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ARTS & CULTURE

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Plato's "Myth of Er" tells a story of souls being judged. Detail of the Archangel St. Michael weighing souls, from the altarpiece of the "Last Judgment," 1446-1452, by Rogier van der Weyden. Salle Saint-Louis in the Louvre.

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

What Plato's 'Myth of Er' Tells Us Today

A reminder that we choose our fates

JAMES SALE

Plato is justly famous as one of the world's greatest philosophers. Indeed, 20th-century philosopher A.N. Whitehead once commented that all Western philosophy is but "a series of footnotes to Plato."

At the end of his book "Republic," Plato recounts the curious myth of Er. "Myth" here has its ancient Greek meaning of "account" rather than our contemporary understanding of it as something false or of its being a traditional story involving supernatural beings, heroes, gods, quests, and the like.

As it happens, this myth—account—of Er does involve supernatural beings! But this is not an ancient Greek myth as story; it is a philosopher's account of how reality might be structured.

For these reasons, that it is not a traditional myth (and so does not feature in most compendiums of Greek myths) and that it has been written by a philosopher (remember, Plato wanted to ban the poets as too subversive), I am wary of according it too much status or credibility.

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TRADITIONAL CULTURE

The Gifts of a Slave: St. Patrick, Ireland, and Western Civilization

JEFF MINICK

A shamrock worn on the shirt or blouse. A mug of green beer. Traditional Irish music mingling with the laughter and shouts in a pub. Parades and pageants with Irish step dancing, leprechauns, and spectators decked out in green clothing.

The celebration of Saint Patrick's Day is long entwined with the American past. The first such celebration in the New World occurred on March 17, 1601, in St. Augustine, Florida, possibly inspired by an Irish priest living in that outpost of Spain. Boston featured a St. Pat's parade in 1737, with New York following suit in 1762. With the flood of immigrants to America from the Irish famine in the middle of the next century, the celebrations grew in size. Home to many of these immigrants, today Savannah sports the South's largest celebration of this holiday. Since 1962, Chicago has dyed its river green to mark this annual event.

On March 17, everyone becomes an honorary son or daughter of Erin, welcome to join in the festivities and raise a glass of Guinness.

Which brings a question: Do these partygoers know who St. Patrick was or why they are celebrating the anniversary of his death? More importantly, do they understand the impact of this priest and bishop on Western culture?

Turn down that music in the pub, ask the revelers at the bar that first question, and you'll likely hear that Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland. Some may bring up the shamrock, now the national plant of Ireland, and claim that Patrick used it to teach the doctrine of the Trinity.

These are fine legends, but that is all they are: legends. The reality is much more powerful and exciting.

Slave and Priest

To begin, Patrick wasn't Irish, but British. As we learn from his "Confession," a spiritual memoir and defense of his work written much later in his life, Patrick was born into a wealthy family in the late fourth century. Reasonably well-educated, he was raised as a Christian, though as a youth he wasn't particularly religious, and was 16 years old when Irish raiders attacked the estate where he lived. Bound and hauled off with others that night, he was taken to Ireland and made a slave.

For the next six years, Patrick herded sheep, alone much of the time and often hungry and cold. As time passed and he dreamed of home, he began to recover his faith. He prayed incessantly, fasted, and came to believe that God was communicating with him. According to his "Confession," one night a voice in a dream told Patrick that a ship awaited him and the time had come to make his escape.

Patrick walked for days, arrived at the coast, joined the crew of a ship, and returned to Britain. After another long trek, he rejoined his family, who "besought me that now at last, having suffered so many hardships, I should not leave them and go elsewhere." But the hardened young man of faith who returned home was worlds away from the boy seized by the slavers, and Patrick declared his intentions of entering the religious life. And not only did he wish to study for the priesthood, but the voice in his dreams also told him to return to Ireland and to bring the people to Christ.

Little is known about the next decade



A police band marches in the St. Patrick's Day Parade down Fifth Avenue in New York on March 17, 2022.



Brigid of Kildare followed in the footsteps of St. Patrick.

or so of his life. That he underwent training, becoming first a deacon and then a priest and bishop, is a given, but as Philip Freeman points out in his biography "St. Patrick of Ireland," we can't be sure of where, what, or with whom he studied.

The Mission

What we do know is that Patrick returned to Ireland and became a bishop with a twofold mission: to minister to the tiny Christian community in that land and to bring as many of the Irish as possible to Christianity. He brought several advantages to this work. His enslavement had given him the ability to speak the language of the people and understand their ways, and he possessed a knack for incorporating their symbols and some of their customs into the faith. They honored their gods with fire, for instance, and so Patrick celebrated Easter with bonfires. To the cross he added a circle representing the sun, revered by the Irish, and so created the Celtic cross.

For years after his reentry into Ireland, Patrick roamed the countryside with a band of helpers and followers, building Christian communities and churches, founding monasteries, ordaining priests, dealing with various kings and warlords, and preaching the Gospels. His "Confession" recounts some of these undertakings, but above all reveals the depths of his spiritual life. His famous and beautiful "Breastplate" prayer reinforces this impression of fervent and sincere holiness.

Like so much of his life, the date and year of his death is debated, though March 17, A.D. 461, is accepted by most scholars. He is said to have been buried on the Hill of Down, Ireland.

Irish Legacy

Though the faithful credited Patrick with many miracles, including restoring the dead to life, his greatest miracles came in the centuries following his death. Because of his personal example and unceasing ministry, he left behind a flourishing religious faith that claimed the devotion of the Irish people and would eventually unite them, ending the wars between tribes and kings, and giving them the ability over many centuries to endure all manner of oppression and wars. Moreover, they became such passionate believers and scholars that they not only changed the culture of their island but also spread learning and the faith throughout parts of Europe.

