

The Third Road: *Faërie* in Hypermodernity¹

Patrick Curry

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In the eighteenth-century ballad ‘Thomas Rymer’, the hero is abducted (without much of a struggle) by the Queen of Elfland, and their route to *Faërie* is the third road.² As she says to him,

O see not ye yon narrow road,
So thick beset wi’ thorns and briers?
That is the path of righteousness,
Tho’ after it but few enquires.

And see not ye that braid braid road,
That lies across yon lillie leven?
That is the path of wickedness,
Though some call it the road to heaven.

And see not ye that bonny road,
Which winds about the fernie brae?
That is the road to fair Elfland,
Where you and I this night maun gae.

Let us to explore (cautiously, as befits a wild and ‘perilous’ place)³ what is variously called Elfland, *Faërie* or enchantment – which is also, I shall suggest, an animist world. I have ventured there before in print,⁴ but this time I will be guided by the metaphor of the three roads, and its significance. My main purpose is to better understand animist enchantment through its continuing presence in a field of British literature and literary culture, one where J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and more recently Philip Pullman have left their mark. But the literary and cultural particularities of its presence also compel attention in their right.

The view of *Faërie* as profoundly ambiguous is an old one. Its natives, as C.S. Lewis remarked in *The Discarded Image*, ‘are marginal, fugitive creatures. They are perhaps the only creatures to whom the Model does not assign, as it were, an official status.’⁵ Lewis means the medieval Christian model but it has both older antecedent and, as we shall see, subsequent heirs.

It seems to me that our personal experiences of enchantment are similarly fugitive and marginal, at least in the accounts we give of them. The third road remains the one less-travelled (or at least, reported) but simultaneously, for many if not most of us, the most enticing, fascinating and ultimately meaningful. For at the dying of the light surely a candidate, at least, for what one remembers of one’s life is the moments of magic (in the sense of enchantment), whatever they may have been for each of us. That includes love, at least by Tolkien’s (2005: 101) definition of *Faërie*: ‘it represents love: that is, a love and respect for all things, “animate” and “inanimate”, an unpossessive love of them as “other”’.

Nonetheless, just because it is wild and unbiddable,⁶ the third road remains problematised, discouraged and marginalised by every official programme, whether religious or secular. This naturally affects individuals as well as organised groups. So I would like to ask: what results when those two conflicting demands, personal and formal, conflict? And when modernity has become virtually synonymous with disenchantment, what is the future of such enchantment in the twenty-first century, or what I am calling ‘hypermodernity’?

I

First, some pointers or field-marks to enable us to recognise enchantment when we encounter it, or *Faërie* if we find ourselves there. And let me say immediately that in order to start off on the right foot we must wholly reject any foundational distinction between ‘state of mind’ and ‘world’, or ‘inner’ and ‘outer’. Although the opposing terms in these pairs can be distinguished as a matter of emphasis, it is merely a vestigial Cartesian delusion to suppose that they can be cleanly separated, and enchantment, perhaps in particular, invariably involves both.

Tolkien – who quotes Thomas Rhymer at the start of his essay ‘On Fairy-Stories’ – there he defines ‘the primal desire at the heart of *Faërie*’ as ‘the realisation, independent of the conceiving mind, of imagined wonder’. Realisation, that is, in the sense both of realising that someone or something *is* wonderful, and their wonder *becoming* real. The contrast-class is given as magic, defined as ‘not an art but a technique; its desire is *power* in this world, domination of things and wills’ (Tolkien 1988: 18, 49-50). Following this lead, then, I take *wonder* to be a hallmark, and the most important one, of enchantment; and *will* its distinguishing contrary. (I have found Tolkien to be an unimpeachable guide concerning enchantment.)

