently by each, but the Multiculturalist does not see the absurdity of his thoughtless pretension to judge cultures from the outside, and find them 'equal', or to fail to see, for example, that some cultures nourish the lust to destroy others. The Multiculturalist's cultures are indeed a carnival, but it is like the Carnavale of Clarges (vol. 7, page 194 & etc.) or Disjerferact of Unsibal (vol. 31. page 58 & etc.): tinsel exultation concealing monstrousness and decay.

For Heidegger the idea of cultural equality is a theoretical mystery which no man can experience, since only his actual belonging to a culture makes him aware of culture in the first place. A culture cannot be judged from the outside because it cannot be experienced from the outside. It is like gravity and atmosphere; without it our very bodies become senseless. On the moon we explode, on Mercury we burn, on Europa we freeze solid, on Jupiter we are squashed flat. In open space, assuming we neither explode, burn or freeze, having no purchase our motilators are reduced to futility. The Multiculturalist does not understand that his doctrine of 'cultural equality' is not only itself a 'cultural prejudice' but arrogant stupidity. He fails to see that his attitude is a parasitically confused and degraded christian metaphysical attitude, without which he would not only fail to be interested in such questions as culture and equality, he would not even be aware of them.

When the white man stumbles upon a tribe of primitives

the latter take him for food, a dangerous demon, a long awaited god, the spirit of their ancestors or something else, as dictated by their cultural horizon. We may chuckle at such childish reactions; they must also reminds us of the power of culture. Is Heidegger correct that the mind cannot reach beyond its cultural horizons?

Vance's work is filled with echoes of grecian metaphysics. Purple magic* is a realm of 'living symbols', a basic extension of which Howard Fair's uncle delineates the corollary, namely 'Dynamic Nomism'. Dynamic Nomism is words or language of material effectuation, or physical power:

For all Mazirian's magic he was helpless. The mesmeric spell had been expended, and he had none other in his brain. In any event he could not have uttered the space-twisting syllables with that mindless clutch at his throat.

(vol. 1, page 3)

The language of the Green Realm is like the Platonic ideals; it belongs to an over-world where concepts, or 'words' (like 'chair' or 'beauty') have a physical value on the level of our subworld—like an actual chair, or the beauty inherent in a 'beautiful' thing. Sometimes Vance hints at metaphysical situations tinged with Heideggerianism:

"The furious powers I control are not valid in the air of the demon-world, where substance and form are of different entity. So far as you see him, he has brought his environment with him; so far he is safe. When he ventures farther the power of Earth dissolves the Jeldred mode; then may I strike him . . ."

Guyal of Sfere (revised version, vol. 44, page 351)

The cultures are incompatible; in his proper environment Jeldred is immune.

Here is a passage illustrating a metaphysical situation redolent of both Plato and Heidegger:

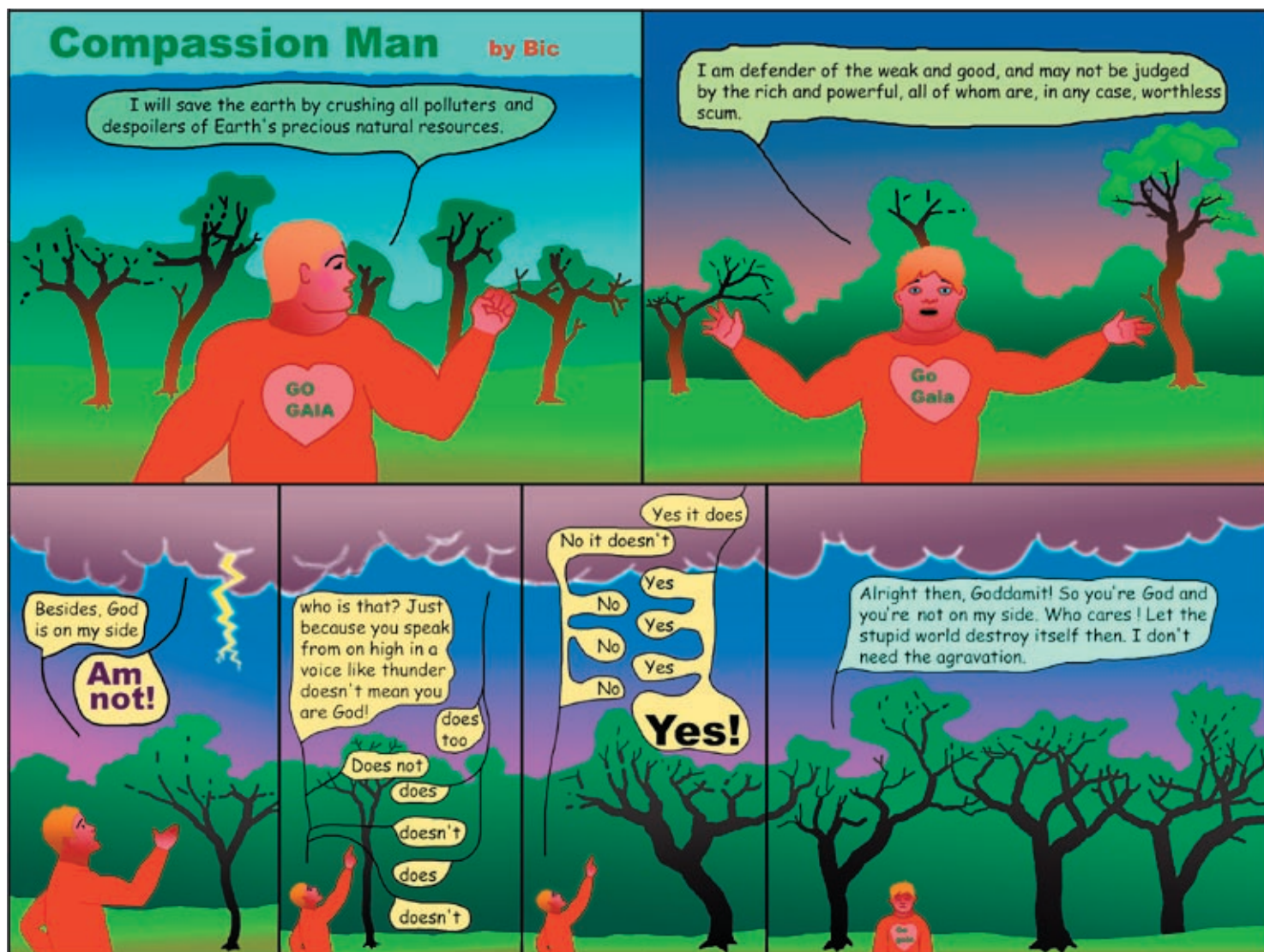
Mother was not a snob, but class-consciousness was the air she breathed. It simply had never occurred to her that plumbers, garbage-men and the like existed apart from their duties. She saw them fulfilling their roles as an organic necessity, in the same manner that a piano provides music, or a walnut tree bears walnuts. Betty had learned, therefore, to classify people by the most obvious of their aspects. Halfway across the Atlantic, considering this matter, she became vaguely excited, as if a truth of great import hovered at the verge of her mind. Everyone, she thought, moved through life behind a screen of symbols: words, clothes, gestures. It was an essential step in the process of growing up to recognize the symbols for what they were, and to feel behind them for the concealed personality. The applicable word was 'sympathy' in its classic sense, without overtones of pity. Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner: who wrote that? Voltaire? Surely he was wrong. One could understand selfishness and cruelty without condoning them.

