

## MAGIC vs. ENCHANTMENT

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According to William Blake, 'To Generalize is to be an Idiot.' As a compulsive generalizer with a weakness for the Big Picture, my only defense is that there is really no such thing; all generalizing is a kind of more-or-less disguised particularizing, with no special claim to universal truth. And I claim none here.

This paper is written in the spirit of Max Weber's meditations on 'the disenchantment of the world', together with the critical theory of Adorno and Horkheimer and, more recently, Zygmunt Bauman. But my starting-point may be less familiar; it comes from an essay by J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy-Stories'.<sup>1</sup> In his attempt to define the nature of Faerie, Tolkien noted that it 'may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic - but it is magic of a peculiar mood and power, at the furthest pole from the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific, magician.' Instead, he wrote, 'the primal desire at the heart of Faerie' is 'the realization, independent of the conceiving mind, of imagined wonder.'<sup>2</sup>

In order to accommodate this difference, Tolkien drew a powerful and elegant distinction:

Enchantment produces a Secondary World into which both designer and spectator can enter, to the satisfaction of their senses while they are inside; but in its purity it is artistic in desire and purpose. Magic produces, or pretends to produce, an alteration in the Primary World...it is not an art but a technique; its desire is power in this world, domination of things and wills.<sup>3</sup>

Elaborating slightly, we might now describe the domain of magic as that of power-knowledge; and that of Enchantment, as art.<sup>4</sup> But that would be simplistic, as we shall see. For one thing, Tolkien makes it clear that Enchantment, as (in his literary mythology) the art of the Elves, is intrinsically bound up with what we often think of something quite different, namely, nature. But nature is very often the object of Magic, too.

In what follows, I would like to point out the virtues of this distinction before considerably extending and refining it. I then consider the present world-historical situation of Magic and Enchantment, which suggests a new category – Glamour – and throws fresh light on the possibility of a 're-enchantment of the world'. Finally, I shall reflect on the special relationship of Enchantment to wonder and to nature.

### **Magic vs. Enchantment**

The virtue of Tolkien's suggestion is most immediately obvious, I think, in the way it disentangles the two very different ways that the same word, 'magic', is commonly used: one to mean enchantment, as in: 'It was magic!' and the other to denote paranormal means to an end, as in: 'to use magic'. (There is a third common meaning, that of trickery or

deceit, which is not relevant here.) What is important about the second meaning is not its paranormality, however, but its instrumentalism; for Tolkien's analysis also undermines the usual simplistic and misleading opposition between 'science' and 'magic'.

As a matter of philosophical, practical and historical fact, these two share extensive common ground - much more than what divides them. The principal goal of both is to engineer changes in the Primary world, and both try to amass knowledge in order to predict and control that world; both adhere to the idea of laws of nature which can be manipulated for human gain. That those laws are spiritual or occult in the case of magic and material in the case of science is a point of ultimately secondary importance. Nothing in Aleister Crowley's idea of magic - 'the art of bringing about changes in conformity with will' - would greatly upset a contemporary scientist, except perhaps for calling it an art instead of a science.<sup>5</sup>

Historically speaking, a great deal of 'natural magic' went into the making of modern science in the late seventeenth century, when the latter absorbed, adapted and renamed much of the former. This is especially true of the Baconian programme, Newton's work, and the Royal Society, one of whose founder members, Elias Ashmole, defined magic as 'the Connexion of naturall Agents and Patients, answerable each to other, wrought by a wise Man to the bringing forth of such effects as are wonderfull to those that know not their causes.'<sup>6</sup> Specifying what kind of 'natural Agents' were involved was, and continues to be, a turf war internal to Magic. Nor has the popular incomprehension of science, which continue to render its effects 'wonderfull' to the public, changed much; how many people really understand telephones, let alone computers, or quantum physics?