Another reliable authority is Max Weber, who defines enchantment as ‘concrete magic’. In other words, enchantment is always both material *and* spiritual, precise *and* mysterious, limited *and* unfathomable. And the contrast he draws is with the ‘rational cognition and mastery of nature’ – paradigmatically scientific and bureaucratic, but with clear religious provenance – which, Weber (1991: 282, 155) said, results in ‘the “disenchantment of the world”’. (This time and/or sensibility, in Tolkien’s terms, is ‘the dominion of Men’.⁷

Also instructive is the etymology of the word ‘enchant’, coming to us from from Middle English via the French, *enchanter*, itself from the Latin *incantare*, that is, in + *cantare*, to sing. Emboldened by Sam Gamgee’s description of Tolkien’s (1991: 369) exemplar of enchantment, Lothórien – ‘I feel as if I was *inside* a song’ – I interpret this to mean the experience of finding oneself *in* a song (a song one hears, or perhaps even that one is singing) and, by extension, a story of any kind.

Robert Bringhurst (2007: 248) offers a different etymology for *Faërie* from that given by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one derived from the Greek *phêres*, meaning ‘creatures of the wild’, and sister to the Latin *ferus*, which gave rise to feral and fierce. It is thus no playground for harmlessly imaginary supernatural beings ‘but the mythworld itself, which is everything outside our control.’ This understanding resonates with others which reiterate that enchantment is wild, perilous, and natural – not supernatural, but ecological in the fullest sense of the word. As Bringhurst (1995: 15) remarks elsewhere, ‘In North America we call this world Nature or the Wild.’

The origins of the word *Faërie* take us in still another direction: Middle English from Old French *fée*, from Latin *fata*, the plural of *fatum*: fate. And as if that

isn't sufficiently tantalising, *fata* itself is the past participle of *fari*, to speak.⁸ So the path of enchantment and that of *Faërie* meet where something is fatefully spoken or sung, or (I would add) written, and fatefully heard or read. And crossroads have long been places where weird things can happen; in classical myth, they were the domain of Hermes, the bearer of messages to and from the gods. 'Weird' itself comes from the Anglo-Saxon *wyrd*, meaning 'fate'.

The metaphor of crossroads is also relevant in a different but related respect. In a brilliant reconstruction of Amerindian animism and perspectivism, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2004: 473, 470) describes it as 'a universe that is 100 percent relational', in which any apparent object 'is an incompletely interpreted subject'. Transformation is then 'not a process but a relation. Nothing "happened", but everything has changed.' But these relations should not be understood as idealist or (purely) spiritual; on the contrary, being radically non-modern and *a fortiori* non-Cartesian, they are, like Weber's concrete magic, both bodied and minded, ensouled and enworlded.

The upshot is that animism, *faërie* and enchantment share profound common ground. *Faërie* is the place where living perspectives meet, animism is the generic term for that dynamic, and enchantment accompanies the meeting. Nor are those perspectives restricted to human ones. Animist enchantment is strictly non-anthropocentric, so all kinds of beings, including 'things', can turn out to be existentially alive, and any object a subject with agency and an agenda, with whom one finds oneself in a relationship.⁹ As Tolkien (1988: 14) says, '*Faërie* contains many things besides elves and fays...it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth and all the things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves...when we are enchanted'.

In a modernist universe, all subjects are incompletely analysed inanimate objects and therefore ethically inconsiderable potential resources to be manipulated as part of a project of the rational mastery of nature (including human nature). In a relationship, in contrast – and enchantment is nothing if not relational – by definition, neither party is in complete control; issues of ethics, negotiation, and etiquette are therefore paramount.

Of course, there are other signs of animist enchantment. (I've always thought that Kubla Khan's 'flashing eyes and floating hair' were a give-away). These markers, however – wonder, concrete magic, participation in a narrative, and nonanthropocentric relations – will do to be going on with.

II

What is the significance of the three roads, then? First, let us note that heaven and hell are co-dependent, not only defining each other but comprising routes merely to different parts of the same truth or reality, the putatively exhaustive Model of the one true God. The two roads of righteousness and wickedness are thus actually forks of a single road, and the most radical alternative to either of them is the ambiguous 'third' road to *Faërie*.

