Untitled by Tom Uttech

The Lost Myth

By Clyde S. Kilby

The background against which I should like to put what I have to say is J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and the peculiar fact that in our so-called realistic world there are hundreds of thousands of high-school, college and university students (not to mention doctors, lawyers, scientists, teachers, etc.) who are reading a story about elves and dwarfs, orcs and balrogs, seeing stones and magical rings, and about ordinary Shire-loving hobbits who, having reluctantly accepted a quest involving their own lives and the life of the entire third age of Middle-earth, carry through on that quest in the highest tradition of heroism and in an atmosphere patently free of the hard "realism" that is said to be the archetype of our time. Though I am sure that David Boroff, writing in the *New York Times Book Review* for January 10, 1965, was wrong, one can sympathize with him for supposing the collegiate interest in *The Lord of the Rings* to be a piece of dandyism and mock seriousness. I want to suggest what I think a better explanation of this wide interest in Tolkien.

This explanation might be evidence of the beginning of recovery, or at least the wish to recover, from an old sore. It could be evidence of a desire to recover the Lost Myth.

This Lost Myth, I think, is the myth of man's wholeness.

Even in the fourth century B.C., Plato makes it clear that man was already sundered. Aristophanes, talking with his friends Socrates, Eryximachus and others, told how originally men were supposed to have had four legs, four arms, two heads, etc. and how in time these men began to think they were something and dared to try to scale heaven and lay hands even upon the gods, and how, instead of annihilating them, Zeus finally hit upon the idea of humbling them by splitting them in two — since when, says Aristophanes, in their loneliness the two halves have longed and seached for one another continuously.

Zeus threatened if necessary to keep on chopping man into pieces to cure his pride. Well, today it seems that man is in about as many pieces as can be imagined and consequently his loneliness and confusion are more pronounced than ever. Although Ortega y Gasset's description of twentieth-century man was written a good many years ago, it seems to me fully as true now as then, possibly more true. "We live," he said, "at a time when man believes himself fabulously capable of creation, but he does not know what to create. Lord of all things, he is not lord of himself. He feels lost amid his own abundance. With more means at his disposal, more knowledge, more technique than ever, it turns out that the world today goes the same way as the worst of

worlds that have been: it simply drifts. Hence the strange combination of a sense of power and a sense of insecurity which has taken up its abode in the soul of modern man. To him is happening what was said of the Regent during the minority of Louis XV: he had all the talents except the talent to make use of them."[1] This sense of a broken and adrift civilization is, I think, the most apparent thing on our present horizon.

I should like to discuss mainly one possible factor attendant upon even if not fully causal to our atomized world. And I hope I may be excused if, like so many others, I go back to Lord Bacon and the year 1620. In the preface to his famous *Novum Organum* he says, "I propose to establish progressive stages of certainty . . . starting directly from the simple sensuous perception . . . (and having) no confidence in the native and spontaneous process of the mind . . . There remains but one course for the recovery of a sound and healthy condition, — namely, that the entire work of the understanding be commenced afresh, and the mind itself be from the very outset not left to take its own course, but guided at every step; and the business be done as if by machinery." This was the road, Bacon said, to certainty and health. The thing which had been at fault was "the native and spontaneous process of the mind." The remedy to overcome this outlaw was to destroy, if I may put it so, its mythic tendency. Bacon, with motives which are understandable, wished to have something certain, something men could quietly and surely agree upon, money they could put in the bank and get a receipt for, a golden yardstick that would enable men forever to say that a yard is a yard is a yard.