The Dark Ocean (vol. 12, page 225)

Betty is seeing beyond the physical to the spiritual, or seeing through illusions to something more real, to basic, or ideal, concepts. In a concrete or even banal way this passage illustrates the idea of the mental horizon of culture; Betty is trapped in her mother's heideggerian cave but like the Platonic philosopher ascending to the sun of Truth she fits her mind's eye to the view of the Overworld. It is not merely 'personality' she sees, which would be an illusion hiding behind an illusion, but Platonic ideals: 'selfishness', 'cruelty', demon-like entities commanding and structuring human actions.

* See Cosmopolis 49 for a discussion of Heideggerianism.

* See Green Magic; VIE vol. #17



POLITICS

Vance's most political work is *The Cadwal Chronicles*. Certain analogies between the contending parties in the story and real-world groups, if not obvious at first glance, seem compelling: the Agents of Araminta Station represent the fundamental aspect of what we call 'democracy': the rule of law. The Peefers are ideologues. The Oomphaw (Smonny) and the Oomps are frank advocates of brute force.

If one attempts to understand these groups in terms of left' and 'right', Yipton might be qualified as 'right'. After the Yips destroy Stroma it is the Peefers who use brute force with much greater murderousness. This corresponds to historical fact. The fascists were very destructive but they were suppressed after less than 20 years; the Communists, despite their 'humanist discourse', are still in action almost a century after the Russian revolution with exponentially more murders to their credit.

The Cadwal analogy* rests on more than the mathematics of murder. After WW1, and the Versailles treaty, today considered gratuitously humiliating for the Germans by most historians, Hitler was not alone in feeling resentment. Hitler was also

* This explication is provisional, not meant to be accurate or instructive in itself but to help indicate the superiority of vancian concepts over the jargon in question. See *Cosmopolis #6* for a more developed political and historical discussion of *Cadwal*.

influenced by post-christian neo-tribal paganism, a heideggerian phenomenon rife in post war Germany. With the retreat of Christianity before triumphant materialism the old gods, the gods of the Teutonic folk, crept out of the Black Forest and down from the northern chill. They sang a siren song to sooth wounded German pride, a song of particularness. The gods of the folk are not the gods of all folk. They are our gods, the gods of our tribe. They are more beautiful than the other gods, for we are the most beautiful. Man's pride will not tolerate inferiority. His folk gods express this.*

Charmed, and drawing logical consequences in the Materialist context, for Heidegger the song of the teutonic gods was existential: the liturgy of the essence of german Being. For Hitler it was a bugle-call to action. But Hitler was not essentially a man of action. It is interestingly heideggerian that he was an artist, or an artistic type; a bohemian. His undeveloped talents as a painter are often derided by over-sophisticated art critics, but the true critic, seeing those few examples of his work available to the public, recognize the fierce soul of a poet. Despite our smarmy conceptions, a poet is not necessarily a fine and delicate fellow. Hitler may have indulged sordid hatreds, that did not impede exaltation in grandeur and tragedy. In his behemian days he would stand for hours in public squares gazing at noble architecture redolent