This contrast also works in another way. Weber (1991: 139) makes the point that a programme of rational mastery depends upon the 'belief...that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation'. And that indispensably requires monism: a *single* principle in relation to which everything, at least in theory, can be grasped and ordered. In its absence, one could end up with more than one incommensurable truth with no overall *logos*, no theoretical way to adjudicate between them – which is the

actual situation in animism and polytheism and their secular version, pluralism – and that is completely unacceptable for any programme with universalist aspirations. In short, in order ‘to rule them all...to find them...to bring them all and...bind them’ (Tolkien 1991: 272), the *One* ring is needed.

It follows ineluctably that the roots of disenchantment lie in religion – or rather, to be more precise, the Abrahamic religions (although I do not say they lie only there). Weber saw this point clearly, as did T.W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1994: 18, 5, 8): ‘Reason *and* religion deprecate and condemn the principle of magic enchantment.’ By the same token, secular modernity, religion’s even more rigorous child midwifed by Protestantism, requires precisely ‘the extirpation of animism’, and ‘the destruction of gods and qualities alike is insisted upon’. Both metaphysically and historically, modernity is thus founded on a rejection decidedly not of magic, whose emphasis on power, control and manipulation is grist to its own mill, and a great deal of which was absorbed by early modern science, but of animist enchantment, particularly that of a living more-than-human nature; and that is what still haunts its troubled dreams.

It also follows that the break between theism and secular rational modernism is a relative not a radical one (see Figure 1). Truth replaces God, scientific reason replaces revelation, scientific authorities replace theologians and the nature of heresy changes, but crucial aspects of the fundamental logic do not. The origin and goal is still singular and universal;¹⁰ there is still a royal road leading from and to it; and the enemy for both programmes remains, strikingly, ‘superstition’ – that is, in this context, unlicensed (that is, wild) enchantment. It follows again that, as against enchantment, both religious and secular universalist programmes are different versions of the same road, with its two branches. They constitute, in effect, ‘two vying “monisms”’ (Jonas 1982: 16), and the noisy, tediously predictable ‘debate’ between the so-called New Atheists’ and religious fundamentalists is largely a turf war for control over ‘Knowledge, Rule, Order’.¹¹

That said, there remains an important difference in principle between theism and secularism. It results from the apophatic nature of God as an ultimately unfathomable spiritual mystery, which denies the final promise of analysis and control that material reality, ultimately limited even if very complex, seems to hold out to science. Theism thus denies what scientism embraces: the prospect of *ultimate* mastery, and with it *complete* disenchantment. Nonetheless, there is common ground insofar as modernist science/ scientific modernism exists in continuity and contiguity with that portion of theism which is committed to programmatic control and therefore disenchantment.

Is that a fair description? I think so, to the extent that religion wants to press enchantment into the service of God, and therefore to manage it. But enchantment cannot be managed – we might almost say, it *is* what cannot be managed – and it does not survive servitude, even to a good cause or a wholly admirable programme. Thus once again, we find that the most radical alternative to both religious and secular salvation/ damnation is the third road, at once desired and feared: the way to, and of, enchantment.¹²

III

Where does this leave the work of Tolkien and Lewis, for whom both religion *and* enchantment were so very important? Briefly, I would suggest that Tolkien (1988: 99) availed himself of the metaphor of God as Creator to authorise his own act of literary

sub-creation – ‘We make still by the law in which we’re made’ – and the idea of the Gospels as a fairytale that is, uniquely, also true in the literal sense to legitimate his own epic fairytale. (In their own terms, these seem quite legitimate strategies.) This strategy left quite a lot of room for uncertainty and ambiguity. Indeed, Tolkien (1981: 189) went so far as to reject a reader’s criticism that he had ‘overstepped the mark’ in metaphysical (meaning theological) matters by having the Elves reincarnate, arguing that no-one could deny its possibility even in the ‘primary’ world, let alone in a fictional one.

Another point is that Catholicism, although its ultimate boundaries are strictly maintained, is distinctly more capacious than Protestantism, with its sensitivity to the charge of pagan idolatry: that is, multiple deities (or rather, theologically speaking, pseudo-deities) worshipped instead of God. On that basis, I would speculate that although there remained for both men an incompletely resolved tension between their Christianity and their love of *Faërie*, it posed a sharper problem for the Protestant Lewis than it did for Tolkien.