Sometimes the magical nature of modern science is openly admitted, and even exploited: as with General Electric's corporate research laboratory, the first in the USA, which was touted as a 'house of magic', staffed by white-coated 'wizards'.<sup>7</sup> More often, however, it is strenuously denied in a way that highlights the tendentiousness of the magic/science opposition. For that is to accept the dubious and self-interested claims of scientific spokespersons to have transcended states of magical enchantment - a.k.a. 'superstition', 'ideology', or 'false consciousness' - and by virtue of a state of disinterested and disenchanting reason, to have seen and described the world 'as it actually is'. Thus we pass all too easily from rationality to rationalism, and from science to scientism, the cult of scientific reason.<sup>8</sup>

Tolkien's distinction between Magic and Enchantment undermines this convenient intellectual deception. It enables us to see that the tension between these two different ways of knowing and of valuing<sup>9</sup> exists within probably every major human discourse: in science, for example, between instrumentalist-utilitarian knowledge of the natural world enabling its exploitation, and deep appreciation of its extraordinary wonders. True, the former dominates; but there are sufficient exemplars of scientific wonder for its own sake (David Attenborough and Loren Eiseley spring to mind) to show that it doesn't do so absolutely. Within magic too - whether the occult arts, New Ageism or neo-paganism - there is an ineradicable tension between the attempted manipulation of spiritual forces for power on the one hand and the worship of ultimate spiritual mysteries on the other. And by the same token, none of these domains can claim to be free of metaphysical, cultural or practical assumptions, or to have an exclusive franchise on the truth.<sup>10</sup>

However, Tolkien's definition of Enchantment needs some further unpacking. If it was simply cognate with art, the result would be to replace one stereotypical cultural assumption - magic vs. science - with another, namely C.P. Snow's 'two cultures' of

science (as Magic) and art. But I don't think this is the case. It is true that Enchantment 'is artistic in desire and purpose', and usually involves the creation of a Secondary World; but its prerequisite is 'the realization, independent of the conceiving mind, of imagined wonder'. In other words (or so I take it), Enchantment must indispensably include an experience of wonder as a reality that, so far as the person(s) involved are concerned, could otherwise or hitherto only ever have been imagined. (Note that it need not have actually been imagined – ie., by the conceiving mind.)

Such an experience, which most of us have probably tasted at least once or twice in our lives, is indeed an essential goal of art, but it is not confined to art. Furthermore, art in this respect draws its provenance – perhaps even its meaning - from such experiences in and of the 'real' world, which it seeks to re-create; a Secondary World can only use the materials, psychological as well as artistic, of the Primary. Enchantment therefore cannot be confined to art; and this actually accords well with Tolkien's otherwise somewhat baffling equation of Enchantment with 'Faerian Drama', the usual effect of which '(upon a man) is to go beyond Secondary Belief. If you are present at a Faerian drama you yourself are, or think that you are, bodily inside its Secondary World.... To experience directly a Secondary World: the potion is too strong, and you give it to Primary belief, however marvellous the events.'<sup>11</sup>

In any case, Tolkien is certainly right that Enchantment does not consist of a willed suspension of disbelief: you 'believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arise, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather the art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from the outside.' This too is not an experience confined to art; think of the attitude of enthralled participants in sexual congress, compared to the disenchanting view of Lord Chesterfield: 'The pleasure is momentary, the position ridiculous, and the expense damnable.' The same gulf separates those who are 'inside' from those on the 'outside' of mystical experience, or even, say, a football game. True, it is possible to suspend disbelief, but that 'is a substitute for the real thing, a subterfuge we use when condescending to games or make-believe, or when trying (more or less willingly) to find what virtue we can in the work of an art that has for us failed.'<sup>12</sup> And unlike Magic, whatever Enchantment may involve it is not the will (as such).

### **Complications**

I am not suggesting that the divide between Magic and Enchantment is absolute; nor, by any means, that the former is necessarily bad while the latter is good. Indeed, it may well be that both modes are a necessary part of human life, in a way reminiscent of yang and yin in Chinese philosophy, or, relatedly, maleness and femaleness (in a way that includes but transcends biological gender). But I am also not positing unchanging metaphysical principles; indeed, I am going to suggest that the way they have constituted by and in context is why they now matter.