But how could one begin to establish Bacon's "progressive stages of certainty" and perhaps in time move on to some final glorious climax of finitude and total knowing? Not backwards towards metaphysics and theology. These were the realms that had made Bacon and his century dizzy and given them the longing for certainty. Much earlier there had been a period when the universe appeared a splendid unity. Pythagoras and his Brotherhood more than twenty centuries before had discovered what they believed to be a cosmos, one world, one whole, inclusive universe, with a great Mathematician at its center and circumference. There are stories to the effect that when Pythagoras discovered the square on the hypotenuse he sacrificed a hundred oxen, also that when irrational numbers were discovered a penalty of death was set for allowing such an heretical idea to escape and work its evil in the world. The Pythagorean spring had welled up into a great river with glorious tributaries such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine, Aquinas and the like. But after all the centuries there was still not the certainty that Bacon zealously longed for. How could that certainty be attained?

"I propose," he said, "to establish progressive stages of certainty starting directly from the simple sensuous perception." We know the direction that was taken, what today we call science (from *sciens,* knowing). And out of Bacon's century and following there have flowed rivers of knowing. One need only mention such names as those of Galileo, Kepler, Descartes, Newton, Locke, the Encyclopedists, the Royal Society, etc. and remind ourselves how chemistry swallowed up alchemy and astronomy swallowed up (or did it?) astrology. I need not take any time describing the ever-widening river of "progressive stages of certainty" that flowed through the nineteenth century and has become something of an ocean in our time. Bacon's method is far more successful today than perhaps he ever dreamed. Many are wondering if anything at all is beyond the reach of the inductive method, from physics to chemistry, from chemistry to biology, from biology to psychology, from psychology to sociology, etc. In medicine, for instance, we can now do for men what we do for automobiles — we can supply new parts and there is talk of starting all over again with some sort of brand new man-made model. In *Brave New World Revisited* Aldous Huxley spoke of his shock at finding his imagined world of total scientific control rapidly coming into actuality within his own lifetime. Dr. Philip Siekevitz, biochemist at Rockefeller Institute, said not long ago: "There is a golden age ahead on earth . . . We are approaching the greatest event in human history . . . the deliberate changing by man of many of his biological

processes . . man will be remodeling his own being . . . Events in biological research are happening so rapidly that we will soon have to answer a new question. No longer, What creature is man? but, What creature should he become?"[2]

Is ours not indeed a Brave New World? But then one must ask the additional question why people are not filled with deep satisfaction, quiet ecstasy, and great expectations? Why along with Ortega's sense of power do we have an almost overcoming sense of despair? I heard of a man who went down the street and said "Good Morning" to another man that he passed. The second man asked, "In relation to what?"

You recall Sartre's "No Exit" and a group of people discovering they have gone to hell. In the room where they find themselves, one asks: "But, I say, where are the instruments of torture? . . . The racks and red-hot pincers and all the other paraphernalia?" Later, in a frenzy, he shouts: "Open the door! Open, blast you! I'll endure anything, your red-hot tongs and molten lead, your racks and prongs and garrotes — all your fiendish gadgets, everything that burns and flays and tears — I'll put up with any torture you impose. Anything, anything would be better than this agony of mind, this creeping pain that gnaws and fumbles and caresses one and never hurts quite enough." He grabs the doorknob and shouts: "Now will you open?" whereupon the door flies open and he is urged to leave, to which he hesitates and then replies, "I shall not go." In the end all the group remain, tortured and in pain greater than fire and brimstone, because there is nothing to be free for. You recall a similar pessimistic evaluation in Camus' *The Stranger,* where a man about to shoot another man whom he actually has nothing against says, ". . . one might fire, or not fire — and it would come to the same thing."

One wonders how to explain the winds of nihilism, destructionism, fragmentation and the death-wish which now sweep across the landscape, a direction perhaps most clearly manifest in the arts. Lewis Mumford says, "The death of the human personality is the message of modern art." Leonard Baskin declares that in avant-garde art "it is man that has been excluded . . . that has been denied. A few weeks ago I sat at table with a professor of art history from the Free University of Amsterdam who, on the basis of his study of modern art, felt there was little to look forward to except brutality and the concentration camp. A good many years ago Mark Van Doren said, "We are not even sure what poetry should be about, if it can be about anything any more." *Time* magazine recently said, "Nearly every important American writer — Nabokov, Mailer, Barth, Bellow, Malamud, Donleavy, Roth, Friedman, Burroughs, Heller, Pynchon, Willingham — works from an assumption that society is at best malevolent and stupid, at worst wholly lunatic. The gods are dead and their graves untended, (and) morality is a matter of picking one's way between competing absurdities."[3]