Of course, folk Christianity long had room for a wide range of semi-autonomous entities, from minor local spirits to grand angelic/ diabolic ones, as well as saints indistinguishable in practice from deities. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation suppressed some of this, although not as effectively as mass industrialisation and militarisation had by the early twentieth-century. But in British letters, there survived a kind of patrician demotic parallel to that tolerance in the vibrant Romantic tradition which obviously still informed and sustained Tolkien and Lewis, among others, in attempting to reconcile religion and *Faërie*.

What concerns us more here, however, is the relationship between these two ways of worlding in the reception of their work, including what Tolkien (1988: 32) called ‘the effect produced now by these old things in the stories as they are’. And what strikes me is that for the reading public, any such conflict doesn’t seem to be a problem at all. At the least, is there any evidence that a significant number of readers have found *The Lord of the Rings* objectionable solely because of either its Christianity or its pagan/ animistic enchantment? I doubt it. (Of course, there were and remain some modernist readers who reject it in the manner of Gollum having tasted *lembas*, the nourishing Elvish waybread: ‘Ach! No!... You try to choke poor Sméagol. Dust and ashes, he can’t eat that’ [Tolkien 1991: 647]. We shall return to them.)

As is well-known, Tolkien (1981: 172, 220) although describing *The Lord of the Rings* as ‘a fundamentally religious and Catholic work’, deliberately excluded ‘all references to anything like “religion”’ on the basis that ‘the Third Age [of Middle-earth] was not a Christian world’. It seems he also felt that their overt presence would be inappropriate, or counter-productive, in an effectively post-Christian world. And on balance, the wisdom of his choice has been borne out. It has enabled countless readers to enjoy his books without having to negotiate overt ideology, and even to partake of the Christian values (among others)¹³ that requiring such negotiations might have prevented. Tolkien’s work has therefore also suffered less from the kind of distracting controversy that has dogged Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia*, in which Christian imagery, in striking contrast, is often unavoidable.

As Laura Miller’s book (2008) shows, however, by far most childhood readers even of Lewis were either oblivious of or unconcerned by that imagery; and the more determined and thoughtful of his secular and/or atheist adult readers, too, can prevent it from destroying their enjoyment of the stories, and recover something of their original enchantment.

So why isn't there necessarily a problem for us readers, so to speak – less than for the books' authors, or the critics – in the formal clash between the disenchanting power of religion and the enchanting power of *Faërie*? I think the answer is threefold. First, there is an understanding (albeit arguably a minority and somewhat unorthodox one) of God and *Faërie* as sharing some key properties, including existential wonder, unbiddability, and participation in a (divine) narrative.¹⁴ (I say 'sharing'; that doesn't mean that one follows from the other, and any attempt along those lines, being *ipso facto* programmatic, would therefore be disenchanting.¹⁵) Concrete magic, in the first part of the term, might seem a stumbling-block for transcendental theism; but even here the Incarnation (*kenosis*) could be adduced in favour of the argument.

Whatever their merits, however, such theological considerations are too arcane to encompass more than a tiny minority of readers. The second reason surely pulls more weight: readers don't see a problem on account of our common ability to maintain two or more formally or even empirically contradictory views at the same time. (Countless polls have confirmed that many, perhaps most voters simultaneously support lower taxes and better public services. And the entire edifice of theodicy is based upon reconciling a beneficent and all-powerful God with 'an irrational world', to quote Weber (1991: 122), 'of undeserved suffering, unpunished injustice, and hopeless stupidity' – apparently with considerable success.) This knack might be decried as an all-too-common inability to think. Before doing so, however, we might remember a reproof by the giant of twentieth-century physics, Niels Bohr: 'You are not thinking, you are merely being logical.' Note, too, the affinity with John Keats's 'negative capability' – an indispensable key to allowing enchantment to happen – whereby one resists 'any irritable reaching after fact and reason'.¹⁶

To my mind, however, the third reason is (like the third road) the most compelling. There is a wonderful vignette in Laura Miller's book in which Tolkien asks Lewis rhetorically, 'What class of men would you expect to be most preoccupied with, and most hostile to, the idea of escape?' The answer is, of course, jailers.¹⁷ Quite right too, but then she adds: 'I, too, longed for escape, but as I saw it, *Christianity was one of the jailers*' (Miller 2008: 101; my emphasis). In other words, the power of narrative – one of the indispensable aspects of, and portals into, enchantment – is such that when the enchantment works, the wonder that it evokes, being wild and unbiddable, escapes even the intentions of its creators (in this case, as Christians) – let alone managers and administrators.