Following in Patrick's footsteps were priests, men and women who took vows and entered monasteries or convents, and saints. Brigid of Kildare, for instance, took vows of chastity and, with the help of a hermit priest, founded a church and a monastery. She was credited with performing many miracles, tending to the poor and the sick, and serving others whenever she could. Today, she is the patroness saint of Ireland.

Inspired by the accounts of martyrs in Rome, but absent any active persecution of Christians, other men and women sought "green martyrdom," which consisted of practices of extreme penance so well described in Thomas Cahill's book "How the Irish Saved Civilization." They sought out remote places to live as hermits or in tiny communities, suffering privation on earth in the belief that it would prepare them for heaven.

Brendan, a founder of several monasteries, found a special way to practice this green martyrdom. Along with a few followers, he sailed into the ocean in a

carragh, a small boat framed out in wood and covered with greased and sewn ox hides. Whether he and his men really set foot in lands as far away as Iceland or New England remains debatable, but in the mid-1970s Tim Severin and a crew of craftsmen and sailors demonstrated that to build such a craft and sail it across the Atlantic was possible. Today, Brendan is the patron saint of mariners.

Helping to Preserve Civilization

Like these "green martyrs," a number of monks departed Ireland to serve as missionaries to parts of Europe, regarding this exile as their own form of self-sacrifice. As Patrick had done in Ireland, they spread the faith, learning, and monasteries to various parts of Europe. In his comprehensive article "Hears and Minds Aflame for Christ—Irish Monks: A Model For Making All Things New in the 21st Century," Daryl McCarthy discusses the immense value of the education carried by these monastics to places such as Germany, Gaul, and Scotland, as well as the aestheticism and devotion that so impressed the people they met.

Over the next 400 years, Irish monks were the backbone of education in Europe. "No land ever sent out such impassioned teachers of learning," wrote Irish historian Alice Green in 1911, "and Charles the Great and his successors set them at the head of the chief schools throughout Europe." These Irish monks are also renowned today for the manuscripts they preserved during the upheavals after the fall of the Roman Empire and the beautiful curvilinear art that decorates some of these ancient tomes.

When we raise our glasses this St. Patrick's Day, let's remember to offer a toast to the man who gave such valuable treasures to our civilization and our culture.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust On Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va.



Stained-glass image of St. Patrick at a Catholic Church in Junction City, Ohio.

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In the past couple of years, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policies have taken the business world by storm. But what do these three words actually mean—and what does their prevalence signify for the American consumer?

The Epoch Times takes a deep dive into the multitrillion-dollar ESG industry, tracing the movement's development from

its origins. We examine the key players driving ESG, their goals for climate and social justice, and how they've united both governments and corporations in their quest for change.

And most importantly, we take a look into the future of ESG. Will it bring about the cleaner, more peaceful, and more equitable world it promises, or will it control our lives in ways that 20th-century totalitarians only dreamed of?

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Nearly all faiths tell of a last judgment. "The Last Judgment," circa 1595, by Leandro Bassano. National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

What Plato's 'Myth of Er' Tells Us Today

Continued from Page 1

But then again, it comes from one of the profound ancients, and I, for one, respect that deeply.

What is the myth of Er and how is it helpful today?

The Myth of Er

Er was a man who died in battle, and with others who had also died, he was led to the afterlife. There, he came to a wonderful place where there were judges who decided where one was to go in the afterlife. There were two doors (one entrance, one exit) to heaven, and two doors (again, entrance and exit) into the earth. Good souls were directed into the heavens, and bad ones were sent down into the earth. The hero, Er, was not sent to either place but was told to remain where he was so that he could see the whole process and report back to the living what occurred after death.

What did occur? Those who went to heaven came back all clean and happy, reporting indescribable sights of beauty; those coming back from the earth were dirty and miserable. In fact, the latter had had to spend a thousand years atoning 10 times over for every sin they'd done.

Furthermore, there were some individuals—tyrants, murderers, and those guilty of other grossest of sins—who were not allowed back at all; their souls were continually flayed.

But for those who could return, their journey at that point had only been stage one. After seven more days, they all gathered in a meadow with Necessity, her daughters (the Fates), and the Sirens.

Here, a lottery takes place where it is clear that what is chosen by each individual is their own responsibility. In essence (quite a philosophical point from a philosopher), the choice they make needs to show that they have learned from their experiences, both in their physical life and what has happened to them so far in the afterlife.

At this point, they can choose to be reincarnated as another human or even as an animal. Before doing so, they drink the waters of forgetfulness and so start their new life with a clean slate. However, the fact is, the soul goes back to life because the soul is immortal.

Er does not drink these waters, and so he is able (on the 10th day and in dramatic fashion) to wake up on the funeral pyre that is about to dispatch his remains and to return to life to explain what really happens after death.

So why is this relevant or important today? Isn't it just idle speculation, albeit of a philosophic bent?

Our Souls Are Immortal

I think there are four reasons why this story is important. The first and, possibly, the most important of all is that the great philosopher Plato seems to agree with the wisdom of the ages, namely that there is an immortal soul.

The soul is something that all cultures of the past knew and revered, be it the Sumerian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Norse, and Celtic cultures, not

to mention the big religions of today, including Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, and even Buddhism. I mention Buddhism last because of its own notions of reincarnation that partially tally with Plato's version.