A long time ago I read a book that still sticks in my mind. It reported that libraries double their holdings about once every sixteen years and pointed out that should, for instance, Yale library continue to expand at the same rate for another century as it has for the past two, it will then have 200 million volumes occupying over 6000 miles of shelves. The card catalogue will require 8 acres, and 6000 cataloguers will be needed to handle material coming in at the rate of 12 million volumes a year. We seem to be like Faustus or Byron's Manfred running everywhere and searching for Something Big but without finding it. Two hundred years ago Voltaire said, "The multitude of books is making us ignorant." How much more ignorant, then, we must be today. Yet we can add that quantity is never properly equated with quality, and a man who sets himself to the task can read most of the truly great books of the world.

Nevertheless the mere quantity and bewildering bulk of things presented to the attention today is no doubt part of what Ortega was thinking about when he spoke of our parallel feeling of power and despair.

But of course the search for certainty ought never to be a thing to cause despair. Whether by sharpness of instrument or depth of perspective, any means of arrival at what is permanent and true must always be commendatory. The despair

therefore, insofar as it is related to the progressive stages of certainty described by Bacon seems to be the result of an oversell which was neither intended by the best practitioners of the method nor indeed inherent in the method. Rather the despair is owing to two popular misunderstandings. One is the supposition that science actually does move "as if by machinery" toward its goals, the other that its reach is endless.

Not infrequently leading scientists have pointed out that believing such an apparently obvious thing as the "simple sensuous perception" is actually an act of faith and that imagination is about as necessary in all real science as in artistic creativity. Warren Weaver, vice-president for the natural and medical sciences of the Rockefeller Foundation, declares "the shocking fact is that science simply does not have detailed and precise access to what we ordinarily call the external world." Instead of dealing with hard, real fact, Weaver insists that science is "playing a subtle game with nature, all based on an unproved and unprovable faith that this procedure is meaningful and rewarding."[5] As to the supposed infinite outreach of science, Dr. Charles Singer of the University of London, writing on the history of science in the latest edition of the *Britannica Encyclopedia,* says that there "cannot be a 'science' of the whole universe; for it is impossible to attain this by adding the sciences together, and there are vast regions of experience, such as art, literature, and philosophy, that are refractory to scientific treatment." It is a popular belief in Science Unlimited, a faith that nothing whatever is beyond the reach of science and that any other approach to truth is as antiquated as an auto graveyard, which has left us, in Matthew Arnold's words, with the feeling of

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.

Another possible cause of our despair is the seeming revelations of science about a mechanistic universe, man's animal origin, psychological behaviorism, and the like, leaving us with the feeling of being hardly more than biological specimens. A minor sign of this, I think, is the increasing frequency of our adoption of words like "react," "interact", and "feedback." The "Broadcaster," a little sheet of announcements at my college, has more than once read, "Come out this evening at 8:00 and interact with Professor Brown on So-and-So." The suggestion seems to be that no arrival at anything like a truth or even a tenable conclusion is to be reached and that only a kind of low-grade cerebral game on the order of ping-pong will be played. After this little stunt we can drink a bit of coffee, then go on our way as if nothing had really happened. The discovery of any real certainty must be left, apparently, to the computer.