* The god of Israel, forever hectoring and punishing the Israelites, is the notable exception.

with the symbolism of triumph, ascension and rule. He found his path as a type of artist, an orator. He sang of German predominance, a destiny blocked by inferior races; the Jew, the Latin, the mongrel, the pervert, the deficient, the unbeloved of his gods. This flattery, this excuse of failure through accusation of others, caught the fancy of a people enduring hard times while others prospered. Not all German complaints were unjustified. Like all competent liars Hitler mixed the true with the false, the just with the unjust. By a series of unlucky circumstances, perhaps secretly favored by the newly active gods, Hitler came to power. Now he could realize his dreams. Harnessing the gods—for Germans are, indeed, a people of exceptional virtues and talents—he created the mightiest army the world had ever known, instituted the Thousand Year Reich, and embarked upon world hegemony.

If Hitler is the exemplar of the 'right' we now may ask: what hitlerism have to do with loyalty to king and church in Paris in 1789? Does the loyalty fascists demand to their pied-pipers have anything to do with feudal-style 'duty to king and country', freely given allegiance to a man son of the kings of his father and grandfather? Such kings might be modest and benevolent men. Louis XVI was more interested in laboratory science and family life than rule. He faithfully busied himself 'democratizing' France (as we would say today). He got his head chopped off by revolutionary fire-brands in a gesture whose absolute value is exactly equal to piping Zyklon gas into a chamber containing a naked Jewish woman: murder. Louis was never elected to office but the catapult which launched Hitler into power was to an important extent democratic. Furthermore; does abandonment of the soul to the gods of the folk have anything to do with submission to the christian God, who demands self-conscious abandonment of self and rejection of self-exultation?

Branding fascists as 'right wing extremists' is worse than simplification, worse than distortion, worse than mendacious; it is a perpetration of nonsense, a gallimaufry of abstract metaphor and thoughtless passions, an auto-destructive tissue of contradiction. Lucid minds will reject it.

I am not complaining that such amalgamations pollute the political process (though they do) but protesting their intellectual absurdity. The work of political scientists based on such categories remains at a alchemical level. If hitlerism is an 'extreme form' of loyalty to Louis XVI why are followers of Lenin—who was un-elected like Louis XVI and anti-Christian like his murderers—not also 'right wing extremists'?

Smonny was not an artist but otherwise she resembles Hitler; she is indolent, resentful, hateful, eager to redress the wrongs done her in a festival of murderous destruction, while simultaneously enlarging her domination. Given the harsh Agency system, her griefs, like Hitler's, were not all imagined. Smonny was forced not only to abandon her childhood home but to leave the very planet of her birth. Her place, her very childhood room, was taken by strangers, off-planet new-comers, all because she was less than brilliant in high school.

In *The Cadwal Chronicles* Vance gives not abstract analysis but a concrete picture. He shows us in action the passions and thoughts behind the great 20th century conflicts. The Peefers, who are the Marxists and post-christian Ideologues of our world, use a discourse of compassion and benevolence to disguise their selfishness and ultimately tyrannical

murderousness. The Yips, like the populations subject to the axis regimes, are innocent, or duped, or inflamed by leaders motivated by raw hatreds and naked lust for domination.

The difference between them is important. If Smonny and the Peefers are both fundamentally tyrannical, one is frank and the other is hypocritical. Both are very bad, but one is worse, because even more dangerous; a man armed with a sword and a pistol is more dangerous than a man armed with only a sword.

This is more than theory. The Marxists have proven themselves more dangerous than the Fascists. In the mindless terms of contemporary political theory, which ought to be rejected, the 'left' is more dangerous and worse than the 'right'.

Vance also shows the Democracies, in the form of Araminta Station, in a clear cold light: indolent, irresponsible, illogical, but eventually clear on basic principles (like rule of law) without which civilization evaporates. The Agents eventually rise to heroic stature, and even show compassion to a certain degree. However much less than ideal it is infinitely greater than anything offered by Smonny or the Peefers.

Vance is not for or against the 'right' or the 'left'. He does not protest against 'extremes', does not call for a 'middle way'. He shows, by his total silence, that such terms, and thus the categories they allegedly describe, are nuncupatory, a distraction from real issues. He dramatizes the lowest common denominators of civil existence (Araminta Station's rule of law), the minimum quantity of moral and physical fiber required for its maintenance. As a political book *The Cadwal Chronicles* is a disabused paean to the Tamms, Wooks and Clattucs upon whom survival of civilization depends. America may be no better than Araminta Station. But, despite the various charms of Yipton and Stroma, it is infinitely better than they. Whatever its faults, at Araminta Station there is hope, and hope is the foundation of human dignity and happiness. Yipton and Stroma are morbid.

THE TELELOGY OF SHOPPING

Only the most reckless souls still stand up for the Nazis. Only the blindest ideologues still advocate Communism. Neo-nazis are an epiphenomenon but a horde of recently 'ex' Communist card-carriers, collaborators, fellow-travelers and sympathizers can't get over their lost dreams. To console themselves they cling to the last vestige of their darling ideology: the marxist critique of capitalism—which is to say, the squawk of a wet crow at a man of straw.