Magic and Enchantment overlap in complex, even paradoxical ways, as can be seen in various test-cases which clarify both their differences and their interplay. Take divination, for example; the new awareness that flows from an act of divination may - and paradigmatically, I believe, does - partake of (re-) enchantment, rather than a utilitarian usefulness as such.<sup>13</sup> However, one may well have a new approach to acting in the 'real' world afterwards, and thus an altered situation vis-à-vis power-knowledge. In other words,

while Enchantment is not in itself an act of will intended to produce certain effects in the primary world, it may well have such effects indirectly.<sup>14</sup>

Exactly the same applies to fiction - which is why both Shelley's boast about poets as the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world' and Auden's lament that 'Poetry changes nothing' are so unsatisfactory. Poetry, and fiction generally, cannot, by its nature, successfully set out to change things, because that is to leave Enchantment for Magic, and thus fail as the former; the *raison d'être* of imaginative literature, as opposed to a tract, is precisely to enchant. But that does not mean that it cannot make things happen in the Primary world, albeit not always in accord with what its author would have wished. The sad case of *The Satanic Verses* illustrates this point very clearly. It is one that Yeats understood well: 'Did that play of mine send out/ Certain men the English shot?'

It also serves to demonstrate that Enchantment is indeed, in Tolkien's term, potentially 'perilous'.<sup>15</sup> Although I'm sure it's not the sort of thing he had in mind, another example of its pathological possibilities - in a domain normally one of life's most delightful and life-affirming - is the (true) story of sexual Enchantment portrayed in Nagisa Oshima's film "Ai No Corrida", which ends in mutual obsession, insanity for one partner and a violent death for the other. Contrariwise, there is something fundamentally psychologically and socially healthy about the spark of human (relative) initiative and (qualified) independence - without which Magic would be impossible - nurtured in the pre-modern humanism of Machiavelli, Montaigne and Erasmus. And at a more mundane though no less important level, when I go to my dentist I prefer a competent exercise of power-knowledge, rather than an experience of spiritual transport.

Other instances can further refine our distinction. Briefly, humour: if something strikes you as funny (a form of Enchantment), well and good; but if it doesn't, no amount of willing it to be so, or explanation of why it is (a branch of power-knowledge, albeit obscure), will make it so. Or take something as simple as going for a walk in the woods, or any other natural setting. As most of us know, an over-determination to arrange everything, externally and internally, so that nothing interferes with our enjoyment, can very effectively destroy the very Enchantment that was our motive in the first place. Which is to say, perhaps, that Enchantment rarely survives becoming a goal; and that although its conditions can - indeed, arguably must - be established by will and knowledge, it cannot be forced to occur.

Facile assumptions can be misleading here. As I have mentioned, science is not necessarily the domain of Magic alone. Goethean science, predicated on phenomenological participation in nature rather than its control and prediction - and therefore marginal to the Baconian-Galilean-Cartesian mainstream - is evidence to the contrary.<sup>16</sup> Some people think that quantum physics has the same potential. Or take another example: intercessory prayer, for the benefit of others, especially those in distress. There are certainly cases where this 'works' in the experience of those involved, and as it is intended to produce certain specific primary changes, such prayer qualifies as a kind of (spiritual) Magic. But it is a kind that happens to escape the modernist/humanist ambit.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Triumph of Magic**

This brings us to a crucial point - and to something of a change of mode here, as we turn to the status and operation of these phenomena in the current world situation. Very briefly, at the close of the twentieth century - for socio-historical reasons that are none the less

compelling for being ultimately contingent (rather, that is, than being essential or intrinsic to their natures) – Magic has achieved a global dominance to the extent that Enchantment seems to be seriously under threat. And if you further accept, as I do (and by no means without a great deal of evidence, although in a paper like this its production is not feasible) that this dominance is responsible for rapidly escalating and in some cases irreversible degradation in human, ecological and spiritual terms, then it follows that Enchantment has become uniquely precious and important as a resource for resistance, and for the realization of better alternatives.

The modernist project is analyzable (as I have argued elsewhere) in terms of three interlocking domains: international capital, science and technology, and the nation-state.<sup>18</sup> In action, these three are now inseparable; and Magic lies at their heart. Indeed, the power of modernist Magic is such that via the media generally (and advertising in particular), it has given rise to what I would like to propose as a new, third category to supplement Tolkien's original two: namely, Glamour. Glamour is Enchantment in the service of Magic; Enchantment, one might almost say, enslaved.