Yet the ancient ideal of Truth, Beauty and Goodness has never been abrogated. The universe, if we are to believe the majority of the scientists themselves, is more than physical, and its structures, harmonies and meaning rise above measurement. The universal must precede rather than follow the sensuous perception before any greatly significant meaning can appear, and the effort of man to dispossess himself of a "given," to stand outside himself and act "as if by machinery," is both impossible and, as to any ultimate knowledge, the surest means of falsification. Hence it is possible, if one will, to find readily at hand a vertical as well as a horizontal and at least a working approximation to the absolute and transcendent. "The cosmic religious experience is the strongest and noblest mainspring of scientific research," said Albert Einstein. "The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms — this knowledge, this feeling is at the center of true religiousness."[6]

The conclusion seems clear that we must pursue values and truth as wise men have always pursued them, that is, by summoning the whole man to thought within a hierarchical universe. This, then, is my first suggestion for the repossession of our lost myth.

A second suggestion toward wholeness would be the recognition of mystery in nature. Keats talks of a time

When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water, and the fire.

I have asked myself seriously which of two possible attitudes towards, for instance, the sun is actually more humanly tenable. Is it more truthful, in the long run, to declare the sun to be merely gases, heat and chemical elements identifiable by spectroscopic analysis or else to declare it, as did the early Greeks, a god? Speaking of that word "merely," C. S. Lewis, in his little book *The Abolition of Man,* discusses the "conquering" of nature by reducing it to smaller and smaller bits of less and less living reality and concluding that it is **merely** this or that. He ends his study with the remarkable sentence, "To 'see through' all things is the same as not to see at all." Some of our best physicists think that Shelley may be right in asserting,

Every grain
Is sentient both in unity and part,
And the minutest atom comprehends
A world of loves and hatreds.

More and more it looks as if those things we call atoms may have a will of their own and may be playing a far subtler game with man than he realizes.

I think it would be helpful if we went back and read some of the medieval bestiaries and herbals. Beyond their quaintness we might find in them real values. In those times the most therapeutically useful plants were considered sacred and symbolically assumed to have first grown on the hill of Calvary, a place itself looked upon as the center of the world. Is there the least touch of this kind of thing in our present view of nature? Most of us, I suppose, would think an antivivisectionist in this century little short of a boob, but men like Bernard Shaw, C. E. M. Joad, C. S. Lewis, and Albert Schweitzer believed that vivisectionism in our time marks "a great advance in the triumph of ruthless, non-moral utilitarianism over the old world of ethical law."[7] I think most of us would be shocked beyond measure if we knew how many thousands of animals suffer torture every day in laboratories — perhaps a great many more than need be. If any objection is raised to this, or to such things as cutting a four-lane highway through a forest preserve or despoiling a beauty spot such as Glen Canyon, the answer always is that man must be served. But which part of man? I myself have practiced for many years looking upon the morning light as an unmerited and mysterious gift and on life in flora and fauna as worthy of a daily salute and even a bow. Years ago I heard somebody say that all our political and diplomatic conferences ought to be moved out of smoke-filled rooms and held underneath trees. It seemed to me excellent. I wonder if under those circumstances the conclusions reached might not be quite different from what they are at present.

I have a good friend in the South with whom I have often walked through the woods. He has the uncanny ability to estimate the number of board-feet in standing trees and has made a small fortune through the gift. For myself, the walks are as Wordsworthian as my limited sensitivity will permit. Between the two, though of course they are not mutually exclusive, I choose my appreciation to his money. More recognition of mystery and symbol in nature would, I think, contribute to our reacquisition of wholeness. And the effort will by no means be simply a sentimental one.

The third suggestion I make about wholeness has to do with what Charles Williams calls coinherence and exchange, doctrines in part growing out of Williams's inability, because of his eyes, to take part in the military and his realization that simply by being alive he is necessarily involved in other lives and sacrifice. Dr. Donne said, "One man's death diminishes me because I am a part of mankind." We are members one of another. I am not talking of banners and marches. These practices have come into existence because of the loss of a deeper sense of man as a mysterious creature walking about on a mysterious thing in stellar space called a planet, and man filled, as Mark Van Doren says, with the realization that "he is more than he need be and less than he would be."[8] Much is said now about the necessity of

self-fulfillment. But the question is which of two selves to fulfill. I have never ceased to be amazed at the popularity for years of a book called *How to Win Friends and Influence People.* Was a more truly selfish title ever hatched up? Later Daniel J. Boorstin wrote a book called *The Image* in which he discusses a world more and more filled with pseudo-events and artificial ways of life. What sort of world is it so dominated by the need for "fun" that an entertainer can make more money in a week than we pay the president of our country for his services for an entire year? Anyway fun is no substitute, as we all well know, for the deeper need called joy, an effect which results from a living sense of coinherence, exchange, and substitution.