The european intellectual elites, Julian Benda's traitorous clerics, along with their american epigones, will no doubt persist in lamentation and diatribe of the 'triumph of savage american-style Capitalism'. Meanwhile it is gratifying to watch them squirm as, ever more frequently, they are obliged to make ritual acknowledgement of the of murders committed by their heroes, disciples of the heralds* of Modernism, and salute the soldiers of freedom, the despised army of petit bourgeois Americans, which is the only counter-force. True; their anti-Capitalist fervor and crypto anti-Christian anti-Westerism, makes them secretly delighted to collaborate, fellow-travel or sympathize with the Islamo-fascists, a

* Machiavelli, Hobbes, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger. . .

demonic new menace being put down by the same deplorable petit bourgeois. It is the old story and only the tsunami of Armageddon will put an end to it.

These clerics, eagerly denouncing how 'savage capitalism' inflicts ever greater suffering upon the American people, to say nothing of everyone else, cleverly ignore that the oppressed everywhere, including the folk who work hardest in France, look to America as an ideal of freedom, even a potential savior. Their denunciation of American life as unsocial and atomized, a society of soulless consumers whose highest goal is shopping, cleverly ignores the self-conscious dedication of volunteer American soldiers to their mission in Iraq (a crusade for Freedom) or how active religiosity is far higher in America than, for example, France, a country which has energetically promoted anti-religiosity for centuries.† This same religiosity is meanwhile denounced as obscurantism. Is the petit bourgeois, with his shopping malls and churches, a soulless consumer or an obscurantist fanatic, or both?‡

The typical American, the typical individual anywhere, is like Glawen and Wayness. He dreams of living happily in a nice home with nice things. He does not worry overmuch about Yips. Peefers and Marxists pretend to care about Yips. They murdered them in record numbers. Who did something for the Yips? Araminta Station gave them work in the first place (not out of generosity of course, but because there was work to do) and then tolerated or ignored their existence, which is better than murder, and saved as many as possible from Peefer arson. A capitalist, Lewyn Barduys, in a gesture of Marshall Planesque scope, did the rest. If his reasons were sociological curiosity rather than Christian compassion it is graceless in a drowning man to complain that the rope they toss him smells of old fish.

The 'petit bourgeois' is the salt of the earth. The 'capitalist' is a benefactor. Vance is even a prophet of globalization:

Ships trading [...] everywhere across the settled worlds.

(vol. 26, page 142)

When they assert that 'Capitalism' is a counter ideology to Socialism, would not the vancian reaction be to wonder what is ideological about a man selling peanuts he grew in his field, even if that field was the size of the state of Georgia?

If Dorothy thinks there is no place like home, that true happiness is right in her own back yard, it does not stop her, when carried by the twister to the land of Oz, from defeating the wicked witches of both north and south, freeing the Munchkins and helping the Cowardly Lion gain courage. One could read the whole of Vance as a gloss on the work of L. Frank Baum:

The Isirjir Ziaspraide hovered over Frayness, and while all came out to watch, a gig descended into Tanglewillow Glen and delivered Jantiff to his front door.

Wyist (vol. 31, page 299)

† Much of the murderous and vandelous mayhem indulged by the French Revolution, in the 1790s, was directed against the Church. In the 1880s anti-religious laws were passed driving monks out of France. This occurred again in 1905.

‡ Jean François Revel has deftly analyzed the absurdities and contradictions of French anti-Americanism. See: http://www.encounterbooks.com/books/anam/anam_intro.html

THE PROCRUSTIAN METAPHYSICAL DILEMMA*

Materialists are impatient with obscurity, to say nothing of mystery. If their haughty impatience is not impressive enough to disguise from thoughtful people the poverty of their metaphysics it should none-the-less not be swiftly dismissed. It may be impoverished; it is not as if there is nothing to be said for it.

When Pagan metaphysicians claim the world is arrayed on the back of a gigantic tortoise swimming in a cosmic ocean—into which travelers will fall should they venture to the edge of the world-shell—that they are talking foolish nonsense is obvious to anyone in possession of what we currently consider the most elementary, not to say indispensable, information about reality. Equally extravagant, in appearance, the claim of the Islamic Metaphysician, regarding an invisible heaven where the deserving in life live on after death in bliss for eternity, is in fact more problematic. The broad-minded Materialist will grant that the theory may be true, since he is incapable of disproving it—though he will not fail to point out that the Islamic Metaphysician is likewise incapable of a scientific demonstration. But when the latter goes on to stipulate that, by special dispensation, martyred jihadists will be conceded further advantages—namely the services of not 10, not 20, not 50, but 70 virgins, who will make his eternal existence blissful beyond the earthly delights of the prophet himself, with his mere 20 wives†—our Materialist will be forgiven cynical suspicion that the Koranic clause in question was not dictated by the angel Gabriel but inserted because it augmented the prophet's military power, with the bonus of helping protect his earthly harem.