I don't make this point to denigrate Christianity but rather, among other things, to throw into radical question the claim of both those Christians and those atheists who claim to offer mutually exhaustive alternatives (and pretend to speak for religion and science respectively). There was a tiny but typical instance of this dialogue of the deaf when, on 16 April 2009, BBC1-TV broadcast 'The Narnia Code'. It is not the fault of Michael Ward, the author of *Planet Narnia: the Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis*, that the programme's director insisted on shoehorning the subject into a mutually exclusive 'choice' between either God or atheism. The third road, as usual, was rendered invisible.

IV

What of the avowed atheists, modernists, and followers of scientism? My guess, based on a survey of Tolkien's critical reception, is that they constitute a high proportion of those who react like Gollum – that is, as if they had been poisoned. Using Tolkien and his work in context as a microcosm, once again, of larger currents

and dynamics, its reception among the literati has been striking. The highlights include ‘juvenile trash’ (Edmund Wilson), ‘a black pit’ (Jenny Turner) and, when *The Lord of the Rings* topped the Waterstone’s comprehensive poll of readers in 1996 as to the most important book of the 20th century, ‘my nightmare’ (Germaine Greer). As *The Guardian*’s literary critic Nicholas Lezard remarked recently, ‘of all the means for professional suicide that are available to the writer, expressing affection for Tolkien is one of the most effective’.¹⁸ Are modernists like these they allergic to enchantment, then?

I would guess the answer is, yes; but they still want it. Once the most basic necessities of air, water, food and shelter are met, I don’t believe it is possible to live for long without enchantment of some kind. In Tolkien’s (2005: 101) words, it is ‘as necessary for the health and complete functioning of the Human as is sunlight for physical life.’ But there’s the rub: what kind? I cannot avoid the conclusion that since modernism demands the consistent worship of endless, unstoppable, universal progress, its most consistent adherents must secretly seek out inadmissible, preferably unconscious, and on that account even more-than-usually dangerous enchantments. In this, of course, they closely mirror the schizophrenia of religious extremists.¹⁹ But most of us manage to muddle along in more contextual and relative ways which keep a third road openly open, so to speak, even if we remain reluctant to discuss it in public for fear of ridicule.

Philip Pullman offers a fascinating literary study of someone caught in this dilemma. Briefly, here is a sworn atheist, and friend and supporter of Richard Dawkins, well-known for his powerful aversion to Lewis’s work on account of its Christology and the reactionary views with which that is sometimes (rather one-sidedly) associated. Pullman’s dislike of Tolkien is somewhat different. It stems from the latter’s Catholicism, his occasionally archaic literary style and, it seems, the fact that Middle-earth is ‘wholly imaginary’ and never ‘actually’ existed. (I’m not making this up, not even the extraordinary literal-mindedness; I engaged in correspondence with Pullman on the subject in 2000.) A better example of what Tolkien (1988: 56) suspected as the true burden of the charge of escapism – namely, the Flight of the Deserter, from what these jailers are pleased to call ‘reality’ – would be difficult to find, or even to imagine. Yet Pullman’s own fiction is best described, indeed can only be described, as fantasy; the so-called real world is not noticeably populated with visible animal daemons, biological entities with wheels, etc.