Of course, since the wonder of Glamour is, with the greatest of pains, will and knowledge, engineered to particular and preset ends, it cannot, by definition, be genuine Enchantment. But if it is the only kind that most people are exposed to, in relentless quantities and with ever greater sophistication, how can the self-fulfilling disappearance of the real thing (as opposed, we might say, to 'the Real Thing!') come as a surprise? This is not a frivolous comparison; not only does it capture the typical corporate displacement of what is (subject to the usual epistemological constraints) real by the blatantly artificial and interest-driven, but the Coca-Cola logo is now the most widely-recognized icon in the world, not excluding religious symbols. To be sure, the pseudo-Enchantment of Glamour is not necessarily driven by the profit-motive – recall how powerful was the spell of hero-worship engineered by Stalin, Hitler and Mao – but in these supposedly post-ideological days, it nearly always is. It was neatly if unintentionally summed up by a top fashion executive: 'selling the dream'. It is the conjunction of those two terms that constitutes Glamour.

### **Dis- and Re-Enchantment**

In recent years, the subject of modernity has generated a vast amount of discussion, especially in terms of 'postmodernity'. I want to avoid that here, in the same way that Kolakowski does, quite legitimately, when he writes that 'the question so many of us have been trying to cope with is not so much when modernity started, but what is the core - whether or not explicitly expressed - of our contemporary widespread *Unbehagen in der Kultur* [cultural discontent]... And the first answer that naturally comes to mind is summed up, of course, in the Weberian *Entzauberung* - disenchantment - or in any similar word roughly covering the same phenomenon.'<sup>19</sup> Zygmunt Bauman points to this when he invokes postmodernity as

restoring to the world what modernity, presumptuously, had taken away; as a re-enchantment of the world that modernity had tried hard to disenchant.... The war against mystery and magic was for modernity the war of liberation leading to the declaration of reason's independence... [the] world had to be de-spiritualized, de-animated: denied the capacity of subject.... It is against such a disenchanted world

that the postmodern re-enchantment is aimed.<sup>20</sup>

These authors, like Weber, are surely right about instrumentalist, utilitarian, bureaucratic disenchantment as the authentic hallmark of modernity.<sup>21</sup> That said, however, the Weberian thesis is seriously flawed - the version, at least, accepted by both modernists themselves and anti-modernists, in which disenchantment is (substantively as well as semantically) the opposite condition to enchantment, and is furthermore part of an inexorable and universal process. That is simply modernist ideology or, if you prefer, myth - not wrong on that account, by any means, but itself an integral part of the global modernization that needs resisting. Barbara Herrnstein Smith has aptly described it as 'the effort to identify the presumptively universally compelling Truth and Way and to compel it universally.'<sup>22</sup> That is why it is important to understand the modernist program as not really disenchanted (and by implication, somehow objective, disinterested, realistic and so on), but as saturated and driven by the ideology and metaphysics of Magic - notwithstanding that it strenuously denounces magic. And there is nothing necessary, complete or irreversible about its contemporary victory; here and there, if often, of necessity, secretly, Enchantment survives.<sup>23</sup>

It follows that if 'disenchantment' cannot be accepted at face-value, then neither can 're-enchantment'. Re-enchantment is not about re-introducing a former condition where it no longer exists; it must rather be a matter of recognizing, articulating and encouraging Enchantment - or more exactly, the conditions for Enchantment that exist now. But it is most definitely not about making it happen or enforcing it; for the potentially terrible irony is that a program of willed power-knowledge to create (re-) Enchantment necessarily becomes Magic, the very thing it set out to oppose. The terminus can then only be some kind of theocratic religious police - no merely hypothetical possibility, as the appalling case of contemporary Iran shows.<sup>24</sup> So if it be asked, 'Can you fight Magic with Enchantment?' the answer is, *pace* Weber's utter pessimism, yes: but not directly.