Often poo-pooed, but in fact more difficult for our Materialist hero to cope with, is insistence by so called Christian Fundamentalists on the written word of the Bible as an exact guide in all things. Examples of this style of metaphysical thinking may be found in *The Essentials of a Christian World View*‡ from which the following affirmations and denials regarding 'the nature of the universe' are taken. These points are at odds not only with atheist ideas, having implications for various branches of science, but challenge certain widely accepted Christian ideas also:

We affirm that the entire universe, including all finite beings, was created by God out of nothing (ex nihilo).

We deny that the universe is not created or that it was created out of God (ex deo) or out of preexisting material (ex materia).

We affirm that the space/time universe is finite, temporal, and real.

We deny that the space/time universe is infinite, eternal, or illusory.

We deny that the universe is in any way to be identified with God or that it exists independently of God.

We deny that man evolved from or is genetically derived from the lower forms of life.

We affirm that because of man's rebellion against God, both he and his environment exist in a corrupted state and stand under the condemnation of God.

* To passing strangers Procrustes offered hospitality and a night's rest in his famous 'Procrustian bed', which he vaunted as particularly comfortable because its size matched whoever slept in it. It was not some magical morphing of the bed, however, which worked this prodigy, but Procrustes himself; those too short he stretched on a rack, those too long he shortened with an axe. The name 'Procrustes' means 'he who stretches'. Explanation adapted from: mythweb.com

† The same prophet who limited the harems of his minions to 4 females.

‡ by Dr. Jay Grimstead of the Coalition on Revival. See: formation.net. I thank Joel Anderson for this link.

The questions addressed are basic: where does the universe come from? What is its nature? How did man come to be? Is goodness written into the cosmic fabric or is it relative and illusory? Such questions are what any self-respecting metaphysician, including the Materialists, must seriously address. These particular answers in *The Essentials of a Christian World View* may appear silly, or unsatisfactory. At least they are argued in detail. Such ideas have a long history and, if we abandon our facile prejudices and recognize the essential poverty of our human state, we might take them seriously as worthy points of debate. The least that should be admitted is how much more meaty they are than corresponding Materialist propositions.

Apart from the problem of the relative value of christian fundamentalist and materialist metaphysics, what I would like to bring out is the somewhat heideggerian and perhaps obvious point that any set of metaphysical assumptions must weigh upon the thought-universe and conduct, and thus upon the personal and communal atmosphere of its adherents. There is a procrustean aspect to metaphysics which cannot be escaped by those who claim to reject or ignore it. We cannot function without a method of coming to grips with things, and this method implies, or is generated, by a more or less conscious metaphysic, or notion about how things are. A proper critique of christian fundamentalist positions is impossible in the context of this article, but I will explore one point which revealingly over-laps other metaphysics I have discussed; the idea of the corrupted state of nature.

For the non-platonic greek metaphysician nature was under the control of the gods. It was neither corrupt nor good in itself, but propitious or hostile depending upon the attitude of the capricious deities who controlled it. For the materialist metaphysician, by contrast, nature is simply what it is, a brute fact without moral taint. We may observe the living consequences of these variants by looking at them through the lens of global warming.

The greek attitude would be, on the one hand, resignation in the face of inscrutable divine mischief, plus outrage and lust to punish the human culprits whose impiety set the gods off half-cocked heating up the atmosphere. What they would not think is that Man was master of the world and directly responsible for climactic change.

A serious materialist Metaphysician (a sample of which I have never encountered but who is a character constantly amusing to construct in speech) should not see global warming as a 'violation' of anything because human activity is just another species of the motion/stillness characterizing the universal mechanism which always and everywhere works perpetual change. He might be concerned for his personal safety—particularly if he is a Dutchman living below sea-level—but should feel no moral outrage because no evil is transpiring. How does this theoretical materialist attitude square with the real-world materialist tone of high outrage and scandalized condemnation for polluters and other non-signatories to the Kyoto Accords? Under the heideggerian pressure of their cultural roots they retain attitudes developed by centuries of christian metaphysics. Despite their atheism, or crypto-atheism, they atavistically regard as evil the human activity which alters the environment because it is a crime against God's dispensations, His divine creation, and ought to be righteously combated. The Materialists are not materialist; they are

christian parasites.*

Since the christian Fundamentalists think that nature is corrupt and condemned by God, their proper attitude might be an indifference not dissimilar to the logical attitude of the hypothetical intellectually-consistent Materialist. Since man is evil, and nature is evil also, no matter what anyone does, even if global warming is averted, one way and another the whole mess is going to end badly. Before Armageddon hits it is best to labor to save one's soul and do whatever modest good one can: being faithful to one's wife, teaching christian precepts to children, voting against pro-abortion candidates. Some fundamentalists, however, are activist, exposing them to the reproach that they are proudly relying on themselves, proudly assuming the status of God's tools.

Non-fundamentalist Christians (Catholics for example) will not agree with the angelic attitude I pretend is inherent to the logic of christian fundamentalism (even if it is not in practice). In the catholic and mainstream protestant view man has been given stewardship over the earth (Genesis 1; 28-30). Carelessly destroying it is an act of impiety. Main-stream Christian outrage at global warming, however foolish, would at least be metaphysically consistent. As it happens main-stream Christians seem to be less active regarding this matter. Perhaps this is because, despite all the yelling and shouting, it fails to be a serious one.