Pullman indulges in some remarkable contortions when challenged on this striking contradiction, saying that he would much rather write realistic fiction if he only could, since he strongly dislikes fantasy (including his own?). Fortunately, the psychology of the artist is not my concern. More instructive is the way even the work of this ideological atheist and would-be jailer confirms the subversive power of narrative that we found in that of his Christian targets. It is confirmed positively in the excellence of his storytelling in *His Dark Materials*, which has understandably enchanted many readers; and negatively, as his programmatic dislike of religion in general, clericalism in particular and Lewis above all (even hatred – which only binds him more closely to them) gradually gains the upper hand over his desire and ability simply to tell a good story...or rather, to get out of the way as much as possible, personal opinions and all, and let the story tell itself. I am not the only reader to find a steady falling-away in quality as Pullman’s three volumes progress, and the culprit, ironically, is plain. It is the same didacticism that ruined Lewis’s final Narnia volume, *The Last Battle*.

How surprised should we be? When Miller was researching her book, Pullman recommended a book by John Goldthwaite (1996), a Christian writer on fantasy literature who apparently shares Pullman's loathing on Tolkien and Lewis, not least on the extraordinary grounds that 'Creating a Secondary World, after all, is in effect a declaration that God's creation is deficient'. Small wonder that Goldthwaite goes on to describe mythic fantasy – probably the most flourishing single genre in publishing – as a 'dead end'. He may have meant that metaphysically but in any case, as so often in this area, the critical impulse is not used to open up a world to sympathetic understanding but rather to close it off and shut it down. And whether that weapon is wielded by a dogmatic Christian or a dogmatic atheist doesn't make any significant difference.

The poet Michael Longley once observed of art that 'when you capture something with precision, you also release its mysterious aura.' You don't get the mystery,' he added, 'without the precision.' (Here is 'concrete magic' again.) *His Dark Materials* starts with a girl in a cupboard in a very particular room, overhearing a disturbing conversation in a richly imagined and detailed parallel Oxford. It culminates with windy denunciations of the Church and Will and Lyra's overwrought separation. Pullman seems suspiciously determined to show – as someone said of Edmund Wilson, another bitter critic of Tolkien's work – that he is the Adult in the room.

Tolkien (1988: 63) thought that great fairy stories end with a 'sudden joyous "turn"' which rends the story 'and lets a gleam come through'. He called what the resulting pang conveys 'hope without guarantees'. In the end, Pullman gives us the opposite: guarantees without hope. His decision was, I'm sure, ideologically driven, but it was not an ideological failing. It was a failure of art.

V

Concerning the second half of my title, I once argued that postmodernity – more as sensibility than historical period – had the potential to liberate us from modernity's relentless progressivism and, incidentally, enable us to appreciate the prescience of anti-modernists like Tolkien, if not necessarily their prescriptions.²⁰ It hasn't quite worked out like that, of course. Encapsulating absurdly, what has happened is that while it has lost a great deal of its popular legitimacy, the modernist megamachine²¹ has nonetheless kept right on going, even picking up speed. In this respect nothing has changed since Weber remarked in 1899 that 'One has the impression of sitting on a speeding train, while doubting whether the next switch will be correctly set' (quoted in Schaff 1989: 14). This situation has left what remains of progressive resistance in such uncomfortably paradoxical positions as hoping for an ecological collapse bad enough to halt modernist 'development' (since little else seems likely to) but not, you know, *too* bad... So where 'postmodern' implies, misleadingly, that modernity is over, 'hypermodernity' reminds us that it ain't so. (It's also an ugly word, which is therefore apt.)

At the same time, it is very important not to attribute even more power to the disenchanters who seem to be running the show than they actually have. To paraphrase Bruno Latour (1993), we have never been *completely* modern – which is just to say, disenchanted. In lived life and in practice, we do not and cannot (unless psychotic) live in a completely disenchanted way. So how do I read this riddle of simultaneous enchantment *and* disenchantment?

In two ways. One, very simply, is that enchantment will survive. Like the Earth – the ultimate source of enchantment, I believe – it does not need us but we need it; so it will continue to animate, unpredictably and uncontrollably, our relationships with each other, with other animals, with nonhuman nature, with places, with art and artefacts, with food, and so on. However, inasmuch as enchantment is unbiddable, it cannot be used or exploited for any purpose or programme; so we need another term for the phenomenon, superficially very like enchantment but actually distinguishable as its wraithlike simulacrum, which is at the heart of the billion-pound hypermodern industries of advertising, PR, entertainment, political spin, fashion and so on. I have already suggested ‘glamour’ (Curry 1999). Glamour is one of the chief tools in the armoury of magic, in Tolkien’s sense of power-knowledge.²² It bears the same relationship to enchantment as the Ringwraiths of Tolkien’s world, who merely continue forever because they cannot die – what he called ‘endless serial living’ (1988: 62) – do to genuine immortality as defined by Wittgenstein (1961: 72): ‘If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.’