## Wonder

I would now like to examine Enchantment more closely, first in relation to wonder, then to nature. Tolkien emphasized the centrality of the former in his definition, 'the realization...of imagined wonder'. 'Realization' here hovers ambiguously but fruitfully between wonder at the world - that it is, what it is, and what is in it - or what Ronald Hepburn calls 'existential wonder', and what makes it possible to realize that it is wondrous, or 'art'. In a perceptive and sensitive essay, Hepburn has analyzed wonder in a way which strengthens the contrast with Magic that I have borrowed from Tolkien (without, I am sure, any direct influence) while refining the idea of Enchantment. He shows wonder to be a 'kind of knowing' which, although it overlaps with religious or metaphysical as well as aesthetic experience, is reducible to neither; nor is it merely 'a prelude to fuller knowledge'. Wonder 'is notably and essentially other-acknowledging'; there is 'a close affinity between the attitude of wonder itself - non-exploitative, non-utilitarian - and attitudes that seek to affirm and respect other-being.' Thus, the 'moral correlates' of wonder include respect, compassion and humility. These all involve 'openness to new forms of value', as opposed to the attitude of "'We've seen it all'" (as in, for example, 'When you've seen one Redwood Tree, you've seen them all').

Here is another overlap with Weberian disenchantment, for the important thing

about that is its monism and universalism: given a single reference point - whether spiritual (God) or material (scientific truth) - 'one can, in principle, master all things by calculation'.<sup>25</sup> Thus there is nothing new under the sun, for everything can, at least in theory, be fitted into the ultimate schema somewhere. In contrast, enchantment for Weber was marked by a plurality of ultimately incommensurable spirits, values and/or principles, in response to which wonder is a constant and appropriate possibility. As he realized, its enemies include both science and monotheistic religion. (This was strikingly confirmed only recently in Britain, when the arch-Darwinist Richard Dawkins and an Anglican bishop buried their differences for long enough to agree publicly on one thing: the iniquity of one of the most widespread forms of popular (re-)enchantment, namely astrology.<sup>26</sup>) Taken together with the paradox I have already noted, that programmatic Enchantment becomes Magical, the implication is unavoidable: any attempted return to theism would only add further to the contemporary triumph of Magic.

There are echoes in this post-Weberian argument of both the late Paul Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism (since ably developed by Barbara Herrnstein Smith) and Isaiah Berlin's value-pluralism. They are highly pertinent ones – again, not in terms of direct intellectual influence but as coherently related strands of argument. In all three cases, the values of Enchantment are seen as seriously jeopardized by a totalizing monist and universalist reason the shorthand for which is sometimes 'the Enlightenment', but which I have called Magic.<sup>27</sup>

Hepburn also argues that the 'transformation of the merely threatening and daunting into what is aesthetically manageable, even contemplated with joy... is achieved through the agency of wonder.'<sup>28</sup> This resonates strikingly (although again, I think, coincidentally) with G.K. Chesterton's rhetorical question, nearly ninety years ago: 'How can we contrive to be at once astonished at the world and yet at home in it?... We need to be happy in this wonderland without once being merely comfortable.'<sup>29</sup>

Hepburn also shows convincingly that although wonder by no means rules it out, it does not depend on theism: 'To be evocative of wonder, an object need not be seen as filtering the perfections of deity.'<sup>30</sup> The irony is that the only other indispensable guide to wonder I have found is Chesterton, in his splendid chapter on 'The Ethics of Elfland' in that classic of Christian apologetics, *Orthodoxy*. He is worth quoting at some length:

The man of science says, 'Cut the stalk, and the apple will fall'; but he says it calmly, as if the one idea really led up to the other. The witch in the fairy tale says, 'Blow the horn, and the castle will fall'; but she does not say it as if it were something in which the effect obviously arose out of the cause. Doubtless she has given the advice to many champions, and seen many castles fall, but she does not muddle her head until it imagines a necessary connection between a horn and a falling tower. But the scientific men do muddle their heads, until they imagine a necessary mental connection between an apple leaving the tree and an apple reaching the ground.... They feel that because one incomprehensible thing constantly follows another incomprehensible thing the two together somehow make up a comprehensible thing....

The only words that ever satisfied me as describing Nature are the terms used in the fairy books, "charm", "spell", "enchantment". They express the arbitrariness of the fact and its mystery. A tree

grows fruit because it is a magic tree. Water runs downhill because it is bewitched. The sun shines because it is bewitched....

