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Featured in this issue:

more on NFP 3

time travel 5

short takes 2

Hobbits and Hogwarts

by Ben Brown

There has been much debate among Christians over the course of the last couple of years about the value, or disvalue, of the amazingly popular Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling. A number of prominent figures have voiced strong objections to the Harry Potter stories, comparing them unfavorably to such Christian classics as *The Lord of the Rings* (hereafter *LR*) by J. R. R. Tolkien and *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis. Such comparisons have been especially common since the recent releases of cinema versions of the first Rowling and Tolkien books in their respective series. The discussion so far has centered almost entirely on the use of magic in stories, but this has, I think, caused many other more important aspects of the books to be overlooked.

The issue that I want to raise in this article concerns the *ethos* of a piece of literature, the worldview which is woven into the fabric of its imaginary world. Every story has one, and it is this which provides the context within which to evaluate the use of magic. The ethos of a world is the spirit with which it is imbued, the soul that informs it. And like the human soul, the ethos is intangible; you cannot reach out and grab hold of it. But you can

See **Hobbits** *on page 9*

Social credit: a distributist reform of the financial system

by Oliver Heydorn

Thomas Storck is to be commended for his persistent advocacy of distributism as an alternative model of economic organization. Given the injustices inherent in capitalism, socialism, as well as the mixed economy, it is about time that an economic system that transcends the traditional spectrum be presented for serious study.

According to Mr. Storck, the human person would be better served if private property, especially productive property, were more widely and equally distributed among economic agents. The bodies that would be largely responsible for ensuring this more adequate distribution would be non-governmental occupational groups or guilds.

Provided that distributism can incorporate a commitment to efficiency, to beneficial economic growth and development, to a co-operative competition, as well as to a just hierarchical society that would disallow any radical egalitarianism, it may very well prove to be the answer to many of our economic and social problems.

There is, however, a certain dimension of our current economic life that Mr. Storck does not address, and which is responsible in one way or the other for many, if not most, of the disadvantages of the present system. In my view, the capitalist monetary system, since it lies at the very centre of the modern economy, is more in need of a distributist-style reform than any other sector.

The present way of creating and distributing money in most countries can be termed "capitalist," because it also separates ownership from work in such a way that an elite few are permitted to make obscene and unjustified profits at the expense of the many. Instead of considering money as a pure means of exchange (which was its original and most fundamental purpose), the capitalist financial system treats money as the productive property of a few, as a commodity that can itself be bought and sold.

At the heart of capitalist finance is the fractional reserve system of banking. By means of this ingenious method of money management, the fin-

See **Social Credit** *on page 8*

short takes

Beware laxism

Just one thought on your excellent piece on NFP. Regarding those who think that the criteria for spacing births by means of NFP are stricter than they really are, I would not want to say that they are all tainted by a judgmental spirit and are resentful of the freedom that is proper to spouses. They may honestly have a wrong understanding of these criteria and may honestly perceive us as laxists. All we can say—and I suppose all you really wanted to say—is that the stricter view of NFP lends itself easily to a judgmental spirit. But then it has to be acknowledged that our position lends itself equally easily to laxism. You know what happened when the old Friday abstinence was replaced by the new regime of leaving it up to the conscience of each believer to do his or her own Friday sacrifice: most lost sight entirely of the duty to make some Friday sacrifice. When one stresses the legitimate place of conscience in spousal decisions about family size, the same kind of moral slide becomes a real danger.

John Crosby
FUS Professor of Philosophy

NFP and peace of mind

Bravo to Kathleen van Schaijik for her April 2002 article, "Abusing NFP". My husband and I have been married for twelve years and are expecting our eighth baby in another month, but not because we are providentialists!! We have made use of NFP many times during our marriage, and expect to do so again.

As always when using NFP, each marital embrace is open to the Lord's infusion of a new life. That's one of the blessings of NFP—God can always "override" our decision and bless us with another child .

We want to raise our children in a happy and peaceful (most of the time it's actually what we call controlled chaos) household. As we age, we notice a difference in our patience with the noise level, the kids' arguing, and the need to provide character formation. We can't just *have* kids, we must raise them too! We home school our children and have been in contact with various people who have the providentialist attitude, and it is difficult to view oneself as maybe lacking something that they have. Our good Lord leads us though, if we truly seek Him, and lets each couple know how to approach the area of fertility within the Church's teaching. Thank you, Kathleen van Schaijik, for a thoughtfully written article, and for the peace of mind that ensued after I read your thoughts.

T. G.
Akron, OH

The logic of love

I speak as the oldest of a family of ten whose parents have been teachers of NFP for over fifteen years. While I don't think I've ever heard my parents advocate the "theoretical providentialist" view, I have "personal providentialism," or at least a great joy in having a large family, in my bones. I must admit that while Mrs. van Schaijik's article seems to accurately convey the teaching of the Church, and I don't think I disagree with any of her specific claims about the ethics of NFP, I think that certain elements of her tone were rather harshly judgmental themselves. I guess I refer mainly to the language of "burdening" that she often uses. It seems to me that while she is willing to concede that the church has a "preferential love" for large families, she nonetheless implies that to hold up a large family as a model of generosity is in itself pharisaical. I guess I just have never felt that one who really loves could ever consider

See **short takes** *on page 12*

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Marriage and the use of Natural Family Planning

by Thomas Storck

In the April 20, 2002 *University Concourse* our esteemed Editor wrote an article entitled "Abusing NFP." I am offering this article in support of her conclusions, although I will approach the question using a different line of argument.