Keep in mind that reincarnation can be, in its way, a form of experiencing hell, for as Er observes, not all those who choose their new life choose wisely.

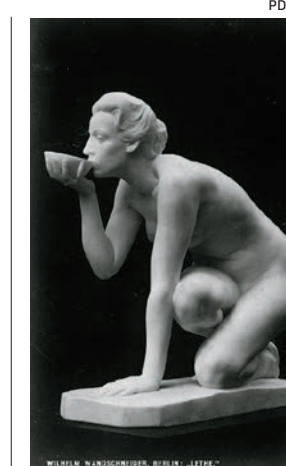
In the materialist world we live in now, this can seem antiquated and irrelevant, but the weight of this testimony is huge. To ignore it, we'd have to dismiss all ancient as well as current religious peoples as primitive ignoramuses, and exude an arrogance of such staggering proportions that only the Greek word "hubris" really gets to the root of the sin.

And that leads us to the second point.

We Will Be Judged

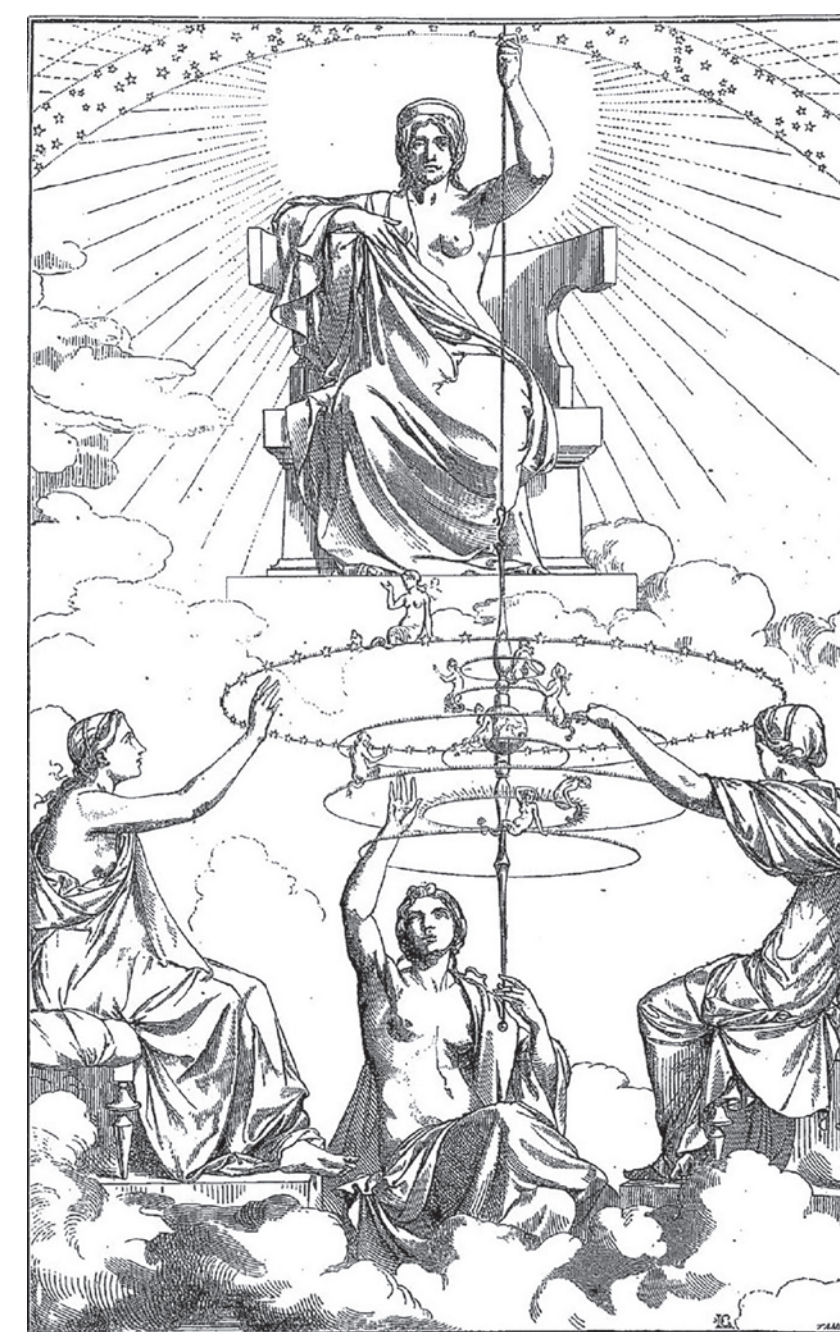
Conceding the immortality of the soul, there is also its judgment in the afterlife. If belief in the immortality of the soul is an unpopular notion in the West, then "judgment"—accountability—is even more unpopular and to be shunned.

We simply don't like to think that we are accountable for our actions, despite the fact that we all have a conscience. Until we



In the "Myth of Er," souls drank from the river of Lethe and forgot their past lives. Sculpture of "Lethe," 1908, by Wilhelm Wandschneider. Postcard collection.

Conceding the immortality of the soul, there is also its judgment in the afterlife.



A modern illustration of a passage in the "Myth of Er," where Ananke, the personification of Necessity, is above the Moirai, the Fates. From "Original From Magasin Pittoresque," 1857, by Edmond Lechevallier-Chevignard.

bury or cauterize our conscience, it warns us of wrongdoing through the emotions of guilt, shame, remorse, and other such feelings.