I deny altogether that this is fantastic or even mystical.... It is the man who talks about "a law" that he has never seen who is the mystic.<sup>31</sup>

Despite appearances, perhaps, Chesterton is not actually guilty of hyperbole here. As I believe any true scientist would admit, no-one knows what gravity, electromagnetism or any such phenomenon actually is, and even physical laws can only be inferred in a way that leaves them permanently vulnerable to future revision. Furthermore, he vividly brings out 'the sense of absolute contingency' that generates existential wonder.<sup>32</sup> But we have already seen that science cannot be necessarily identified with Magic nor art with Enchantment. The point is that whatever form they take, Magic and Enchantment both lay claim to a special relationship to nature. The nature of that claim, however, couldn't be more different. The former brings all of nature under one rule, the rule of a set of universal laws to which there can neither exception nor appeal; whereas the latter sees nature as endlessly plural, particular and unique. (That is why real Enchantment, from the scientific Magician's point of view, is literally useless.)

## Nature

Tolkien too emphasized Enchantment as wonder at nature, including specifically its perception, celebration and healing. Such a connection - or rather, identity - could be approached analytically in various ways. Perhaps Enchantment-as-art 'is' nature in the way that Hepburn suggests when he writes that our values and experiences

are essentially the result of a cooperation of man and non-human nature: the universe would not contain them, were it not for our perceptual-creative efforts, and were it not equally for the contribution of the non-human world that both sustains and sets limits to our lives. To realize that there is this cooperative interdependence of man and his natural environment checks the extremes of pessimism by showing our earth-rootedness even in our aspirations. There is no wholly-other paradise from which we are excluded; the only transcendence that can be real to us is an 'immanent' one.<sup>33</sup>

If this seems rather general, recall that Hepburn also adduces humility as a moral correlate of wonder. Putting these points together makes sense of much: where Magic involves a 'tragic' (temporary, conditional, partial) defiance of limits, Enchantment evokes a profoundly 'comic' appreciation of our earth-rooted dependency.<sup>34</sup>

It may also be the case that, as William Blake bluntly put it, 'Nature is Imagination itself'. One way to grasp this is the idea of nature as cosmic art; for while art is 'conscious' while nature is supposedly not, I think modernity has encouraged us to overestimate the degree and importance of the former in art, while destructively denying (as Bauman has pointed out) nature's capacity as animate subject – except, in an ultimately patronizing way, within the limited ambit of aesthetic Romanticism.<sup>35</sup> A related suggestion is that of Gregory Bateson - another voice of sanity, and an admirer of Blake - who fruitfully analyzed mind and nature as 'a necessary unity'.<sup>36</sup> Where I think Bateson's formulation falls down, however, is its dependence on the mystical idea (as Chesterton would have put

it) of logical or transcendental necessity.<sup>37</sup> If there is to be any such unity, it must be forged in our experience, which is where it matters. But as I also mentioned, the juggernaut of modernist Magic has ever more strongly linked Enchantment and nature - equally imperilled as never before in human experience - or else impelled us to recognize their union; no hard-and-fast distinction between reality and our experience of it is possible here.

One interesting implication is that the (literally) dead art of Damien Hirst and his ilk, where this link has been severed, is not just unenchanted but actually an arm of Magic - and as such, no longer art. It might be replied that death and putrefaction is part of nature. True; but Hirst's art, like that of his mentor, Bacon, restricts nature to just that, in a nihilistic denial of animation, subjectivity and ineffability that is the acme of modernist sensibility. Nor is the patronage of a wealthy and decadent art establishment, knowing (and setting) the price of everything and the value of nothing, a coincidence; nature as dead, fully knowable and manipulable is a precondition for its full commercial exploitation.

By the same token, modernist/humanist Magic rejects natural limits. Applied to their ultimate instance - death - the result is exemplified by cryogenics. Both individually and collectively, we are to do 'whatever it takes' to get whatever we want. A recent advertisement I saw stated the following proposition: "To be truly free requires a life without boundaries. The passport to that future is technology." But a life without boundaries, as any first-year psychology student should know, is not freedom but psychosis - and in the ambition of such companies, not merely individual but global psychosis; not mastery, but mass slavery.