So my final conclusion is that given our susceptibility to promises, and systems of promises, to completely satisfy our endless desires (especially for security and control), disenchantment too, especially in the form of glamour, will continue. Both in weird tandem, and not only one or the other: that is our fate.

Figure 1:

	CHRISTIANITY (Spiritual)	SCIENCE (Material)	MODERNISM (Ideological)
Source & Goal	God	Truth	Progress
Manifest in	Scripture	Laws	Manifestos
Accessed through	Revelation	Scientific reason	‘Critical’ reason, iconoclasm
Authorised by	Clergy (theological experts)	Scientists (technical experts)	Critics (theoretical experts)
Heresy	Superstition (heterodoxy)	Superstition (ignorance)	Superstition (tradition)

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- ¹ Originally a paper for a seminar on the work of Tolkien hosted by Nick Groom at the Tremough campus of the University of Exeter on 12 May 2009, with thanks to Professor Groom for the kind invitation. I also thank Michael Winship, Sean Kane, Ursula Le Guin, Nigel Cooper and Franco Manni for perceptive comments on previous drafts.
- ² 'Thomas Rhymer' comes from Francis James Child (ed.), *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols. (Mineola: Dover, 1965), I, 323-24.
- ³ Tolkien 1988: 9, 14. The original essay was first delivered as a lecture in 1939, and first published, somewhat enlarged, in 1947. See the recent definitive edition by Flieger and Anderson 2008.
- ⁴ Curry 2007a, 2007b, 2008 and 2012. My interest in this topic was rekindled by the discussion in Miller, *The Magician's Book*, e.g. p. 276.
- ⁵ Quoted in Miller, 272. Cf. Valerie I.J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) for a study of the process of 'sorting' that the medieval Church engaged in, a process begun by the early Church fathers.
- ⁶ A term I borrow, with thanks, from Anthony Thorley.
- ⁷ Tolkien's description of the Fourth Age, after the events chronicled in *The Lord of the Rings*, in Appendix B of *The Lord of the Rings*.
- ⁸ See Tolkien, *Smith of Wootton Major*: 143.
- ⁹ Such as the stones discussed by the Ojibwe elder and Irving Hallowell; see Harvey 2006: 33-34 & ff.
- ¹⁰ I am of course aware of the doctrine of the Trinity, and it is an important qualification. Islam, in comparison, is uncompromisingly monist.
- ¹¹ In Saruman seductive words (Tolkien 1991: 277).
- ¹² In Curry 2008, I have explored the interdependence of power (as symbolised by the One Ring) and enchantment (as symbolised by the three Elven rings).
- ¹³ See the discussion in Curry 2004: 94-109.
- ¹⁴ I am grateful to Nigel Cooper for raising this point in a very helpful discussion.
- ¹⁵ See Hepburn 1984: 140, where he argues convincingly that aesthetic wonder does not necessarily entail theism.
- ¹⁶ With thanks to Ursula Le Guin for pointing this out.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Tolkien 1988: 56.
- ¹⁸ *The Guardian* (3.4.10). See Curry 2005 and my 'The Critical Reception of Tolkien's Fiction' in *A Companion to J.R.R. Tolkien* (Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming in 2013).
- ¹⁹ A headline at the time of writing from the BBC reads, 'The lover of one of Europe's most influential bankers breaks down in court and admits killing him after kinky sex.' It's not difficult to think of equivalent incidents of various kinds involving high-level religious figures.
- ²⁰ As Robert Musil remarked, 'Progress would be a fine thing if only it would stop.'
- ²¹ Lewis Mumford's term.
- ²² The echo of Foucault is deliberate and, I believe, appropriate.