A fourth avenue toward wholeness is imagination. Imagination was deliberately excluded from Bacon's prescription. You remember Charles Darwin's description of himself not long before he died. "My mind," he wrote, "seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend, I can not conceive." He remarked that if he had his life to live over again he would follow the rule of reading some poetry and listening to some music at least once a week, because "the loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature."[9] Earlier in this century a president said that what was needed in his time was a great poet who would tell us who we are and where we are. That need grows more urgent as disparity and fragmentation increases. The great secret of poetry is the metaphor and the secret of metaphor is imagination. Imagination enables us to reach up and touch sky and embrace trees and talk to birds and animals and to communicate meaningfully with other humans. Imagination lets us know that man is himself an image, a mystery, a symbol and indeed a myth.

No doubt there are other avenues looking to man's wholeness than the four I have mentioned — hierarchy, the essential mystery of nature, coinherence and right imagination. I have suggested these as ones that appear important to me.

Now I should like to return to J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and the fact that this story is now being widely read and proving deeply meaningful to thousands. Let me briefly identify in this work the four types of wholeness which I have mentioned.

In the *Rings* we have an unfailing hierarchy whose most obvious element is so completely a moral one that even to mention it seems a little out of place. Edmund Wilson insists that Tolkien's villians are too black and his heroes too white. But he overlooks the fact that in every instance evil is shown to be a corruption of the good. Morgoth and Sauron were in the beginning among those given a celestial vision of the right and who volunteered to help turn that potential good into actual good. The Ringwraiths were formerly good men who were seduced into Sauron's service. Saruman was once a member of the White Council and had long withstood evil before he came finally under the domination of Sauron. If some of the Elvish leaders seem too good, they also have an all but eternal background of good and evil against which their conduct must be seen. If Middle-earth history is overlooked, Mr. Wilson's assertion has truth in it, but to overlook that history means to have misread Tolkien.

Divine Right is a subject I think I have never heard commended, but the conception of a man divinely given the right to rule and fully accepting the responsibility of ruling as a mediator between higher and lower is one of the finest things possible in the blind alleys of this world. All of the "high" characters in the *Rings,* and especially Aragorn, who is literally a king, represent truly the principle of divine right. Aragorn for long years went about as servant and protector of the people and preserved the same excellent relationship when he came to his throne.

In the *Rings* history is not only present but warmly alive to promote and even sanctify actions. Hardly anything is more characteristic of elves than their long

look at their past, a past that is congenitally rooted and in which consciousness and conscience are coeval.

Then can one fail to breathe deeply of the glory and mystery of nature in the story? Just to mention Lothlorien is to evoke beatitude. Nature there and elsewhere is "inhabited." This is especially true of trees. The talking trees called Ents become characters in their own right. Frodo put his hand on one of the great mallorn trees in Lothlorien and suddenly realized that he had never before understood "the feel and texture of a tree's skin and of the life within it. He felt delight in wood and the touch of it, neither as forester nor as carpenter; it was the delight of the living tree itself." The mystery of seeds and of growth are represented by Galadriel's gift of a mallorn seed and the soft gray dust that caused all other trees quickly to repossess the Shire after Frodo and Sam's return. Lewis points out that reading about enchanted trees gives real trees an enchanted quality. It is so in this story.