At the same time, however, the new awareness of art-as-nature (and vice-versa) radically extends the possibilities of Enchantment, including 're-enchancement'. It has now become possible to value the Earth in new ways - which are nearly always also very old ways that have been re-discovered and adapted from indigenous peoples, whether of the past or elsewhere - that are simultaneously, spiritual, practical, and artistic (though they need not involve traditional artistic media). Indeed, it seems to have become possible to the exact extent that it has now become necessary. Although practically everywhere has its grassroots equivalents, in Britain there is no better example than the integrity, skill and humor of those resisting that exemplar of modernist madness, the road expansion program; and its heart is the realization of nature's wonder. (The huge motorway punched through the ancient hills at Twyford Down in Hampshire, where this movement began, is modern Magic. It's not a pretty sight.)

### **Signs of Wonder**

What are the signs that might help us to recognize genuine contemporary re-Enchantment? It seems to me they are these:

- (1) Wonder in and at the natural world, its places and its non-human people but actual ones, and not merely in the abstract (even as 'Gaia') - accompanied with a recognition and appreciation of their integrity and variety, independently of any use they may have to human beings. (This is the central insight of deep ecology, usually termed 'ecocentrism'.)
- (2) As against the monism and rationalism of modernist Magic, a consistent pluralism in at least three respects: epistemologically as relativism, axiologically as value-pluralism, and politically as a project of radical and plural democracy.<sup>38</sup>
- (3) An end to humanist/modernist (and postmodernist) secularism and its war on wonder,

with the frank admission of a spiritual dimension of human experience that is not exhausted by institutionalised religion. In terms of (re-) Enchantment, its closest affinities are with popular animism, even more than with other sympathetic approaches: polytheism, pantheism or panentheism, and Buddhist non-theism. (It has to be said – and I am speaking here of discourses, not of individuals - that in this context, monotheism starts with some severe handicaps.)<sup>39</sup>

Actually, Enchantment is a result of right relationship with the Earth just as much as the reverse; more so, indeed, in the sense that we need the Earth, whereas it does not need us. This is a vital point to remember, if we are to resist its incorporation into a program of religious power-knowledge, or its corruption into the virtual enchantment of Glamour. But it is possible – and urgent – to encourage and sustain Enchantment. What does so is living life as nature’s art; and the art of living in and with nature. This requires forswearing the modernist dream of mastery. But slavery is not, as alarmists cry, the only alternative. The person ‘who allows himself to be “free with” Nature’ – but within nature – can, as Tolkien noted, ‘be her lover not her slave.’<sup>40</sup>

## REFERENCES

- (1) Pp. 9-73 in *Tree and Leaf* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988 [1964], henceforth OFS; the original essay was first delivered as a lecture in 1939, and first published, somewhat enlarged, in 1947. As Professor Shippey has pointed out to me, Tolkien may have been influenced to some extent by J.G. Frazier, *The Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan, 1922), chapter 4, pp. 48-60, as regards the common ground between magic and science; but his treatment of religion is quite different. For those interested in following up the Tolkien connection, see Patrick Curry, *Defending Middle-Earth: Tolkien, Myth and Modernity* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, and New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).
- (2) OFS, pp.15, 18. Independent of the conceiving mind, note; so we are not talking about ‘willed suspension of belief’, or a wilful projection of meaning.
- (3) OFS, pp. 49-50.
- (4) The former term was originally that of Foucault, of course, but it can be aptly appropriated here in a general sense. In order to keep these particular definitions in mind, I shall retain Tolkien’s upper-case first letters in this discussion.
- (5) Quoted in *Pagan Dawn* 124 (Lammas 1997).
- (6) Elias Ashmole, *Theatricum Chemicum Britannicum* (London, 1652), p. 445. See (for example) Charles Webster, *From Paracelsus to Newton: Magic and the Making of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
- (7) New Scientist (11 Oct. 1997) p. 50. (Thanks to C.J. Moore for this reference.)
- (8) See Paul Feyerabend, *Farewell to Reason* (London: Verso, 1987).
- (9) Formally speaking, epistemologies and axiologies.
- (10) See (for example) Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Belief and Resistance: Dynamics of Contemporary Intellectual Controversy* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1997).