The matter at issue here is when is it licit for a married couple to make use of natural family planning to postpone or avoid having children. Mrs. van Schaijik discusses the opinions of those who believe that licit use of NFP is very rare—e.g. when there are serious health problems on the part of the mother, serious financial difficulties, etc. Those who take this view would say that to postpone or avoid a new child for such reasons as stress, depression or fatigue would be selfish and sinful. Neither Mrs. van Schaijik nor I have anything to say against those heroic couples who freely and lovingly choose to accept as many children as God wishes to send them; indeed, we both think that such couples have a special place in our Lord's Sacred Heart. Rather the problem arises with those who try "*to impose an obligation on all married couples that is not to be found in the teachings of the Church*, viz., that unless prevented by nature or emergencies, all married couples ought to have large families; and, correlatively, no couple should make use of NFP, except in very rare cases...."[1]

Everyone knows mothers who bear eight, ten or twelve children and who manage such large households with aplomb. But not everyone has their emotional and physical resources and no one else can rightly criticize those who do not have such physical and emotional gifts.

In the first place, let us consider the traditional primary end of marriage. As put in a standard pre-Vatican II theological manual, "*Finis principalis Matrimonii est generatio et educatio prolis*,"[2] that is, "the principal end of marriage is the procreation and education of children." Now the important thing to note about this for our purposes is that the primary end of marriage is the procreation *and* education of children. And of course *education* here means much more than *schooling*. Perhaps it could best be rendered as *formation*, the entire spiritual, moral, intellectual, social and physical shaping of a child, so that he can serve God in this world and attain eternal life in the next. Obviously in order to be educated a child must first be generated and born. But, as we see too evidently around us, not all children who are procreated are educated. And if parents are indeed the first and primary educators of their children,[3] then the state of their health, both physical and psychological, has a great impact on their ability to educate their children. Thus if parents are stressed or constantly tired or overworked, they are not apt to be the best educators of their children. I am not speaking of their ability to ferry their children around for the latest in art or music lessons or sports camps or whatever. No, I am thinking of the daily interaction of parents and children and the strength needed by parents for the sometimes arduous task of rearing their children. It does not conduce to forming children psychologically if their parents are frequently irritable or overly critical. Yet, as is obvious, fatigue and stress tend to bring out such negative qualities in human beings.

Of course, one might argue that the best lesson that parents can give their children is that of generous sacrifice to God. And I certainly do not deny the value of this lesson. But I question the ability of anyone to look into anyone else's heart or into the privacy of any other family and pronounce whether those parents are living up to the high calling of the sacrament of matrimony or yielding to self indulgence and taking the easy way out.[4] Everyone knows mothers who bear eight, ten or twelve children and who manage such large households with aplomb. But not everyone has their emotional and physical resources and no one else can rightly criticize those who do not have such physical and emotional gifts.

The second line of argument I want to pursue involves a discussion of the purpose of child bearing in conjunction with God's original command to Adam and Eve, "Increase and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). One of the chief insights in the Aristotelian/Thomistic philosophic tradition is that every action has an end. Things exist for a purpose. God's command to Adam and Eve was to bring about the peopling of the earth. And certainly the birth of every human being is a good. But the duty of married couples to have children is rationally related to the population needs of the world and the Church.

A very interesting discussion of this question took place in the 1950s and early 1960s by moral theologians

entirely orthodox and loyal to the Church's Magisterium. In particular, let us look at a work written by Jesuit Fathers John C. Ford and Gerald Kelly, volume 2, *Marriage Questions*, of their *Contemporary Moral Theology*, published in 1964.[5] Frs. Ford and Kelly opine that, even with absolutely no excusing cause based on health, economics, etc., no married couple is bound by the law of God to have more children than is necessary for the general conservation and gradual increase of the human race. They state, "There may be difficulty in determining the exact limit for various countries; but certainly today in the United States a family of four children would be sufficient to satisfy the duty."[6] Such an approach to the question of use of natural family planning was not limited to these two authors. As they state, "Verbal acceptance of the theory was expressed by a great majority of some thirty moral theologians who discussed it at Notre Dame in June, 1952, on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America."[7] I am not here holding up the minimum as an ideal. But we have no right to criticize someone else for what is in fact not a sin. Nor can we confuse a counsel of perfection with a duty or expect others to achieve what might be for them heroic virtue.

This discussion by Frs. Ford and Kelly took place against a backdrop of generally large Catholic families and a healthy birthrate in society at large. Today we have the opposite. The population of some European countries has already fallen in absolute numbers, and in many others will soon begin to fall drastically unless those countries consent to be overwhelmed by Muslim immigrants. One could thus argue that, at least in Europe, Catholic families ought not to consider their duty to Church and state as fulfilled with four children. And I think there is something to be said for arguing thus. Therefore I include this discussion less for the specific numbers that Frs. Ford and Kelly calculated nearly forty years ago than to bring forward the principle that licit use of natural family planning depends on many factors and cannot be reduced to a simple formula of 'Have as many children as possible, unless you have a grave reason not to.'

Lastly, let us look at what Pope Paul VI actually said about this question in *Humanae Vitae*, no. 16.

> If, then, there are serious motives to space out births, which derive from the physical or psychological conditions of husband and wife, or from external conditions, the Church teaches that it is then licit to take into account the natural rhythms immanent in the generative functions...."

The Latin original of the first part of the sentence runs, "*Si igitur iustae adsint causae generationes subsequentes intervallandi, quae a coniugum corporis vel animi condicionibus*...." I have italicized the word usually translated as "serious," and it is in the Latin "iustae," that is, *just*. So it would appear that Pope Paul was simply stating that the causes for making use of natural family planning must be just causes, i.e., not frivolous.[8]

I close this article with simply these words of our Lord, "Woe to you lawyers also! for you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers" (Luke 11:46). ■

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[1] Kathleen van Schaijik, "Abusing NFP," p. 11 (emphasis in original).

[2] A. Tanquerey, *Brevior Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae*, 6th ed. (Paris: Societas Sti. Joannis, c. 1923) p. 730. It would probably be possible to find literally hundreds of places—encyclicals, the 1917 Code of Canon Law, statements of Roman congregations, theology textbooks, catechisms, rotal decisions—where this teaching was repeated. Some have argued that *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 50, changed this teaching on the existence of a primary end of marriage. Space does not allow me to go into this controversy in this article, but suffice it to say that the Church has not and could not change this teaching.

