

Lord of the Rings: Philosophical Poison

by Steven LaTulippe *Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2003 at 8:01 PM*

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The righteous anger of the ancient Ents is unleashed upon Saruman's tower -- leafy Luddites who wreck machinery, kill workers, and wash away the blight. The message is hard to miss. It is right out of the Earth First! ideological handbook.

December 31, 2003

When I first read the Lord of the Rings as a child, I was moved beyond words. It was like entering a boyish fantasyland of adventure, danger, and romance. Tolkien painted Middle Earth with such poetic beauty that I wanted to unsheathe my sword and come to its rescue. His portrait of evil was captivating in its relentless malevolence.

Upon hearing that it was to be made into a movie trilogy, I was somewhat pessimistic. I doubted that any production could do the books justice. I was skeptical that the soul of the story could be captured on the big screen, and feared that the beloved tale would be butchered by Hollywood.

But I have to hand it to the makers of this series. By God, they did it. With each episode, they just kept getting better. The scenery is entrancing. The action is breathtaking. The characters blossom in their heroism, humanity, and beauty.

But now, decades after my first reading of the series, my perspective has changed. My "propaganda radar" is always on, and it picks up smuggled concepts and hidden political agendas like a tireless bloodhound. Decades of bombardment by the cultural Marxists have forced me to eat the apple of Eden. I see the good and evil and can no longer bask in that wonderful innocence of childhood.

As much as it genuinely pains me to say it, this movie trilogy is philosophically corrupt.

May old Tolkien forgive me, but the ideology embraced by the Ring trilogy is extremely harmful to those of us on the libertarian/paleoconservative right. It is more than harmful, it is downright dangerous.

I realize that this borders on sacrilege ... but before showering me with hoots of derision, hear me out.

Generally speaking, I see two politically-charged ideas advanced by this series.

First, and of lesser importance, is a strong anti-technology message that is plainly evident. The heroes are warm and fuzzy people who live in pastoral environs. The Hobbits farm peacefully in their delightful shires. The Elves live in their grand forests. The dwarves live in their rugged mountains and caves.

Cities and industry, on the other hand, are portrayed in the worst terms imaginable. Saruman's demesnes are downright Dickensian. Deformed orcs labor in satanic mills, mass-producing their evil progeny. The very Earth is despoiled as forests are mowed down, leaving behind barren moonscapes of poisoned soil and air.

This could have been written by Ralph Nader.

But luckily for Middle Earth, this industrial blight is erased by the righteous anger of the ancient Ents. They storm from the remaining forests like environmentalists attacking an SUV dealership. These leafy Luddites wreck the machinery, kill the disfigured orcish workers, and wash away the blight in a giant tidal wave.

Like it or not, the message is hard to miss. It is right out of the Earth First! ideological handbook.

While this Marxist/environmentalist propaganda is annoying, the more serious problem is the attack on "isolationism."

America, and much of the Western world, has had a long-running conflict between two irreconcilable views of the purpose of our civilization. One group, most aptly typified by the Jacobins of French Revolutionary fame, believes that society is an idealistic pursuit of utopia. This school of thinking holds that there must be a unifying goal which must be pursued relentlessly in order to justify society's collective existence. From the Crusades to the present Iraq War, the Jacobins believe that only by throwing our bodies (not their bodies, mind you ... but ours) into the maw of war for the "higher purpose" that currently enthalls them will we morally justify our existence.

The opposite pole, typified by the America First movement of 1930s fame, holds a position usually described as "conservative." This group believes that the purpose of society is to provide a framework of liberty so that the people can go about living their lives. It holds that the purpose of society is to permit the people to raise their children, work at their chosen career, and worship God with as little interference from distant authority as is possible. It is the belief in a Republic, not an Empire. It requires a military of minutemen, not centurions. It believes in "community building" at home, not "nation building" abroad.

The movie that the Ring trilogy most recalls in my mind is Casablanca. That too was a wonderfully made production with first-rate acting. But it too was a pot-shot at "isolationism." That movie revolved around a character who sulked about his own failed love life rather than lift a finger to enter the fray of world war. He

was portrayed as a rather pathetic "man" who would rather cry in his drink than do anything concrete to save the world.

In the Ring, an implacable evil arises from distant lands. The Hobbits, (who one thinks are portrayed rather like our beltway elites view Americans in small-town USA), are content to live their myopic little lives instead of going off Crusading. But they can't just live their little lives. They cannot think that there is any moral righteousness in building a shire and enjoying their family. Not when there are orcs that need killing.

It is this Manichean view of reality, along with the futility of "isolationism," that is the real underlying message of the Lord of the Rings.

The psyche of our elites is essentially one endless loop of Lord of the Rings, with themselves starring as Gandalf (the wise one who must convince everyone else of the need for the Crusade). Their worldview, which in the American context I believe arose from the righteous fanaticism of New England Puritanism, focuses on a continuing series of Saurons. Southerners, Spaniards, Serbians, Muslims, etc., have each, in turn, served as the evil straw man against which the elites can release the grapes of wrath and swing their terrible swift sword.