The fragrant grass filled with star-shaped yellow **eleanor** and the pale **niphredil** in timeless Lothlorien works its own magic, as does Aragorn's discovery in the darkness, by its sweet and pungent odor, of the herb **athelas** for the healing of Frodo's wound from the Ringwraiths. This herb, we are told, had been brought to Middle-earth from Numenor. Its existence was known to very few people, a suggestion perhaps that the essential contact with the perduring good earth is now mostly lost to men. The great horse Shadowfax bears almost a talking relation with Aragorn, and in many other ways the substantial existence of nature in its own right is manifest in the *Rings*.

And again, how thoroughly the principle of coinherence is exemplified in Tolkien's story. One of the elves in Lothlorien remarks that "in nothing is the power of the Dark Lord more clearly shown than in the estrangement that divides those who still oppose him." The fellowship of the Ring consists of a wizard, an elf, a dwarf, four hobbits and two men, each with his own peculiarities and strengths yet all moving together in the accomplishment of a single good purpose. It is a case, I think, suggesting the truth of Lewis's remark that democracy is not a process of making people equal but enabling clearly unequal people to live amicably together. One of the finest touches, I think, occurs upon the demand that Gimli the dwarf be blindfolded as he walks through Lothlorien. When Gimli refuses and an impasse seems upon them, Aragorn suggests that all be blindfolded and it is done. All suffer for one, and later when the blindfolds are removed they are repaid by a great burst of glory. Williams's coinherence and exchange are illustrated.

At a time when ancient customs of courtesy and ceremony are about as obsolete as dinosaurs, one of the most appealing elements of the *Rings* is the practice of such customs. We recall the order of the gatherings at Rivendell and Minas Tirith as well as the epochal custom of gift-giving as exemplified in Galadriel's gifts to the fellowship. Gift-giving where the gift contains the giver, as in Galadriel's case, is still one of the significances of our lives, though shoddiness of sentiment and commercialism have trepanned the larger portion of it. The courtesy of King Aragorn to his lowly friends Frodo and Sam in seating them beside him on his throne becomes more than a simple incident in the story.

There is also in the *Rings* a courtesy of sex that, though often noted by its absence today, nevertheless still echoes resonantly at some deep level of our being. Aragorn waited a fantastically long time for Arwen Evenstar, but then their marriage bore all the more meaning and depth for it. Both Sam and Gimli found in Galadriel not simply a beautiful woman but a deeply impelling symbol of courtesy and dignity.

Lastly we can say that the *Rings* appears to be one of the genuinely imaginative works of mankind. Its 1200 pages, including over a hundred pages of footnotes which are themselves imaginatively integral, is less an example of imagination than it simply is imagination. Paul Ricoeur says that by means of imagination man recognizes his real existence and exercises a metaphysical prophecy of things possible to him. Imagination, said Einstein, is "more

important than knowledge." I believe the *Rings* reminds us of some country we knew and loved in a sort of previous incarnation, a channel opening on the foam of perilous seas in lands longed for in the depth of the psyche, lands never traveled yet always traveled, never visited yet from which we have never really been parted, lands where the light is bright, the colors unmuddied, and where our everyday longing for joy is constantly pointing us.

The three books most popular among college students during the past seventeen years are, in order, *The Catcher in the Rye, Lord of the Flies,* and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings.* In the first a sensitive and lonely boy finds that it is impossible for him to learn anything from the phony adult world in which he lives. The second symbolizes the shallowness of our present civilization and attempts to show that it is only a step back to the jungle. Both these books are negative, even at times bitter, in their inferences. Tolkien's story is utterly different.

A generation boasting of its realistic outlook finds multitudes not only reading of dwarfs and elves and talking trees but finding such things pertinent to everyday life. A generation the young of which have been accused of an inner malaise and indifference to human values reads a story replete with dignity, courtesy, heroism in the knightly pattern and of fulfillment not through indulgence but through sacrifice. A generation brought up on Cartesian doubt, alienation, the logic of suicide, the notion that God is dead, of newness for its own sake, and only a quasi belief in religion while its real one is in supposed pragmatic realities, finds that hobbits give more intestinal fortitude than Nietzsche, Sartre and the Bishop of Woolwich.