Rather, in the West, we seek to undermine judgment. This we do firstly and foremost by corrupting language. As New York Times columnist and author David Brooks puts it in his book "The Road to Character":

"When modern culture tries to replace sin with ideas like error or insensitivity, or tries to banish words like "virtue," "character," "evil," and "vice" altogether, that doesn't make life any less moral; it just means we have obscured the inescapable moral core of life with shallow language. ... Furthermore, the concept of sin is necessary because it is radically true."

The Basic Vocabulary of Morality

This leads to our third point about the importance of Er's myth: The story stresses the need for personal responsibility. Of course, if we no longer have the basic vocabulary of morality—words like "good" and "evil," for example—then taking responsibility becomes much more difficult for us. Writing long ago in the 1950s, Christian humanist Dorothy L. Sayers said:

"Our confidence in such faculties as will and judgment has been undermined, and in collapsing has taken with it a good deal of our interest in ourselves as responsible individuals."

Choosing Our Fate

Finally, the fourth point is a consequence of the third point: the importance of the choices that we make. These choices will determine everything, as in "everything" being our destiny, or our fate.

It is interesting that in the myth, the three Fates (daughters of Necessity personified here) are present at the drawing of the lots. As we say in the modern world, choices have consequences, but increasingly more and more people seem to want to ignore this fact. Writer and philosopher Ayn Rand had a wonderful aphorism that perfectly encapsulates the issue: "We can ignore reality, but we cannot ignore the consequences of ignoring reality."

Another way of expressing this truth is to say that life has meaning because life is moral. There is right and there is wrong, and the "Spindle of Necessity" (the universe) upholds this structure. This leads us straight back to point number two: There is a judgment.

This, surely, is a big antidote to much of our contemporary thinking and beliefs, irrespective of our specific religious denomination: The soul is immortal. There is a judgment after death. (Although often in life too, for as the Buddhists say, "You will not be punished for your anger, you will be punished by your anger.")

We are responsible for our actions, and therefore the choices we make have eternal consequences. Believing these propositions elevates human life, for as Dante scholar Prue Shaw observed, "To act instinctively on desire is to be an animal." Morality is an antidote to that.

James Sale has had over 50 books published, most recently, "Mapping Motivation for Top Performing Teams" (Routledge, 2021). He has been nominated for the 2022 poetry Pushcart Prize, won first prize in The Society of Classical Poets 2017 annual competition, performing in New York in 2019. His most recent poetry collection is "HellWard." For more information about the author, and about his Dante project, visit EnglishCantos.home.blog

A stout heart creates character, not size. "Portrait of a Dwarf," circa 1626, by Juan van der Hamen. The Prado Museum.



Character Over Appearance: Rex Ellingwood Beach's Short Story, 'The Shyness of Shorty'

KATE VIDIMOS

In his short story "The Shyness of Shorty," Rex Ellingwood Beach proves that we must not be fooled by appearances. Beach tells of a dwarf, Shorty, who is continually mocked and judged by his peers for his appearance.

Shorty lives in the Old West. He is small in height with a large head and midsection, tiny legs, and an odd posture. Almost everyone laughs at him when they see him, especially his fellow workers at Bar X.

A Laughing Stock

The other Bar X men regularly stop at Bailey's roadhouse. But today Shorty takes their place and arrives at the roadhouse, where he is greeted by the owner Bailey and his Chinese cook, Hot Joy. Upon seeing Shorty's dwarfish appearance, Bailey suppresses laughter and Hot Joy laughs shrilly.

Shorty falls on Hot Joy "with the rush and roar of a cannon ball" and gives him a thorough thrashing, sending the cook away in pain.

Shorty then challenges Bailey's suppressed laughter: "Some of the Bar X boys took to absorb[ing] humour out of my shape when I first went to work, but they're sort of educated out of it now. I got an eye from one and a finger off of another; the last one donated an ear."

Yet despite his antagonistic actions and odd shape, when the newly wed Sheriff Ross Turney and his wife arrive at the roadhouse, Shorty proves to be shy. The sheriff's laughing angers Shorty, but he is touched when young Mrs. Turney treats him with respect. She does not seem to notice his dwarfishness.

As he lies in bed that night at the roadhouse, Shorty's mind whirrs. He is completely mesmerized by Mrs. Turney's kind recognition. He is so flustered that he heads out to get a strong drink.

Small but Fierce

As Shorty slowly gets drunk, things at

However people may judge us, we can rise above that and stand for goodness and truth.

the roadhouse slowly get worse. The Tremper gang, whom the sheriff seeks to arrest, arrives and Bailey proves to be in league with them.

Bailey and the Tremper boys capture the sheriff, while Shorty hides behind the bar. He hears that the ruthless men struck Mrs. Turney. He knows that he must do something.

Trying to stay upright and controlled, Shorty steps out from behind the bar with two pistols drawn. He yells "Han'sup!" Everyone is surprised. One of the Tremper boys quickly draws and shoots at Shorty, but Shorty is so short that the bullet whizzes past him.

Though Shorty is judged by his diminutive size, Beach shows that he does not let that prevent him from being brave. Shorty rises above taller men when courage counts. Beach shows that character matters more than looks.

However people may judge us, we can rise above that and stand for goodness and truth. As Henry Clay says in "The Papers of Henry Clay: Secretary of State 1827":

"Of all the properties which belong to honorable men, not one is so highly prized as that of character."

While most people tend to judge others by their looks, what's inside is what matters most, especially courage, of which Shorty possesses an abundance.

Kate Vidimos is a 2020 graduate from the liberal arts college at the University of Dallas, where she received her bachelor's degree in English. She plans on pursuing all forms of storytelling (specifically film) and is currently working on finishing and illustrating a children's book.