These various metaphysical approaches, unless one of them is true, and even if their goals are the same (denying, accepting or combating global warming) may all be seen as styles of navel-gazing, or of interpreting the world per local precepts. This opens a vancian perspective upon an infinity of local situations building up a notably heterogeneous universe.

THE METAPHYSICAL VANCE

The metaphysical Vance deploys on two levels. At the lower level are the metaphysical assumptions implicit in his stories, or the world, in the largest sense of the word, in which they take place. At the higher level are the metaphysical speculations, experiments and arguments which the stories often present. Regarding the first level not much need be said. What may be called 'Vance's world' is that of the true philosopher living in our advanced christianized society. If this metaphysic is neither christian, strictly speaking, nor platonic, neither is it materialist. Vance flirts with neitzchian metaphysics; the Demon princes are 'beyond good and evil'. He flirts with Heideggerian metaphysics, clearly fascinated by

* In an article called 'Spiritual Parasites: Couldn't evil be explained by choice?' (see: <http://www.victorhanson.com/>) Bruce Thornton writes: "We modern Westerners are what the Spanish poet Miguel de Unamuno called "spiritual parasites," living off that rich spiritual tradition and the values and institutions it created, even as we discount those same spiritual values and look rather to the high priests of materialist determinism to make sense of our world. But is anyone truly satisfied with the chatter of the determinists? Does anyone think that their reductive explanations get at [the nature of acts of horror]? That science can ultimately say anything meaningful about what we are, and why we do what we do, that doesn't in the end depend on radically simplifying the complex, intricate, unpredictable, quirky reality of our individual humanity? In short, that doesn't ultimately dehumanize us by turning us into mere material things in the world, a gob of meat to be aborted or left to starve to death when it becomes inconvenient?"

the force of local culture.† But the underlying metaphysic of his stories is an occidental everyman's metaphysic relying, like most of us, and in heideggerian fashion, upon the assumptions we live by and among.

I am here concerned with an intermediate level: those vancian theories and discussions which touch upon the metaphysic of his story world. In chapter 7 of *Emphyrio* we read:

Recently, among the bits and fragments in Amiante's portfolio, Ghyl had come upon a few lines of philosophical dialogue which had haunted him; and now, innocently, he spoke them:

"IN A SITUATION OF INFINITY, EVERY POSSIBILITY, NO MATTER HOW REMOTE, MUST FIND PHYSICAL EXPRESSION."

"DOES THAT MEAN YES OR NO?"

"BOTH AND NEITHER."

(vol. 20, page 86)

The 'situation of infinity' idea is found in other stories but it is fully explicated in the following passage of *Emphyrio*:

The group leader, irked by the interruption and by the break in the mood he was trying to establish, asked in a cold voice, "What is all this obscurantist ambiguity? I fail to understand!"

"Simple really," drawled Nion Bohart [...] "It means that anything is possible."

"Not quite," said Ghyl, "it means more than that; I think it's an important idea!"

"Bah, rubbish," snorted the leader. "But perhaps you will deign to elucidate."

[...] "As I see it, the cosmos is probably infinite [...] So there are local situations — a tremendous number of them. Indeed, in a situation of infinity, there are an infinite set of local conditions, so that somewhere there is bound to be anything, if this anything is even remotely possible [...]"

"Come, come!" snapped the leader. "You are blithering! Declare us this dramatic enlightenment in plain words!"

"Well, it might be that in certain local regions, by the very laws of chance, a god like Finuka might exist and exert local control. Maybe even here, on the North Continent, or over the whole world. In other localities, gods might be absent [...]"

The leader drew a deep breath. "Has it occurred to you that the individual who attempts to reckon the possibility or probability of a god is puffing himself up as the spiritual and intellectual superior of the god?"

"No reason why we can't have a stupid god," muttered Nion Bohart[...]

"It is a posture, may I say, of boundless arrogance. And also, the local situation is not under discussion. The Glyph reads, 'Finuka disposes!'. This clearly means that Finuka controls all! Not just a few acres here and a few acres there. If this were the case the Glyph would read 'Finuka disposes across the township of Elbaum, in Brueben Precinct, likewise along the Dodrechten mudflats' or some such set of qualifications. Is this not obvious? The Glyph reads 'Finuka disposes!', which means Finuka rules and judges — everywhere!"

Three basic ideas may be gleaned from this dialogue. First, Ghyl claims that the 'situation of infinity' theory implies more than that 'anything is possible'. This more can only be that not 'anything', but 'everything' is possible, and not only possible but actual. The idea of infinity is too extensive for the scope of this essay however, following the example of Lehusier (vol. 34, page 21), I will make a 'terse statement': with one qualification

I cannot dispute the idea I am imputing to Ghyl: not only is anything possible, everything is actual. For example, every form of atomic and molecular structure, like every possible snowflake, in an infinity of time and space must be. Not only snowflakes and other mineral variations, the molten richness of which is mostly hidden in the depths of the planets and suns, but bio-spheric manifestations calculated to thrill our most sensational dreams; giant pterodactyl-like creatures which humanoids might use for mounts, floating 'clouds' of lighter-than-air substance upon which large dwellings of pumice might be built — or things even more extravagant: gigantic breathers of interstellar gas whose brains project cogencies congealing matter into random, convenient or desired forms on an inter-galactic scale.