No one is less "alienated" than J. R. R. Tolkien. In complete contrast with some of the most admired writers of our time, he has a world of certainties. In a time of slackened values he maintains a sure hierarchy. His morals are solidly traditional. He is a thousand miles from the sex angle of much of our current writing, movies and advertising. Though he is not optimistic about our age, he has no existential *anqst*. In a time when the cult of personality dominates the scene, Tolkien belongs to the tradition of medieval art where the created object completely sublimated the creator of it.

The great majority of discussions of the *Rings* emphasize its continuous moral resonance. In a recent dissertation at the University of Michigan, Dorothy K. Barber says that the real significance of the story is Christian and its basic metaphor is "God is light."[10] A graduate student at the University of Wisconsin wrote that he had found the *Rings* the best reading of his entire life and wished he had discovered it in his teens and had then the experience of what he described as its "therapeutic values." A mother wrote of first devouring the story while recuperating from the birth of a son and bewildering her doctor and family by strange references to black riders, elves and orcs. She went on to say that for her the story illumined "the nature of Reality, the glorious and tragic dimensions of the struggle between good and evil." "You," she wrote the author, "have made courage and commitment and honor more meaningful." A young business man in Oxford told me that he regarded the *Rings* as his "Bible," and that when confused and discouraged he went home and read from the story and was restored in mind and spirit.

I conclude with the question whether the wide reading of *The Lord of the Rings* marks a trend. Utopian books reached a peak about the turn of the century and were succeeded by dystopias or anti-utopias. Now there is evidence, a little at least, of a more optimistic turn of things. In his *Books with Men Behind Them,* Edmund Fuller describes the works of contemporary writers with "a sound vision of man," and Mark Hillegas, in his *The Future as Nightmare,* suggests some little signs of a possible movement not nightmarish. One of the most emphatic statements is that of Arnold Gingrich, publisher of *Esquire,* who, speaking at the Sorbonne in 1959, declared that the "point of vomit" in writing has been reached and predicted a Puritan revival in literature. Three years later he repeated this conviction that total revulsion and reversal were somewhere in the offing and that the reversal would be total —

"hardbound, softbound, periodical and permanent." Gingrich was writing not from a religious view but simply on the assumption that the world has exploited sex and its new liberty to the point of license.

Is it not possible that J. R. R. Tolkien has portrayed by story, image, symbol and mythic depth the sources of our often satirized or ignored, yet real, longings? The actuality of a past that is more than the mere passage of time, a past in which there is lively meaning for the present because meaning is a "given" which we could not escape if we tried. That history is not bunk and the *Tao* is still operative? That time is more than the ticking of the clock? That things, yes even atoms themselves, have "innards" and that inwardness is both inescapable and positively desirable? That dignity is not absurd nor antiquity a thing either to be ignored or belittled? And, perhaps best of all, that there is both a "eucatastrophe" and an "evangelium" at the heart of the cosmos?

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3. Lewis Mumford, "Dehumanized Nightmares," *Time*, May 1, 1951; Leonard Baskin, "The Necessity for the Image," *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1961, p. 76; Mark Van Doren, "The Poetry of Our Day Expresses Our Doubt and the Time's Confusion," New York *Herald Tribune Book Review*, September 25, 1949, p. 9; *Time*, April 26, 1968, p. 68.
4. Fremont Rider, "*The Scholar and the Future of the Research Library*, New York, Hadham Press, 1944, p. 12.
5. "A Scientist Ponders Faith," *Saturday Review*, January 3, 1959, p. 9.
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7. "Vivisection," Boston, New England Anti-Vivisection Society, p. 7.
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10. "The Structure of *The Lord of the Rings*," 1965.
11. "Arnold Gingrich's Prediction: A Puritan Revolution in Literature," Chicago Daily News, December 1, 1962.