ILLUSTRIOUS IDEAS AND ILLUSTRATIONS: THE IMAGERY OF GUSTAVE DORE

Abdiel and Lucifer on the Question of Freedom

ERIC BESS

What is freedom? Is freedom the ability to do whatever we want whenever we want? Or is freedom directly connected to our ability to control ourselves? Does freedom occur when we can guarantee equal outcomes for all? Or does freedom have more to do with recognizing the supremacy of God's righteousness?

As we continue our series on John Milton's "Paradise Lost," we will explore the idea of freedom.

Lucifer Proposes Equality and Freedom

As he talks with the archangel Raphael, Adam becomes interested in Heaven's war. Raphael uses this as an opportunity to warn Adam about the potential conse-

quences of his free will.

Raphael begins the story at the moment God informs the angels that his son, Jesus, will be their lord. The angels in Heaven were excited at this wonderful news: They celebrated, sang, and danced, and God enjoyed their jubilation.

Some of the angels, however, weren't pleased. One angel in particular, Lucifer, didn't take kindly to having to bow to another being he considered an equal. Lucifer rallied a bunch of his followers to come with him in secret to the northernmost place in Heaven. Here, he begins his outward defiance of God.

Upon a hill surrounded by golden towers and pyramids of diamonds, he sat on a throne and thanklessly complained that he and his followers, despite being some of the most powerful beings in Heaven, had to bow twice now—once to God and again to Jesus.

Enslavement is equated with narcissism.

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This only to consult how we may best With what may be devised of honours new

Receive him coming to receive from us Knee-tributed yet unpaid, prostration vile, Too much to one, but double how endured, To one and to his image now proclaimed? (Book V, Lines 779-784)

Lucifer's pride makes him unwilling to be subservient to anyone, even God. Milton shows that Lucifer's intentions are more nuanced. Here, Lucifer is going against God by promoting a specific type of equality and freedom:

Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend The supple knee? ye will not, if I trust To know ye right, or if ye know yourselves



"This greeting on thy impious crest receive" (VI. 188), 1866, by Gustav Doré for John Milton's "Paradise Lost." Engraving.

Natives and sons of Heav'n possessed before By none, and if not equal all, yet free, Equally free ... Who can in reason then or right assume Monarchy over such as live by right His equals, if in power and splendour less, In freedom equal? (Book V, Lines 787-792, 794-797)

Lucifer suggests that not all may be equal in all aspects, but all are equally free, and anyone who tries to infringe upon this equality is a tyrant and must be resisted.

Lucifer and Abdiel Debate Equality and Freedom

It's at this point that an angel in the audience, Abdiel, protests Lucifer's blasphemous remarks. Abdiel wants to remind the angels that their subordination to God does not compromise their freedom:

All things, ev'n thee, and all the Spirits of Heav'n

By him created in their bright degrees, Crowned them with glory, and to their glory named ...

Nor by his reign obscured, But more illustrious made ...

His laws our laws, all honour to him done Returns our own. (Book V, Lines 837-839, 841-845)

Abdiel suggests that all of the angels in attendance, even Lucifer, were created by God with all of their glory, and the supreme power of God has never obscured their glory since their glory is God's expression. To oppress them would be, in essence, to oppress himself.

In other words, all of them are expressions of God's power, and the more powerful God is, the more powerful they are. The very power, equality, and freedom that Lucifer wants is already possessed through being close to God. He could get the elevation he seeks not by defying God, but by praising God.

Of course, Lucifer doesn't agree with this and says:

We know no time when we were not as now; Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised By our own quick'ning power ... (Book V, Lines 859-861)

Lucifer's response is that none of them remembers that God created them. Instead, being the first to appear as if from their own power, their glory seems to come from something innate within themselves. Thus, they don't need to pay homage to anything or anyone outside of themselves.

Upon seeing that none of the other angels are taking Abdiel's side, Lucifer's confidence grows, and he cockily tells Abdiel to run back to his new king so that he can continue to be a slave. The angels who follow Lucifer explode into applause and scowl at Abdiel as he leaves to return to God.

God already knows all of Lucifer's plans and sees the whole resistance unfold, so all of God's angels are preparing for battle. God and his angels see Abdiel resist Lucifer, and they celebrate him when he returns. God says to him:

... Well hast thou fought The better fight, who single has maintained Against revolted multitudes the cause Of truth, in word mightier than they in arms; And for testimony of truth hast borne Universal reproach, far worse to bear Than violence: for this was all thy care To stand approved in sight of God, though worlds Judged thee perverse ... (Book VI, Lines 29-37)

God tells Abdiel that this test was a difficult one. It's very difficult to pursue truth and care only for God's approval. Those angels who scowled at him were once his friends, and he had to take a lonely walk of shame through their looks of disapproval as he journeyed back to God.

God says that this kind of shunning can be even more difficult to endure than violence. But Abdiel passed the test, and the next test will be much easier because Abdiel will have God's whole army with him.

The First Blow

The God's army is led by the archangels Mi-

chael and Gabriel to find Lucifer's army and thwart their rebellion. They find Lucifer planning a surprise attack. He's held high on a chariot in the middle of golden angels with golden shields. The two armies line up against each other and await commands.