[3] Cf. *Gravissimum Educationis*, no. 3; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, nos. 36-38.

[4] Moreover, natural family planning is perhaps not so easy to misuse as some seem to think. Unlike contraceptive use, where, especially with the pill, couples can go on unthinkingly contracepting for years on end, with NFP each month a couple must rethink their decision to postpone or avoid the possibility of a pregnancy. And, thanks to the God-given attraction of the sexes for each other, they have a strong incentive to throw caution to the winds.

[5](Westminster, Md. : Newman, 1964) Lest anyone think that Frs. Ford and Kelly were part of the phalanax of dissenting moralists which at that period was just beginning to operate in the open, the authors explicitly state that the Church can never approve of contraception. "The Church is so completely committed to the doctrine that contraception is intrinsically and gravely immoral that no substantial change in this teaching is possible. It is *irrevocable*." p. 277 (Emphasis in original) Remember that in this period, between approximately 1963 and the appearance of *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, few would have been so bold as to make such a statement. Fr. Ford went on to publish an important article (co-authored with Germain Grisez) in the June 1978 issue of *Theological Studies*, "Contraception and the Infallibility of the Ordinary Magisterium," arguing for the infallibility of the teaching contained in *Humanae Vitae*.

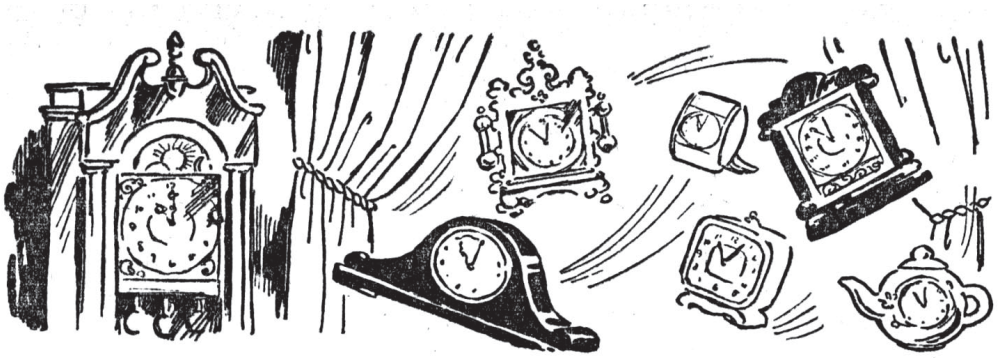
[6] *Ibid*., p. 423.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 422.

[8] In the volume of post-Vatican II documents edited by Austin Flannery (*Vatican Council II : More Postconciliar Documents*, Boston : Daughters of St. Paul, c. 1982), *iustae* is translated as "reasonable" (p. 405).

On the (Im)possibility of time travel

by Patrick Toner



Ben Brown has offered some arguments against the possibility of time travel. I will show here that they are unsuccessful. This requires going through them one by one, and that process shall occupy the bulk of my response. I will conclude with a brief explanation of why I agree with Brown's conclusion despite finding his arguments faulty.

Brown begins by considering a causal paradox. He suggests that we've all seen examples of it in works of science fiction: "A person does thing X1 at time T1, which has as its direct result that he travels back in time and does thing X2 in time T2; but it turns out that X2 was actually the direct cause of his doing X1, and thus he would never have traveled to time T2 and done X2." Brown's argument that this is unacceptable seems sound, but his conclusion that this scenario renders time travel logically impossible simply does not follow. Any theory of time travel that allows the traveler to undercut the conditions that allowed him to travel back in time in the first place may very well be logically impossible. But to avoid the contradiction Brown here points out, the time travel advocate has only to accept that, foibles of science fiction writers aside, such scenarios really are impossible: theories that allow them are just bad theories.[1] The range of the time traveler's activities could be quite restricted—perhaps the time traveler can't exert *any* causal influence while he's in the past. So Brown's causal paradox is no reason to claim that time travel is impossible. Rather, it illustrates a consequence time travel theorists should be careful to avoid.

Brown's second argument is more involved, and answering it will require a bit of preliminary terminological clarification. Let's start by distinguishing two types of persistence: endurance and perdurance.[2] Endurantists and perdurantists agree that (at least some) objects persist, or last, over time. (I existed in 1975, and I exist now: I have persisted.) They disagree about *how* objects persist. Endurantists hold that persisting objects are wholly present at all times in which they exist. Perdurantists believe that persisting objects are, rather, spread out in time. They have temporal parts, and are not wholly present at any given moment of time. So assume that perdurantism is true: what accounts for my existing in both 1975 and 2002 is that I have a temporal part in 1975 and a temporal part in 2002; I am the "space-time worm" made up of all of my temporal parts.[3] The perdurantist claims that temporal parts are like spatial parts. Time, like space, is extended. Just as spatially extended objects have spatial parts in different places, persisting objects have temporal parts in different times.[4]

Next, we need to distinguish two views about time. Eternalism—the claim that all times are ontologically on par; that the present is no more real than the past or the future—stands in contrast to presentism, according to which the past is no more, and the future is not yet; only the present exists. Thus, the dispute between eternalists and presentists is a dispute about the ontological status of other times (than the present). Presentists think that only the present exists, while eternalists think all times exist.

Brown correctly notes that time travel requires eternalism.[5] He does not, however, distinguish endurance and perdurance. He argues as if there were no such distinction—and this accounts for the failure of his second argument. Brown thinks that if I were to travel back to 1985 and meet "myself" there, the person I meet would "obviously not (be) me despite the fact that we have the same DNA." Brown offers no argument in support of this claim; he expects us to take it as obvious that I can't be wholly in two places at the same time. Fair enough. I'll take it as obvious.