The second idea is that while a metaphysician puffs himself up to be superior to a god, that god might be stupid. Modernist approaches, from Hobbes to Heidegger, imply the stupidity of god; puffing themselves up as his spiritual and intellectual superior, they demote him to non-existence. On the other hand the materialist Metaphysician might seem the most modest of his class; if he is dealing with a god at all it is certainly a stupid one. The dead and senseless plasma which constitutes his universe is either without thought or capable of only limited thinking. In defence of the christian Metaphysician it may be pointed out that he is, strictly speaking, a theologian, eager to make more or less sincere and justified proclamations of modesty. You don't make *Exodus* 32, 15-16, the cornerstone of your moral teaching unless you are prepared to profess a certain submissiveness:

And Moses turned, and went down the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides: on the one side and the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

Heidegger also seems to support modesty by confining man to his current if perhaps evolving culture. But any materialist philosophy reduces the god of christian civilization to imbecility, as Vance implies on page 83 of *Emphyrio*:

About noon they reached Rabia Scarp. During some ancient storm the scarp had been struck by lightning, with the result that a boss of black rock was traced with a set of complicated marks. Certain of these marks, which priests had enclosed in a gold frame, bore the semblance of Archaic characters, and read:

FINUKA DISPOSES!

Before the sacred Glyph a large platform had been built, with an Elemental Pattern inlaid in blocks of quartz, jasper, red chert, onyx.

For the troop leader to escape the condemnation of 'puffed-up' he levels at Ghyl, he must demonstrate that Finuka, not the god of Moses, is the true universal god — which brings us to the third idea, and the qualification mentioned above: the conflict between universal and local claims. How can everything imaginable be possible if one of the imaginable things is a god responsible for everything? This conundrum is addressed explicitly in Vance's first published story. The god Laoome is said to 'think worlds' but, like the Elders of the Hub, he only controls a private infinity. Is a private infinity really infinite? Is it not a species of local-situation englobed in a greater infinity? Perhaps, but for the creatures who live in it the question is nuncupatory; what is infinite for them

† A striking example of a heideggerian exposition is *Nopalgarth* (vol. 8, page 183), where visceral likes and dislikes, as well the '6th sense' so characteristic of vancian humanity is a function of cosmic brain parasites, the Nopal or the Gher, existing in a non-physical, alternate, or parallel dimension, an invisible world like that inhabited by angels and demons. This parasite world intersects ours at the interface of the brain. The parasites, selfishly interested in their host's well-being, transfer useful informations, via subliminal suggestion, to their host. The mutual animosity of Nopal and Gher are also transferred. In a materialist-evolutionary twist to the story, each seeks to protect its self-interest by destroying the competitor's hosts.

might as well be universally infinite:

The World-Thinker spoke: "That which you see before you is matter as real and tangible as yourself. I have indeed created it through my mind. Until I dissolve it in the same manner, it exists. Reach out and touch it."

Lanarck did so. [...] and the red forest crushed like dry moss under his fingertips.

"You destroyed a village," commented Laoome, and caused the world to expand [...] until the perspectives were as if Lanarck hung a hundred feet above the surface. [...] The trees, far larger than he had supposed, with boles thirty or forty feet through, lay tossed and shattered. Visible were the ruins of rude huts, from which issued calls and screams of pain, thinly audible to Lanarck. Bodies of men and women lay crushed. Others tore frantically at the wreckage.

Lanarck stared in disbelief. "There's life! Men!"

"Without life, a world is uninteresting, a lump of rock. Men, like yourself, I often use. They have a large capacity for emotion and initiative, a flexibility to the varied environments which I introduce."

[...] "Are they really alive?"

"Certainly. And you would find, should you converse with one of them, that they possess a sense of history, a racial heritage of folklore, and a culture well-adapted to their environment."

Lanarck now poses the obvious question:

"But how can one brain conceive the detail of a world? The leaves of each tree, the features of each man —"

"That would be tedious," Laoome agreed. "My mind only broadly

conceives, introduces the determinate roots into the hypostatic equations. Detail then evolves automatically."

Here we have a half-way station between the god that knows each hair on each head, and a more distant 'creative force' which merely sets rules. This is the god of de-Christianized Christians.

Vance next develops the same idea in a darwinian context:

"An experiment in evolution," came Laoome's thought. "A million years ago those creatures were men like yourself. This world is oddly designed. At one end is food, at the other drink. In order to survive, the 'men' must cross the desert every day or so. The dragon is prevented from leaving the desert by actinic boundaries. Hence, if the men can cross the desert, they are safe."

Lanarck, understandably scandalized by Laoome's doings, formulates the ritual reproach:

"You allowed me to destroy hundreds of these — men."

Curious feelers searched his brain. Lanarck sensed Laoome's amusement.

"The idea is repugnant? In a moment I shall dissolve the entire world. . . Still, if it pleases you, I can restore it as it was. See!"

Immediately the forest was unmarred, the village whole again, secure and peaceful in a small clearing.

The ways of the gods are mysterious, without common



measure to human ways. But Lanarck is not Laoome's creation, he is neither his object nor his subject. His judgement upon him is not puffed-up because they are existential equals. Laoome's failure to share Lanarck's values and principles is a fault which Lanarck, unlike Laoome's creatures, is in a position to more than rebuke:

"You're a most practical man. What happened to Laoome?"