Abdiel is filled with disgust at Lucifer's presenting himself as so grand despite how evil he has become. Lucifer gets off of his chariot and walks to the front of the line, where he's met by Abdiel. They exchange heated words, and Lucifer says:

At first I thought that liberty and Heav'n

To Heav'nly souls had been all one; but now

I see that most through sloth had rather serve,

Minist'ring Spirits, trained up in feast and song;

Such hast thou armed, the minstrelsy of Heav'n,

Servility with freedom to contend. (Book VI, Lines 164-169)

Lucifer insults all of God's angels. He tells them that they confuse freedom with being able to sing and dance in praise of God, but this is merely a jester's performance, a minstrel show not to be confused with true freedom.

Abdiel responds that serving God isn't the same as lacking freedom. True enslavement comes from making unwise decisions and following those who would rebel against God by being enthralled with themselves. Enslavement is equated with narcissism:

This is servitude,

To serve th' unwise, or him who hath rebelled

Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee,

Thyself not free, but to thyself enthralled. (Book VI, Lines 178-181)

At this moment, Abdiel throws the first strike, which lands on Lucifer's shield and pushes him back 10 paces. Here, Michael blows the trumpet, and the actual battle begins.

In his illustration "This greeting on thy impious crest receive," Gustave Doré depicts the moment that Abdiel lifts his sword to attack Lucifer. Lucifer looks as if he is going to draw his spear. The angels of God are around Abdiel and can be seen silhouetted in the background. Lucifer's angels, however, are slightly darker in value, and two at the bottom right corner shield themselves or turn their back to the oncoming onslaught. Is their lack of courage an expression of their freedom?

The Question of Freedom

All of this brings up the question of true freedom.

Between the lines, Milton seems to suggest a difference between free will and true freedom. Raphael begins the story as a warning to Adam about the potential consequences of free will: We reap what we sow, but we sow what we will. Here, freedom seems to be bound to what we reap; it's a consequence of how we employ our free will; freedom is our reward for sowing righteously.

Abdiel uses his free will to defy Lucifer and praise God, and he receives the type of praise Lucifer desperately wants.

Lucifer, however, is using free will to claim and fight for absolute equality with God irrespective of his place in the divine hierarchy. His divine rank is lower than God's and Jesus's, but he feels he should be treated like they are nonetheless: He wants power and praise to be equally distributed. Free will can be likened to equality of opportunity. Lucifer wants equality of outcome, and he plans to destroy everything that gets in his way.

In all of his self-praise, Lucifer fails to see that he's enslaved by his own pride, a pride that follows him everywhere as a hell he can't escape.

Gustave Doré was a prolific illustrator of the 19th century. He created images for some of the greatest classical literature of the Western world, including *The Bible*, *Paradise Lost*, and *The Divine Comedy*. In this series, we'll take a deep dive into the thoughts that inspired Doré and the imagery those thoughts provoked. For the first article in the series, visit "Illustrious Ideas and Illustrations: The Imagery of Gustave Doré."

Eric Bess is a practicing representational artist and is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSVA).

HISTORY

An American Hero: Medic Desmond Doss

WALKER LARSON

Nothing defines a society like the individuals we elevate, praise, and emulate. The pinnacle of a society's heritage consists of its pageant of heroes, passed from parents to children for centuries, perhaps millennia, because it embodies the values of the culture. It lights a fire in the hearts of each succeeding generation to be something more, to stand for something, to be not unworthy of their ancestors' achievements.

The Romans called it "pietas"—piety—"a respectful and faithful attachment to gods, country, and relatives, especially parents."

A Roman Hero

The paragon of piety in the Roman tradition is the character of Aeneas from Virgil's epic poem "The Aeneid." Aeneas flees the blistering, burning city of Troy when it is overrun by the Greeks, and brings with him his father (literally carried on his shoulders) along with the "lares" and "penates," the household gods, which in Roman religion included the hero-spirits of one's ancestors.

Part of this Roman piety showcased by Aeneas, then, is the preserving and honoring of those who have gone before. Aeneas, according to the legend, becomes the founder of Rome, but it is unthinkable that he would leave the household gods, his heritage, behind him. He brings them with him all the way to Latium, where Rome will eventually be established.

Aeneas both preserves the heroes of the past and becomes a hero himself in that he lives out the Roman ideal of piety.

Desmond Doss consistently shows up on lists of the greatest American World War II heroes.

An American Hero

Heroes embody our principles, as well as our vision for the future. This is one reason why literature and history are so important to a nation's culture: They preserve and maintain a consensus of what a society values and aspires to.

Who today would the vast majority of Americans agree were true heroes? World War II American medic Desmond Doss may be one. The Oscar-nominated 2016 film "Hacksaw Ridge" was based on the life of Corporal Desmond Doss and received 91 percent positive reviews from audiences according to the film review aggregate, Rotten Tomatoes.

A recipient of the Medal of Honor, Doss consistently shows up on lists of the greatest American World War II heroes. Clearly, many Americans regard him very highly. For those who don't already know his story, I will briefly recap it here.

Doss was born in Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1919. His parents were William Doss, a carpenter, and Bertha Doss, a homemaker and shoe factory worker. Doss was raised as a Seventh-day Adventist, and he firmly embraced this religion. He married Dorothy Schutte in 1942, and the same year joined the U.S. Army, despite being offered a deferment.

He registered as a conscientious objector, however, since he did not believe in using a gun or killing. He emphasized that he was really a "conscientious cooperater," since he was willing to go on the battlefield, wear the uniform, and so on, but not carry or use a weapon. In addition, he requested a weekly pass to attend church every Saturday.