Those who oppose their plans are either isolationist hobbits, cowardly human villagers, or Saruman-like turncoats.

The problem with this "Middle Earth" view of reality is that it does not accurately reflect the world around us. Arabs are not orcs. Milosovic is not Sauron. The Albanians are not elves. This philosophy of endless Crusading will leave us with mounds of corpses, a bankrupt treasury, and an Empire instead of a Republic.

So as much as we might enjoy swinging our make-believe sword at those imaginary orcs, adulthood beckons. Serbian nationalists and Muslim fanatics can never destroy our Constitution. But the ethos of endless war just might succeed where they fall short.

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www.lewrockwell.com/orig4/latulippe3.html

WTF

by carcass *Thursday, Jan. 01, 2004 at 2:00 AM*

for Facks sakes, its just a movie!

Reply to LOTR

by Princeliberty *Thursday, Jan. 01, 2004 at 3:18 AM*

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The Hobbits only go their adventure when the shire is under threat of destruction. The orcs have been around for thousands of years without hobbits doing anything them.

Isolation is the healthy norm in LOTR and war is a rare expection only to be done to ensure the survival of your nation.

Good guys also live in cities like in Gondor. It is corrupt abuse of the nature that is bad not technology itself. The Elfs are more advanced than humans in fact.

What you see in Tolkien is not a Marxist view but neither do you see a modern day conservative view. You see a true Christian view which is something rarely heard in politics today.

Lord of the Rings

by John R. *Thursday, Jan. 01, 2004 at 10:01 AM*

The chief difference in your view to what see, is that the hobbits, while preferring to live their lives in peace in the Shire, were only called into action by the threat of having Sauron gaining power from the ring he'd been seeking. Once at Rivendell, a fellowship of different races join together to stop this threat by destroying, or helping to destroy the ring. There is no crusading against a perceived enemy, but a defense against a certain attack. It is not like Sauron is sitting in Mordor with his orks, threatening to perhaps attack one day, and Gandalf asks everyone to "attack first, before Sauron or Saruman does," Sauron is in the process of sending armies out (through Saruman) to attack and destroy. Defense is the only hope for Middle Earth.

heroes

by Matti *Monday, Jan. 05, 2004 at 2:07 PM*

That hobbit doesn't want to "posses" this ring (=ultimate power) and so far he wants nobody else to, because power only brings evil and misery.

Matti.

"See, hear, smell, touch, walk, sleep, breathe,... DON'T SHOP!"

LOTR and the freedom of watching movies

by Dr. Ernest Mathijs *Wednesday, Jan. 07, 2004 at 12:08 PM*

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In response to the messages about Lord of the Rings. Yes, it is only a movie, but if people want to give meaning to it and connect it to the real world, nothing should prevent them from doing that. If someone wants to see LOTR as a metaphor for Bush/Sauron, or ecological struggles, or even male chauvinism (not many powerful women are there?), they can.

I am part of a worldwide (non-corporate) team of university researchers investigating how viewers around the world make meaning of LOTR. If you want to voice your opinion (and about 10.000 people have already done so) you can go to :

<http://www.lordoftheringsresearch.net>

This is not an attempt to lure people into cooperating, we operate independently from any commercial goals - in fact quite the opposite, we hope our findings can show that the ways in which people watch films cannot be reduced to marketing strategies; it is an honest try to show the movie industry that viewers do make a difference.

Feel free to distribute this message widely

(and thanks to the people from Indymedia for providing such a unique platform for communication - we had one of your colleagues from London give a talk here recently and the place was packed Yey!)

users.aber.ac.uk/eem

hey

by guidoke *Wednesday, Jan. 07, 2004 at 1:04 PM*

I did not see the movies, I did not read the books and I feel ok.

With all this talking, writing, advertising, for 3 years now, you would get the impression that you miss something if you did not see the movie or read the book.

I wonder how much attention this "thing" would have got without the BRILLIANT propaganda-machine, docterd out almost 3 years ago.

At last, next year(end this year), no more Lord of rings...

Niet zo snel!

by christophe *Wednesday, Jan. 07, 2004 at 1:43 PM*

Wel eerst nog de lancering van de DVD van The Return of the King afwachten. Dat is voor de eindejaarsperiode.

En volgend jaar volgt dan nog de spectaculaire release van de dvd-box met de drie episodes.

En dan, ja dan zal het misschien wel voor een tijdje stil zijn...

;-)

of nog erger

by guidoke *Wednesday, Jan. 07, 2004 at 2:22 PM*

"Het productiehuis New Line Cinema wil graag The Hobbit verfilmen, een ander boek van J.R.R. Tolkien, de schrijver van Lord of the rings."

DS, 2-12-2003

Goh ja, Harry Potter 26 zal dan ook uitkomen en misschien krijgen we er nog een episode van Star Wars bij. :(

lord of the rings

by barend *Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2004 at 12:36 PM*

5038802wartburg.nl

fuck the hole lord of the rings

beter toch

by lord of the rings freak *Sunday, Jan. 16, 2005 at 6:01 PM*

beter toch man lord of the rings is zo goed (boe ken film)
dus als de hobbit wwrod verfilmt is dat echt heel goed