For the perdurantist, however, my traveling back to 1985 and meeting myself there leads to none of the absurdities Brown suggests it must. The perdurantist would say that I meet myself in virtue of being a space-time worm that has zigzagged back upon itself. The "persons" who meet are simply temporal parts of me, and not persons at all. The perdurantist, thus, doesn't claim that I can be wholly in two places at once. He claims only that I have parts in two places at once; but that's a different story, and not obviously problematical.[6]

Nor is there, pace Brown, a problem with handling moral responsibility. I am morally responsible for any acts committed by any of my temporal parts. I don't evade moral responsibility for a sin by saying "hey, it was my foot that did it." I'm responsible for what any of my spatial parts do. The same is true of my temporal parts. The problems Brown discusses are, therefore, only problems for the endurantist. So this argument shows that time travel requires a perdurantist ontology; not that time travel is impossible.[7]

Brown's next argument is piggybacked onto this one, but it has a rather perplexing twist. Although he presents it as an argument against time travel, it is in fact an argument against eternalism. He writes that "such a theory of time travel would imply that there are a really real infinite number of human persons, all simultaneously existing as we speak." But what he has in mind here is the "timeline" view (mentioned above), according to which all times are equally real. And the "timeline" view is eternalism. If this argument is successful, Brown accomplishes much more than showing time travel is impossible. He shows that eternalism is false. The argument, however, does not work.

The perdurantist eternalist partly avoids the problem Brown mentions—the problem of an actual infinity of persons—by denying that my past temporal parts are persons; they are, rather, temporal parts of a person. That's not enough to avoid Brown's argument, though, because he doesn't object to the actual infinity of *persons* specifically, but, rather, actual infinity *simpliciter* (for things other than God). So if the perdurantist eternalist view produces an actual infinity of temporal parts, then Brown's argument here still applies. Of course, in order for the argument to be successful, Brown has to show two things. First, that only God can be actually infinite. Second, that the perdurantist eternalist view really does produce an actual infinity. He offers arguments for neither required premise. Even if I grant the first—I don't have any settled views on that question, so I'm willing to grant it for the sake of argument—I just don't see how Brown can make the second stick.

Imagine that, in the history of the universe, there are thirty million human beings. Each of these human beings has lots of temporal parts. Let's arbitrarily select an enormously high number—200,000,000,000,000. Now let's multiply thirty million by two hundred trillion. (Well, *you* folks do it. I'll trust you to get the right answer.) Have we gotten to infinity yet? Not quite. How many people with how many temporal parts would we need to have before we came up with an infinite number of parts? Let's try one hundred billion human beings, each of whom has a googolplex temporal parts. Multiply. Infinity? Nope. And so forth. We can never reach infinity this way, no matter how high the numbers we start out with.

Perhaps this isn't the angle Brown is thinking of, though. He may be assuming that the "timeline" is infinitely divisible. So if there is a temporal part that occupies time span T (say T is one second long), then that temporal part is divisible into smaller time spans, and so on *ad infinitum* (just as, in geometry, any segment of a line is infinitely divisible). While this is a commonsensical (and common) assumption, it is not necessarily true. Consider the possibility that there are fundamental temporal parts that last an instant—a non-divisible instant. These parts should be thought of as similar to the fundamental particles of matter, which are extended but not divisible. As long as non-divisible instantaneous temporal parts are possible—and I don't see how they can be shown not to be—then Brown's argument can be avoided.[8]

The fourth argument is simply the first argument restated and generalized, so it can be dealt with in the same way we dealt with the first argument. In his fifth argument, Brown cites Aristotle's definition of time, and argues that, given such a definition, time travel leads to contradictions. This argument is by no means decisive, as Brown seems to recognize. (He states it as a conditional. "*If* you grant this….") Brown produces the contradictions by stipulating a definition that rules out time travel. But why should the time travel advocate accept Aristotle's definition of time? Brown gives him no reason to. An eternalist perdurantist will have a notion of time that is not inconsistent with time travel, since for him, change is an entirely different sort of phenomenon than it is for Aristotle. While some see the fact that eternalist perdurantism rules out "change" in the usual sense as a decisive argument against the view,[9] others are happy enough to say goodbye to that notion of change. After all, it is thought that special relativity entails eternalism—and we wouldn't want our dated conceptions of "change" to stand in the way of the triumphant march of scientific progress.[10] At any rate, Brown's considerations about problems of change are hardly compelling.

The final argument is this:

Presumably, when one says that time travel is possible one means that a person can go back, for example, to the real, true, genuine 1776. But if you've traveled back to the real 1776, then what are you doing there? You didn't exist in 1776, so to say that you are in the real 1776 is to say that it's not the real 1776, which is yet another contradiction.

This argument is unsound, for—given that he's assumed for *reductio* the actual accomplishment of time travel—it has a false premise. If I've traveled back to 1776, then I *did indeed* exist in 1776—the real, true, genuine 1776. So the contradiction is not produced.

Brown's last point is a suggestion rather than an argument. We are asked to consider what ramifications time travel would have "for morality, heaven and hell, God, angels, etc." I'm not sure what ramifications Brown has in mind—indeed, I can't see a significant problem arising from any of the directions mentioned here.[11] Perhaps in a later article, Brown will provide some of his reasons for making this suggestion.

Brown's arguments for the impossibility of time travel fail. However, I think he is right that time travel is impossible. And Brown is on the right track—as I said above, when he notes that time travel is possible only if eternalism is true. But eternalism is not true; presentism is true. Therefore, time travel is impossible. Obviously, it is both substantive and controversial to claim that presentism is true; I won't argue in support of that claim here. However, it should be clear enough that it's impossible for me to travel to the past if the past doesn't exist, just as it's impossible for me to travel to Planet X if Planet X doesn't exist. The time traveler needs a destination. If presentism is true, there is no time but the present, and therefore, there is no destination.

If you're not happy with the bare claim that presentism is true, then just take the lesson as a conditional: if presentism is true, time travel is impossible.