- (11) OFS, p. 49.
- (12) OFS, pp. 36-7.
- (13) See Patrick Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets: Victorian and Edwardian Astrology* (London: Collins and Brown, 1992), Chapter 1.
- (14) Suggested by Clay Ramsay, for which, thanks. I would include astrology in divination.
- (15) OFS, p. 50.
- (16) See Henri Bortoft, *The Wholeness of Nature*; Jeremy Naylor (Ed.), *Goethe on Science* (both Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1996).
- (17) On humanism (of the kind I mean), see David Ehrenfeld, *The Arrogance of Humanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); on modernism (as the self-consciousness of modernity, not a particular cultural movement), see Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
- (18) In Curry, *Defending Middle-Earth*, this three-fold analysis of modernity has been borrowed from Paul Ekins, *A New World Order: Grassroots Movements for Global Change* (London: Routledge, 1992).
- (19) Leszek Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 7.
- (20) Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. x-xi. See also Ihab Hassan, 'Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective', 196-207 in *The Post-Modern Reader* (London: Academy Editions, 1992).
- (21) For a fascinating analysis, see Alkis Kontos, 'The World Disenchanted, and the Return of Gods and Demons', pp. 223-47 in Asher Horowitz and Terry Maley (Eds.), *The Barbarism of Reason: Max Weber and the Twilight of Reason* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).
- (22) Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Harvard University Press), p. 179.
- (23) For two very different books arguing (in their own ways) this point, see Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) and Roberto Calasso, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993).
- (24) And as Raymond Tallis mentions, in attacking re-enchantment in his *Enemies of Hope. A Critique of Contemporary Pessimism: Irrationalism, Humanism and Counter-Enlightenment* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 159; but Tallis conflates enchantment with religion, and specifically theism.
- (25) Weber, quoted in Kontos, 'The World Disenchanted', p. 242, n. 8.
- (26) BBC4, 'Moral Maze', 14 Nov. 1996.
- (27) One of the best guides to this territory is John Gray, in *Enlightenment's Wake: Politics and Culture at the Close of the Modern Age* (London/NY: Routledge, 1995) and *Endgames: Questions in Late Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997).
- (28) R.W. Hepburn, *'Wonder' and Other Essays* (Edinburgh University Press, 1984, pp. 140, 144,

145, 146, 151. See also his recent essay 'Nature Humanised: Nature Respected', *Environmental Values* 7:3 (1998) 267-79.

(29) G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996 [1908], pp. 3-4.

(30) Hepburn, *Wonder*, p. 144. I agree with Shunryu Suzuki, in *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (New York: Weatherhill, 1970), p. 61: 'The world is its own magic.' It is worth noting, however, that Tolkien would not have agreed.

(31) Nigel Forde (Ed.), *A Motley Wisdom: The Best of G.K. Chesterton* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), pp. 274-76.

(32) Hepburn, *Wonder*, p. 140.

(33) Hepburn, *Wonder*, pp. 181-82.

(34) See Don D. Elgin, *The Comedy of the Fantastic* (Westport: Greenwood press, 1985).

(35) See Jay Appleton, 'Nature As Honorary Art', *Environmental Values* 7:3 (1998) 255-66, and his *The Symbolism of Habitat: An Interpretation of Landscape in the Arts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990). Thanks to Nicola Bown for the point about Romanticism.

(36) Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979).

(37) See Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Belief and Resistance: Dynamics of Contemporary Intellectual Controversy* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1997).

(38) On epistemological pluralism, see Smith, *Belief and Resistance*; on axiological, the work of Isaiah Berlin; on political, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical and Plural Democracy* (London: Verso, 1985).

(39) On the subject of religious discourses, I am fully aware that particular individuals are capable of finding and drawing upon resources for ecologism in any of the major religious traditions; see J. Baird Callicott, *Earth's Insights* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1994). I am also (obviously, I hope) not using the word animism in its classical anthropological sense of a teleologically primitive stage of religion.

(40) OFS, p. 55.

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