"Laoome is dead."

"How?"

"I destroyed him. I thought of what we just went through. His dream-creatures — were they real? They seemed real to me, and to themselves. Is a person responsible for what happens during a nightmare? I don't know. I obeyed my instincts, or conscience, whatever it's called, and killed him."

Isabel May took his hand. "My instincts tell me that I can trust you."

Isabel is reassured because Lanarck has demonstrated what for a woman should be the most important quality in a man: submission to the basic tenets of our civilization, such as protection of the weak—as explicated in the ten-point plan of the god of Moses.



VANCE ON . . .

MODERN ART

"I know that I've got at least two minds working all the time," said Althea. "Sometimes I relax the one on top just to see what the other one will do, and very interesting things happen. It's a lovely game to play when you've nothing better to do."

"That's how a lot of modern artists paint pictures," said Ben.

"Unfortunately I'm not interested in their souls, any more than they're interested in mine."

Bad Ronald (volume 12, page 167)

FEMININE BEAUTY

"I've admired beautiful women all my life. Unfortunately from a distance."

Dark Ocean (vol. 12, page 243)

THE EPICURIAN IDEAL

. . . that is the reason we are on this earth, eh? To drink good wine," he raised his glass, "to have good things to eat, to smoke good cigars, to enjoy the friendship of beautiful women." He drank his wine with satisfaction.

(Ibid.)

LUST

The thought of supple young bodies and the fascinating things that might be accomplished urged him to gallant enterprise.

Bad Ronald (volume 12, page 113)

SLANDER

As for Sir Shalles, he had not been idle, and appeared here and there to disseminate a wonderful variety of rumors. Sir Shalles, according to best report, was a stocky gentleman of intelligence and credibility, even though a number of his claims were either inherently ridiculous or self-contradictory; his audience could believe what it

wanted to believe. He stated that Aillas and the Ska had formed a secret alliance; that ultimately the Ulf barons would find themselves fighting for the Ska. Sir Shalles reported that Aillas was subject to foaming fits, and that his sexual tastes were both freakish and rank. Sir Shalles also had it on the best authority that after King Aillas rendered the barons defenseless, he intended to impose a crushing burden of taxes upon them, and confiscate their lands when they could not pay.

"Is there more?" Aillas asked when Sir Tristano had stopped for breath.

"Much more! It is widely known that you are already sending shiploads of Ulf maidens back to Troicinet for use in the waterfront stews."

Aillas chuckled. "What about my worship of Hoonch the dog-god? And the fact that I poisoned Oriante so as to become King of South Ulfland?"

"Neither of those, yet."

"We must strike back at this energetic Sir Shalles."

The Green Pearl (vol. 37, page 183)



FEELING THE PROD

Reacting to Extant #1 on the Vance-BBS Dan Gunter opines that I have done great work:

organizing and herding the VIE to completion

but that I have also:

showed [myself] to be sadly lacking in judgment.

I wonder how he reconciles these judgements? How could I have successfully herded (if I did) without good judgement? Or is he just complaining that the good judgement failed to show—that the 'herder's art', as Socrates might have called it, was hidden?

Dan Gunter comments on Extant #1:

. . . [Paul Rhoads] seems intent on going to war with me, apparently because I had the temerity to disagree with him, and to do so directly.

I should search my soul and repent a tyrannical taste for abject obedience, a habit of intolerant fury and insensate war-making at any show of resistance to my will, particularly if it is brave and direct?

At least Dan Gunter has neatly seized upon one nugget of truth:

I have apparently irked the bejesus out of Paul Rhoads.

Correct! Is he sorry about this? In the highly hypothetical case he might have done anything he should regret, is he contemplating apology? On this point he makes himself quite clear:

Curiously, I don't feel at all guilty about that.

I agree that it is curious.



CRITICAL REACTION

Response to Extant #1 has been lively, bilingual and covers the good 'ol spectrum from sarcasm to encomium. Some samples:

I feel "Extant" will become very influential. Yes, indeed, long after the VIE is forgotten people will still be reading "Extant." First we had Jack Vance, which was good, but even he himself did not after all fully understand what he was trying to do. He was fumbling, blindly, as it were, for truths which have only come to be spelled out clearly in the pages of "Cosmopolis." Now we have something even better.

I do not think that [Jack Vance's] achievement as an author is well served by the kind of discussion I find in your Extant publication. Please do not include me in your readership.

. . .you have a wonderful written voice and a delicious range of logic and humor and sarcasm that is highly enjoyable to read.

Votre analyse est brillante. Non seulement je suis d'accord avec chacune des lignes que vous avez écrit, mais cela m'a permis de comprendre, en grande partie, pourquoi j'aime autant l'oeuvre de Jack Vance (que je lis et relis depuis presque vingt ans). Et encore bravo pour le clin d'oeil: il y avait COSMOPOLIS, il fallait EXTANT!

What debate! What ripostes! What hair-raising battles through the virtualosphere! . . .your writing is a delight. Your combination of wit, spleen and high concern for important things is pineapple on chocolate.

. . .thanks for your irascability!



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