If eternalism is true, however, time travel *may be* possible. While eternalism (combined with perdurantism) doesn't rule out the possibility, neither does it entail it. Surely, though, endurantist eternalists find themselves faced with some of the problems raised by Brown in his essay: that combination of views is incompatible with the possibility of time travel. For what it's worth, though, there are much stronger reasons for rejecting that combination of views than that they conflict with the possibility of time travel—which is, obviously enough, a worry only for those who think time travel is possible.[12] ■

Patrick Toner earned his BA at Franciscan University in 2000, and may have completed his MA in philosophy there in 2002, though he's not entirely sure. He lives in Charlottesville, VA with his wife Shannon, and their kids Ben and Ellie. He is in his second year in the philosophy Ph.D. program at the University of Virginia.

[1] For a seminal discussion of this issue, see David Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 13 (1976), 145-152. Lewis rejects the idea that a person could travel back in time and, for example, kill the person who made it possible for him to travel back in time. Thaxris, Lewis would reject the scenario Brown sets out in his first argument. (Lewis, incidentally, finds nothing objectionable about causal loops in general; he just seems to object to the most viciously circular.)

[2] The terminology I use here is David Lewis's. Cf. *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1986), 202. The terminology one prefers is of no great importance: however, the distinction itself is vital. Do not be misled, then, by those who use "endure" and "perdure" interchangeably. Cf. Norris Clarke, SJ, *The One and the Many* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 125. Fr. Clarke typically uses "perdure" to mean (I think) what I mean by "endure," but on the page cited, he switches between the two terms, with a use of "persist" thrown in for good measure. He can use the terminology however he prefers, of course; but on my usage here, the terms are not interchangeable.

[3] I say "a" temporal part: this is merely for convenience. As far as I know, no perdurantist would claim that I had *just one* temporal part in 1975. I'll have more to say about this later.

[4] This view is often called "four dimensionalism," because it treats time as a dimension in addition to the three spatial dimensions. "Four dimensionalism" is misleading, however, because it is possible for a non-spatially extended object to persist—and, of course, such an object would not be four dimensional. It is also misleading because it is typically used in such a way as to gloss over the distinction between the temporal issue—eternalism vs. presentism (about which more next)—and the persistence issue—perdurance vs. endurance. For these reasons, I avoid the term.

[5] "To consider time travel possible is to consider time as a sort of continuum, like a line that goes on in both directions, each point 'simultaneously' existing."

[6] Of course, it can be objected that the problem with the story I've just told is that it requires my having two temporal parts at the same time; and isn't that sort of like my having two spatial parts at the same place? That is, isn't it contradictory? It might be if the temporal aspect were the only thing that distinguished temporal parts from one another, but that can't be right, or there'd be only *one* temporal part per time—a part that includes everything that exists at that time. But that's not the perdurance view; that view is that I have a temporal part at T, you have a temporal part at T, and so does everything else that exists at T. The parts, that is, are also distinguished by spatial location—not merely by temporality. This helps us avoid the objection. My two temporal parts at T can be differentiated in virtue of being in different places, even though they are at the same time.

[7] Ted Sider has beaten Brown to the punch in showing this, however. See *Four Dimensionalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 101-109.

[8] Or, at any rate, Brown needs to get to work showing why these fundamental temporal parts are impossible in order to defend his needed premise and get his argument to go through.

[9] Cf. Peter Geach, "Some Problems about Time," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 51 (1966).

[10] Ted Sider calls the apparent incompatibility of presentism and special relativity the "fatal blow to presentism." (Op cit., 42.) More importantly, many people think that the dogma of Divine Eternity entails eternalism about time. I think that is an error. But my point is that there are reasons for accepting eternalism, and once one is an eternalist,

perdurance necessarily follows. (Cf. n. 12 below.) Therefore, many Christians will be unconvinced by Brown's considerations about the nature of time, as will many people of scientistic leanings.

[11] He had mentioned the "morality" issue earlier, when he suggested that the "me" of 1992 can't be the "me" of now, and so I can't be morally responsible for the actions of "me" in 1992. I assume that's what he has in mind here. However, as I said, the perdurantist has a fine solution to this problem.

[12] Endurantism is, in fact, incompatible with eternalism; perdurance is the only live option for the eternalist. Likewise, the presentist must be an endurantist. For arguments in support of this claim, see Trenton Merricks, "Persistence, Parts, and Presentism," *Nous* 33 (1999), 421-438; "Endurance and Indiscernibility," *Journal of Philosophy* 91 (1994), 165-184; and "On the Incompatibility of Enduring and Perduring Entities," *Mind* 104 (1995), 523-531. Also see E.J. Lowe, "Tense and Persistence," in *Questions of Time and Tense*, R. Le Poidevin, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 43-59, esp. 56-58.

Social credit

Continued from page 1

anciers are able to extort enormous amounts of money in interest payments from their customers. I say 'extort' because the profits that are generated by this process are largely unearned.

Fractional reserve banking works in the following way: Smith goes into bank A and deposits 1000 dollars in cash. Bank A is only required to keep a small amount of this money in its reserves, say 3-10%, while the rest can be loaned out. Let's say that Jones wants to borrow 900 dollars from bank A in order to purchase a used car. Let's assume further that Jones does not want to buy the car in cash, but prefers to offer the salesman a cheque. When Jones goes to bank A with his request, and the bank agrees to grant him a loan for 900 dollars, the bank will not loan out the 900 dollars it has on deposit from Smith; rather, it will duplicate this 900 dollars by writing a cheque for Jones. This is because credit money, i.e., money that must be paid back with interest, is just as valid as paper money or coins as a medium of exchange. Thus, where there was only 1000 dollars in cash at the beginning of the process, the bank has now added an additional 900 dollars to the money supply by means of the fractional reserve system. When Jones hands his cheque over to the salesman from whom he purchases the car, and the latter deposits it in bank B, the whole process of generating new credit and hence new money is repeated once again.[1]

Indeed, it is estimated that ~95% of the money supply of a modern economy is created *ex nihilo* by financial institutions in this manner.[2] The problem with the fractional reserve system is that although it cost the financiers little or nothing to create this new money, they nevertheless insist on interest payments. The result is usury, traditionally understood not as the charging of an exhorbitant amount of interest, but as the charging of any interest whatsoever on a non-productive loan. Now a loan may be non-productive in two different ways. A loan may be non-productive in the sense that it is not going to be used to finance profitable production, or non-productive in the sense that the loan is not the product of a cost-generating process. Loans that are the product of the fractional reserve system do not, by themselves, entail any significant cost for their producers, therefore the charging of interest on these loans is usurious.