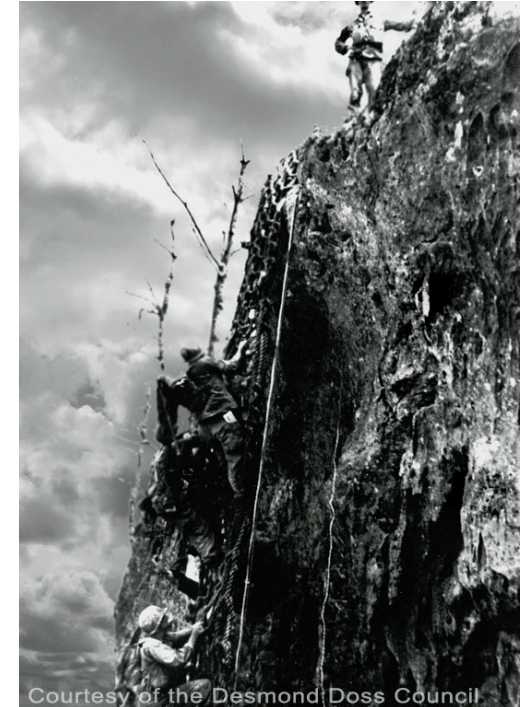
Doss's peculiar beliefs along with his small frame made him an object of mockery and derision among his fellow soldiers. One even threatened, "Doss, as soon as we get into combat, I'll make sure you won't come back alive."

The officers also persecuted him and tried to get rid of him. They eventually attempted to court-martial him for refusing the direct order to carry a gun. These efforts were unsuccessful, however, and Doss declined to leave—and declined to hold a grudge.

Hacksaw Ridge

The full extent of Doss's true mettle was re-

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE DESMOND DOSS COUNCIL



Medic Desmond Doss on top of the Maeda Escarpment, May 4, 1945. U.S. Army.

vealed when he took part in the American attack on Okinawa in 1945. The Germans were surrendering at this time, but the Japanese fought on, trying to hold the island and its Maeda Escarpment in order to prevent an invasion of Japan itself. The soldiers referred to the Maeda Escarpment, a sheer rock face, as Hacksaw Ridge.

Doss's company secured the top of the ridge, but the Japanese launched a devastating counterattack. Officers ordered a retreat, and the Americans rushed back down the cliff. But not Doss.

Once again, Doss disobeyed an order for the sake of what he saw as a greater good. He remained behind, answering the calls for a medic from the many wounded men still on the battlefield (less than a third had made it back down the cliff).

Completely disregarding his own safety, amidst the choking dust and smoke, shock waves of explosions, and the hiss of bullets, Doss ran from one comrade to the next, treating their wounds, dragging them to safety, and lowering them down the cliff face. He even attempted to save some Japanese soldiers. In all, he rescued at least 75 men on that day, May 5, 1945.

The American troops captured the ridge, and eventually all of Okinawa. Several days after his great act of heroism, Doss was wounded by a grenade and a sniper's bullet. Still, he thought of others over himself: He insisted that his litter-bearers rescue a wounded comrade before they rescued him.

Doss survived the war, though he suffered from tuberculosis (likely as a result of the terrible conditions on the Pacific islands) for six years afterwards, and lived most of his life with only one lung. He died on March 23, 2006, aged 87.

American Values

So, what universally admired aspects of the American character does Doss reveal to us? In the first place, courage. At our best, we are a bold and brave people, who know what our goal is, and aim straight for it, regardless of contradictions or obstacles (even sheer cliff-faces).

This trait grows, in part, out of our individualism. Individualism is a double-edged sword, but we see in Doss something of its best form: a quiet independence and rock-solid adherence to his principles and conscience. He knew when to disobey a lower law or expectation for the sake of something higher.

Finally, Doss demonstrates the remarkable compassion and self-sacrifice valued by Americans. Care for the downtrodden, the sick, the wounded, when rightly directed, is among the best of traits of our culture. Doss gives an example of this kind of care, a care that doesn't hesitate to suffer on a personal level—pain or even death—for one's fellow citizens.

Walker Larson teaches literature and history at a private academy in Wisconsin, where he resides with his wife. He holds a Master's in English literature and language, and his writing has appeared in *The Hemingway Review*, *Intellectual Takeout*, and his *Substack*, "TheHazelnut."

FILM REVIEW

Saving Bits of Celluloid and Bringing Them Back to Life

MICHAEL CLARK

Divided into four distinct chapters, “Film, the Living Record of Our Memory” (“Living Record”) delves into an overlooked and largely unknown area of movie history about which even many who consider themselves industry experts will discover they are woefully unformed.

Wasting zero time, writer and director Inés Toharia presents images of multiple film cans being opened and revealing their content. Most of it is nothing but dust, something that happens to film stock left too long in hot and humid storage rooms. The bulk of these are silent films that went ignored so long—80 percent of all ever produced are forever lost.

Sold for Scrap

Then, there are “talkie” productions released from the late 1920s through the late 1940s that were purposefully sold off by various studios and melted down for their silver content. It was the mindset at the time that once a movie completed a theatrical run, it had exhausted its ability to generate revenue, and this “recycling” was just a way to wring out a few more bucks.

It didn’t help matters that all of these movies were made from nitrate stock, a volatile and highly flammable substance that was discontinued in 1950.

Easily, the most disheartening portion of this opening salvo began in the 1940s when the Nazis, not content with conquering most of Eastern Europe, confiscated the artworks of these countries. When it became clear that they were going to lose the war, the Nazis began destroying the thousands of films in their possession. If not for the intervention of the Russians, they would have succeeded in full.