In addition to the intrinsic injustice of such a system, this way of creating and supplying money has some very harmful consequences. Whenever a banker creates a loan and demands to be paid back with interest, he only introduces the principal into the monetary supply; he does not introduce any money to cover the interest payments which may, in the long run, amount to more than the principal itself. The result is that under the current financial set-up there is a chronic lack of money that artificially limits both production and consumption. This, in turn, leads to escalating personal, corporate, and government debts, wasteful economic growth, environmental degradation, the inadequacy of health and educational services, social breakdown, unnecessary financial stresses, and so on. On account of its essential nature, as well as its nefarious consequences, it is about time that the fractional reserve system be rejected as immoral.

I would like to suggest, therefore, that before we see to the introduction of a distributist economy in Mr. Storck's sense, we should first consider a reformulation of the present financial system in accordance with distributist principles.

I would like to suggest, therefore, that before we see to the introduction of a distributist economy in Mr. Storck's sense, we should first consider a reformulation of the present financial system in accordance with distributist principles. For the most important kind of property that needs to be more justly and hence more widely distributed is money, for money, as the universal medium of exchange, provides its holders with the

necessary means for obtaining any good or enjoying any service.

The doctrine of Social Credit, first developed in the early part of the last century by the Scottish Engineer C.H. Douglas, may be regarded as one such distributist alternative to the fractional reserve system of money creation and distribution. The proposal consists of a number of policies that are designed to work in tandem. In the first place, fractional reserve banking would be replaced by full reserve banking, so that the banks could no longer produce most of a country's money supply for personal gain. Instead, a National Credit Office would be charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the money supply is always equal to the productive capacity of the economy, in such a way that purchasing power is sufficient to liquidate supply. The new money that would be created by the NCO would be regarded as a social service, hence the term "Social Credit." This means, in turn, that it would be introduced into the economy debt and interest free. Some of this new money would be used to finance government expenditure on health, education, infrastructure, defense and so on (thus eliminating the need for taxes); some of it would be distributed to each citizen in the form of a social dividend that would guarantee everyone a minimal revenue (thus eliminating destitution and the more severe forms of poverty); and some of it would be used to finance the retail sector while lowering the prices of goods and services for consumers (thus allowing for the recalibration of the whole system and the prevention of inflation.)[3]

Unfortunately, it would be beyond the scope of this article to give the Social Credit doctrine the more precise exposition and defence that it deserves. I briefly present it here in the hopes that more people would come to recognise that there are viable alternatives to a capitalist monetary system, alternatives which may, if adopted in time, mean the difference between—as Douglas says—another retreat into the dark ages, or the emergence into a day of such splendor as could never have been imagined. ■

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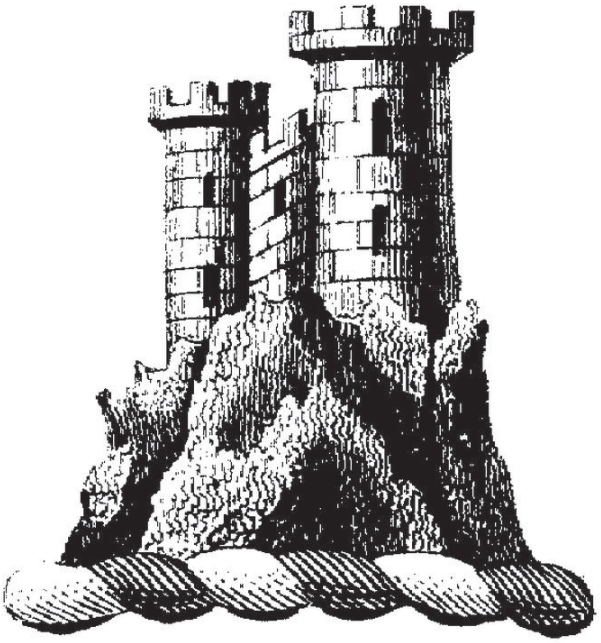
[1] Cf. www.laleva.cc/economia/money.html

[2] Cf. www.douglassocialcredit.com

[3] By financing the retail sector through this 'just price mechanism', a balance in the money supply would be maintained: new money would be injected at the rate of production, while old money would be retired from circulation at the rate of consumption.



Hobbits

Continued from page 1

nonetheless know of its existence, feel its presence and discern its character. It manifests itself in very definite ways: the principles by which the world is governed, its physical and spiritual form as described by the author, the kinds of creatures that inhabit it and how they interact with one another, the particular creatures that play a significant role in that world, how they live and die, the things they say and do, and so forth.

The Sorcerer's Stone (hereafter *SS*), the first Potter book, seems to me to be informed by a basically good "soul." Its story and heroes have an underlying solidity and right order that shows itself in various ways throughout the book. There is a definite (though imperfect) sense of right and wrong; of goodness, justice and truth; of the importance of teamwork and friendship. There is also a sense that certain things are worth fighting for, even against one's friends; that there can be far-reaching consequences for one's actions; that doing the right thing often involves sacrifice, etc. Every one of these values, however, can also be found in the Hardy Boys series, the Nancy Drew series, and a thousand other books of only modest literary worth. And, of course, they can be found in *LR* as well. So what's the difference? What makes Tolkien's trilogy a classic, while Rowling's, as I will attempt to show, is not of enduring value?

The answer, I think, lies primarily in what I have called the ethos of a story (though, of course, considerations of language, symbolism, descriptive power, imaginative force, constructive capacity, and the like are important factors as well, in all of which categories *LR*

stands head and shoulders above the Potter books.) The answer is not to be found in the fact that Tolkien has gone to such great lengths to construct an incredibly elaborate world, nor in the moral lessons provided, though such things are certainly a part of the whole. It lies, rather, in the depth and breadth of Tolkien's inner vision, which shines forth in particular splendid moments, but is almost tangibly present in every leaf of Middle Earth.

What is this vision? I can think of no single word for it, nor even a whole book of words. One finds it expressed in the merrymaking of the elves and hobbits in the face of imminent, deadly peril. It is manifest in the simple, joyful, blissfully ignorant Shire, which Gandalf and Sam so love and so wish to preserve. So central, in fact, is the salvation of the dear little Shire that all of the Ringbearer's work seems fundamentally ordered to saving it in particular out of all of Middle Earth. We see the soul of *LR* in the fact that Frodo has inherited the ring with its dangers and must himself dutifully bear its burden as his own assigned task, despite his inferiority to so many others; in the fact that Gandalf is at once gentle and terrible; in the way that Gimli and Legolas are brought to mutual appreciation, then admiration, and finally friendship; in the fact that everything in Middle Earth is marvelously alive and active, even the trees and the rivers; in the fact that Boromir is crazed by his lust for the ring, out of a desire to use it for the good, while for the very same reason Gandalf and Galadriel refuse to even touch it; in the manner of Boromir's treachery, sorrow, repentance, confession and penance; in the fact that Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas take time to remember, honor, and "bury" Boromir, even while Merry and Pippin are in mortal danger; in the presence of kind, old Tom Bombadil over whom the ring has no power, and who (believe it or not) has more important things to concern himself with than the fate of the world; in the master/servant relationship of Frodo and Sam, which surpasses in depth, beauty and strength any relationship that Frodo could have with such "mere" friends as Merry or Pippin; in the concern for posterity, even at great cost to oneself; in the sense of tradition and its sacred importance; and so much more. (Just think, I have limited myself to examples from the first book of the trilogy).

This should begin to give my reader an idea of what I am trying to say. Let me now elaborate on a couple of these points and compare *LR* with *SS*.

One of the most beautiful scenes of *LR* comes at the beginning of the second book (but at the end of the first movie, for those who haven't read the books). Boromir—though he has, in a fit of lustful madness that had been building for 300 pages, just tried to take the ring for himself—is struck deeply with sorrow, repents of his evil and manifests his good and noble heart by laying down his life to save Pippin and Merry. This every reader can understand, but what happens next is, to my mind, even more profoundly beautiful. I am not referring to the fact that Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli, choose to chase after the captured hobbits, despite the seeming desperation of such an act. Everyone who's seen a war movie has grappled with the principle of not abandoning one's friends (which I'm happy to see still has life in our efficiency-based culture). What is even more inexplicable and beautiful is the fact that they spend precious hours not only seeing to their dead friend's body, but grieving over him and singing songs of mourning! Legolas makes it clear that they do this not only out of friendship, but out of a solemn sense of duty. One does not leave one's companion's body to be eaten by birds, no matter how desperate the circumstances. (Keep in mind that at this point they think that Frodo and the Ring have been captured!)

Compare the nobility and emotive power of scenes like this to *SS*. What happens when Harry Potter and his friends get into trouble? Sometimes they act bravely and dutifully, to be sure, but not always, for such things are not deep virtues or principles with them. For example, when faced with punishment, Hermione tells a lie to save Harry and Ron, and the book presents this very much as a good thing. How noble of Hermione to sacrifice her principles (for she never lies) to save her friends! Her lie then becomes the bond that cements her friendship with the boys, according to the author. Three pages later we are told that after this lie, "Hermione had become a bit more relaxed about breaking the rules

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... and she was much nicer for it." Come again!?

Aragorn's friendship with Pippin means something precisely because he is a man of integrity and commitment; he does not abandon his duties to his friends—ever! Pippin can trust Aragorn to come to his aid precisely because he can trust him to bury Boromir first. But on what basis can Harry trust Hermione to be honest with him if she happens to think that something more important is at stake? Loyalty to principles and loyalty to friends are interwoven beautifully in *LR*, but have only a flawed coherence in *SS*.

One could claim that the scene in *SS* is an anomaly, that the book as a whole has a great deal of principles to which the heroes steadfastly adhere. To this I agree, which is precisely why I do not condemn *SS*, but instead say only that it is significantly flawed and thus unable to endure as a classic. It embodies a contradiction without even realizing that it is doing so.

Rowling's best lines are practically platitudes in comparison with even the simplest aspect of Tolkien's underlying ethos.

Despite the presence of many principles, however, let me also point out that it seems to me that the stronger emphasis in *SS* is on the side of unprincipledness. Almost every successful endeavor occurs by means of breaking the rules: the troll, the mirror, discovering Fluffy, Harry's Quidditch position, saving the stone, etc. And on the rare occasion when the heroes are punished for disobeying, the mean, strict Professors McGonagall or Snape are the punishers, whereas good Dumbledore never makes a strict showing. Even worse, it is not as if Harry usually has good reasons to break the rules; in fact, good reasons not to break them are clearly given to him. Instead he too often acts out of pride, anger or some other vice. And in a scene when breaking the letter of the rules is finally legitimate in order to preserve their spirit, Hermione turns around and breaks the rules herself—and for no apparent reason! It's almost as if Rowling can't help but incorporate a certain lawlessness into the best scenes.

Let me offer another comparison between *LR* and *SS*. At the end of *SS* Dumbledore, the wise and trustworthy headmaster of Hogwarts, tells Harry to just say the villain's name: Voldemort! "Always use the proper name for things. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself." The idea seems very wise: be brave, don't fear, and don't do anything that might increase fear; fear is bad, courage is what is needed. Harry has faced Voldemort and now need no longer fear him, nor should he. In *LR*, however, there are sundry names that ought not be pronounced. Not only does Tolkien understand the nature and use of language better than Rowling, but more to the point, he knows that there are certain things that *ought* to be feared, and so we *ought* to manifest that fear in our language.