This segment dovetails nicely into another profiling of the early collectors—those who recognized the future cultural significance of the film medium. More pioneers and preservationists than hoarders, these benevolent individuals put great effort into saving any and all movies they could locate. One in particular, Cinémathèque Française founder Henri Langlois, was

Most silent films have been long ignored and are now lost.

‘Film, the Living Record of Our Memory’

Documentary

Director:
Inés Toharia

Running Time:
One hour, 59 minutes

MPAA Rating:
Not Rated

Release Date:
Feb. 27, 2023

★★★★★



Samples of film deterioration in “Film, the Living Record of Our Memory.”

able to rescue two early German classics: “Faust” (1926) and “Nosferatu” (1922).

Revealing Home Movies

Next, Toharia throws us a hard curveball by including a truncated and illuminating history of amateur or “home” movies and how they figure into the title of this film. In addition to things that those of a certain age associate with home movies (vacations at the beach, birthday celebrations), Toharia includes clips of those shot in post-Kristallnacht Vienna and a 1938 film of Depression-era field workers that are highly reminiscent of what would be seen in “The Grapes of Wrath” two years later.

Arguably, the most visceral portion of the entire production are the home movies of Japanese Americans getting off of overstuffed train cars and being led to internment camps. In America. It’s not a good look to be sure. But as it is often said, those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it.

The first portion of the third quarter of “Living Record” is dedicated to the ongoing and endless search for lost features and shorts not only in the United States and Europe but also in the Far East and Africa, alongside the bios of some of the early pioneers in those regions. It is truly inspirational and eye-opening stuff.

Talking Back to the Screen

In what is the most unique and light-hearted but revealing passage, Toharia profiles the “Mostly Lost” film festival. Held annually since 2007 at a branch of the Library of Congress in Culpeper, Virginia, it includes 150 invited scholars and movie buffs who are shown portions of

recovered silent films and are called on to audibly identify clues contained within the mysterious frames. It’s the only time that talking during a movie is encouraged.

Fittingly, the final 30 minutes concentrates on the global community of film restorers. Selfless, dedicated, and eminently patient, these professionals are charged with taking decimated, often unwatchable bits and pieces of celluloid and bringing them back to life, or as close to life as possible.

Because of their limited time and funds, they also have the arduous, unenviable task of choosing what to save and what must be left to wither away.

The most surprising aspect of the restoration segment is what’s in store for the future of filmmaking in general and the manner in which it will be shot and eventually preserved. To make a comparison without giving too much away, it lends credence to people who prefer the sound of analog vinyl records over digital CDs.

Needless to say, “Living Record” is absolutely essential viewing for movie fans, scholars, students, historians, and anyone interested in how important it is to take care of the past.

Presented in English and subtitled Spanish, Italian, French, Catalan, and Arabic.

Originally from Washington, D.C., Michael Clark has provided film content to over 30 print and online media outlets. He co-founded the Atlanta Film Critics Circle in 2017 and is a weekly contributor to the Shannon Burke Show on FloridaManRadio.com. Since 1995, Mr. Clark has written over 4,000 movie reviews and film-related articles. He favors dark comedy, thrillers, and documentaries.

TRUTH and TRADITION

In Our Own Words



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I try to create a beautiful, uplifting, or thoughtful experience in order to reconnect us to our spirituality.

Sharon Kilarski
Arts and Culture Editor

The Best of the Human Experience

Dear Epoch VIP,

If you’re at all like me, you know that it can be ugly out there. You read about it in the news, watch it on the screen, and maybe even see it out your window. And it seems worse lately—depressing. That’s where The Epoch Times steps in.

Ever since its creation, The Epoch Times has featured an arts and culture section that acknowledges the importance of the truly beautiful—whether beautiful in a physical sense or a moral one, and we continue that mission today.

And as the Arts and Culture editor, the mission is at the center of how I run my section.

In keeping with our motto of Truth and Tradition, we aim to present the best and noblest that human culture has to offer. By exploring the best craftsmanship in the world, we acknowledge that diligence, hard work, and patience produce excellence. In reviewing films, we search for those that are actually good for the soul, or, conversely, we point out where they have failed in this regard. By looking to our heritage for historical, literary, and mythical figures, we seek those with outstanding character and virtues to offer as exemplars to emulate. And by looking to the classics in music, the performing arts, and fine arts, we find themes that emphasize dignity, uprightness, harmony, and purity to inspire us.

In a sense, traditional art, stemming from traditional culture and values, aims at the heart and can speak

to us in surprising ways—as though we are having a conversation with a dear and trusted friend.

And just as conversations with a friend will sometimes touch on pain, the traditional arts not only capture the breath of human experience but its depth as well, allowing us to recognize our sins and frailties, and transforming humanity’s inevitable pain to give that pain meaning. It is the beauty of the classics that carry out this alchemy.

Most importantly, I believe that art has traditionally been a link to the sacred, as a way to remind us of purpose on earth. **As the late philosopher Roger Scruton wrote, “True art is an appeal to our higher nature, an attempt to affirm that other kingdom in which moral and spiritual order prevails.”**

That our society today has forgotten this purpose is all the more reason that each week, as editor of Arts and Culture, I try to create a beautiful, uplifting, or thoughtful experience in order to reconnect us to our spirituality.

I’m continuing to find paintings, stories, and remarkable figures that astonish me and I hope they will affect you, dear reader, too. I hope you will enjoy the Arts and Culture section, and that it can help you step away for a moment from the violent, cynical, demonic, immodest, insulting, and tasteless. I hope our content leaves you refreshed and anticipating the next issue.

In Truth and Tradition,

Sharon Kilarski
The Epoch Times

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