Tolkien understands that real courage includes a proper fear of those things that ought to be feared. The courage that Dumbledore advocates is an illusory courage, for it is not grounded on a true knowledge and respect for the natures of things. Dumbledore's courage is a kind of brazenness—an indiscriminent standing before the whole world and shouting, "I'm not afraid of anything!" Tolkien's is a grave, considered, deeply rooted, prudent courage that manifests the interconnection of the virtues. Dumbledore's courage says to Voldemort: "Hah! You're nothing. I'm not afraid of you!" Tolkien's says to Sauron: "You are truly powerful and could destroy me. You are truly evil and would torture me first simply for the cruelty of it. But, despite the great evil of which I am rightly afraid, despite the fear that penetrates to my bones, not only will I not serve you, but I will do everything in my power to stop you." Rowling's courage is that of the belligerent underdog. Tolkien's is that of the martyr.

SS gives the impression that evil shouldn't be feared, whereas *LR* faces the evilness of evil straight on. One should not thumb one's nose at it. The Ring was almost the ruin of Boromir and was the bane of both Isildur and Saruman. Even more so, Sauron has destroyed countless good things and wrecked much of the good world. This is not to be taken lightly (although, for Tolkien, this fact is balanced by a very strong sense of Providence, the absence of which in Rowling's works should have made evil all the more fearsome, though she does not even realize it). But precisely because Tolkien takes evil so seriously, the good is that much more good. Evil is so bad because it harms what is so good.

Despite the serious threat that hangs over the whole of Middle Earth, however, *LR* is by no means dark or bleak or overpowered by fear. One thing that surprises (or should surprise) most readers is the joy that is so constantly present in the books. (The movie, unfortunately, almost completely misses this element, presenting a very black world.) Many examples can be given: the simple goodness of the Shire which is preserved from Sauron's corruption, the celebration at Rivendell, the month-long(!) respite at Lothlorien (what could the fellowship have been thinking, when the fate of the world hangs in the balance!), and the party with the elves that Frodo and company have in the Shire, even though the dread black riders are afoot. Foremost, however, is the visit to old Tom Bombadil, a scene of central importance to this theme of the book. Tom has the joy of the world in his heart, a joy which cannot be disturbed even by the greatest of troubles. It is very unfortunate (but

perhaps not surprising) that it was left out of the movie.

If the evil that hangs over Middle Earth is going to cause our heroes to stop celebrating the good, then the battle has already been won. If evil is going to snare them into abandoning their principles and leave their friend to be eaten by birds, then they have rescued the hobbits in vain. Nor are the acts of celebration a kind of escapism, for the characters are celebrating a real good that is present to them, even in the midst of evils. Both evil and good are given all the weight that they deserve. Tolkien depicts this beautifully, whereas Rowling's solution lies in a sort of naive puffing one's chest out at evil. Tolkien's depth of insight here is simply beyond Rowling's horizon. Rowling's best lines are practically platitudes in comparison with even the simplest aspect of Tolkien's underlying ethos.

The soul that informs *SS* is a clearly disordered one, but still one that has got certain things straight and to that extent is not without value. It does not present a unified vision, and so one has to do a good bit of sorting out to get to the valuable part. The soul of Middle Earth, on the other hand, is a saintly soul. Though not without imperfections, you have to look long and hard to spot them, and when you do, they seem overwhelmed by the tide of counter-principles that are welled up against them.

Much more needs to be said, but this should begin to bring to light the difference that I am trying to articulate. Yes, *SS* depicts goodness and truth, despite its flaws, but *LR* exudes them from every page. I will conclude with the insight of a well-read mother of seven children. Hardy Boys and their peers (I personally would put Harry Potter one step down), she said, are like candy. They taste good, but they do not substantially nourish the body. And just as children are allowed occasional sweets—and then only when they've become healthy by means of substantial food—so too we must take care to nourish their souls with healthy, meaty, substantial literature before providing them with sweets that delight the soul without much cultivating it. ■

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short takes

Continued from page 12

such a family burdensome.

I speak with a fair amount of passion here, because I remember very well my semester in Oxford, when my Protestant friends looked at me as if I had two heads when I told them I had nine brothers and sisters. The unspoken (or sometimes spoken)reaction was always:"That poor mother, trodden underfoot by the heel of legalistic Catholic morality." NO, and a thousand times no! If the procreative dimension of marriage is as important as we believe it to be, a large family can only be cause for rejoicing in the abundance of life which God has bestowed on it. "Truly sons are a gift from the Lord, a blessing, the fruit of the womb! Indeed, the sons of youth are like arrows in the hand of a warrior!" (Ps. 127:3-4) Of course, the Church makes no moral requirements about family size, but it does seem—to my highly inexperienced eyes—that the inner logic of love would lead one to desire as much life as possible, and this not as a burden, but as a gift.

I don't know if Mrs. van Schaijik would disagree with any of the above, but I couldn't help feeling that her article left the impression that most large families are suffering under providentialist legalism, and I feel that one need not be a pharisee at all in order to affirm that more children is more desirable. I should also add that I've never met the sort of "default number" rhetoric which she refers to, and perhaps if I had, my view of providentialists would be different.

In any case, I would conclude by expressing my joy and thanksgiving to the Lord for every one of my nine brothers and sisters, most of whom far exceed our culture's norm, but each of whom is an incommunicable person, a soul destined for Heaven. In the words of the founder of Regnum Christi, Marcial Maciel, whom I consider my own spiritual father: "We certainly cannot appeal to a supposed 'right' of a child yet to be begotten, for you have to exist to have rights. But the logic of love surpasses the narrow logic of legalism that bases everything on rights and duties. Man, with the whole universe at his service, had no 'right' to exist; but such was God's love that he called him into existence. . . . This is the logic of love. It is also the logic of conjugal love."

Michael J. Houser
FUS senior