



# SEVEN

ST. JOHN'S  
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# AWARD WINNING ESSAYS

## Alienation, Homecoming, Departure Told In "Oedipus at Colonus"

Editor's Note: This is a continuing series of award-winning essays from the previous school year. Following is the first part of Galen Breningstall's best freshman essay.

"I YEARS HAD BEEN FROM HOME AND NOW,  
BEFORE THE DOOR I DARED NOT OPEN, LEST  
A FACE I NEVER SAW BEFORE STARE VACANT  
INTO MINE AND ASK MY BUSINESS THERE."

### PART I

The riddles supplied by Sophocles in "Oedipus at Colonus" are as baffling as the riddle of the Sphinx itself. Before one even begins to pursue the riddles, though, he must consider the gravity of his actions. The tragic life of Oedipus has exemplified the risks involved in pursuing the riddles of gods and demi-gods. Yet, the tragic life of Oedipus has also exemplified that great risks may lead, however painfully, to great gains. Sophocles relegated the revelation of Oedipus to Theseus as a secret and a source of power. Perhaps, then, from the benighted point of view of one who has not been indoctrinated in the Oedipal mysteries, any attempt at solution would be feeble image-guessing. Finally, one might assume that Oedipus' assumption of a mantle of suffering precipitated a revelation which excuses the rest of humanity from having to travel the same course for the same result. The alternative possibilities are pain, frustration, pleasure, and revelation. Inaction is manifestly the safest course. It is also contrary to the imperatives of the inquiring spirit. Therefore, with the regal Oedipus' preference for truth and understanding before all consequences, embarks this quest for the answer to Sophocles' riddles.

When the chorus receives the reply of "Oedipus" to their insistent inquiry about the name of this unfortunate stranger in "Oedipus at Colonus", they exclaim, "Oedipus! You! I!" The tale of Oedipus' woe spread quickly throughout Hellas. On the most patent level, it was a delicious tale of horror. Oedipus solved the riddle of the Sphinx with his insight into human transience, the journeying from infancy to age and its effect on the human anatomy. All human action occurs between infancy and age. It would then appear that an insight into human transience would extend to human activity as well. The perceptive Oedipus, however, is blind to his own actions. Oedipus unknowingly flees from his foster parents, kills his father, and marries his mother. By his presence in Thebes, he unknowingly brings a plague upon the city. The culmination of this unknowing horror occurs when Oedipus' perservering investigation of the death of Laius reveals himself as Laius' son and slayer. A tale of patricide, incestuous love, and the agony of recognition such as this is grotesquely entrancing. Yet, Oedipus' tale has great depth and within this depth are clues to the unraveling of Oedipus' marvelous and puzzling death.

Oedipus, unlike humanity around him, is at birth a

three-footed being. Before Laius sent him to be destroyed, his ankles were fastened together, an act which decreased his limbs by one. The stage of life where three-footedness is the norm, though, is old age. Oedipus, from the time of his birth, is at a distance from understanding the source of his being equivalent to the temporal distance of an elderly man from his birth.

The most blatant evidence of this alienation from his source of being is Oedipus' ignorance of his own name. Names are bestowed on one at birth and are indicative of the recognition of the creation of a unique human being. They symbolize the source of one's being in both a physical and metaphysical sense. Since he does not know his name, Oedipus does not know his relationship to Laius and Jocasta. Consequently, his reaction to the message of the oracle is directly opposed to the reaction he would have had had he reacted with knowledge. All the perverse acts Oedipus perpetrates, he performs under an aegis of ignorance. He does not realize his actions have this perversity until the old shepherd is forced to tell the painful story of Oedipus' origins. Even then, Oedipus is victimized by an edict he made while in ignorance of his name. A name always accompanies one and if it remains in darkness may covertly foil the noblest intentions and aspirations.

Oedipus in "Oedipus the King" at first lacks the perseverance in investigating his own origins that he later shows while indicting himself. When the elusive oracle prophesies his murdering his father and marrying his mother, Oedipus flees in terror. This is opposed to his resolute refusal to flee as intimations arrive that he has indeed killed his father and married his mother. Oedipus' flight results in the deferring of the irritating question of his origin. The question may be raised about why Oedipus should have remained in the proximity and pursued his origins in the shadow of such a gruesome prophecy. In response to this query, two replies obtain. Firstly, Oedipus was apparently uncertain enough about his genealogy to doubt his foster parents and journey to Delphi. How, therefore, could he be certain to whom this prophecy applied? Also, one wonders if Oedipus could not have continued his investigations into the rumors which had reached his ear about his origins apart from his supposed parents. It is inconsistent with the respect Oedipus has inspired for his shrewdness and insight to deny that he could have devised a scheme to accomplish his ends at a distance.

Finally, Oedipus prior to his tragic fall lacks a feeling of guilt for the horrors he has committed. It is obviously wrong to wholly censure Oedipus in this respect since he is at this time unaware of the wrongs he has committed with the exception of one. When Jocasta tries in vain to allay the fears Tiresias' prophecy has incited in Oedipus, she sets the scene on which occurred Laius' slaying. Oedipus, in the horror of recognition, states, "What have you said Jocasta? What have you said? The past comes back to me. How terrible! 2" At the time of the incident, Oedipus felt justified in exacting his vengeance, having been shoved and assaulted over a right of way dispute. However, it is difficult with the material given by Sophocles to establish exactly

who was culpable during this incident. Both Laius and Oedipus evidenced obstinate pride. Laius and his driver struck first, but it is doubtful if Oedipus did not excessively avenge his injuries. This inability of the reader to establish blame reveals something blameworthy in Oedipus himself. There is no hint given in "Oedipus the King" that Oedipus ever pondered whether he was not partially culpable for the murders. When Oedipus states, "The past comes back to me, 3" there is an intimation that he had placed the incident beyond his retrospection.

Tiresias states to an unbelieving Oedipus,

Therefore, I tell you this: you have your eyesight  
And cannot see the sin of your existence,  
Cannot see where you live or whom you live with,  
Are ignorant of your parents, bring disgrace  
Upon your kindred in the world below  
And here on earth. 4

Sightless Tiresias can see origins to which the perceptive Oedipus is blind. By knowledge of this truth, Tiresias the blind prophet is more powerful than Oedipus the king. Oedipus is apart from his source of being and until this point in "Oedipus the King" has not been persistent in its pursuit. Oedipus is not troubled by the question of guilt in the recognized actions of his past and has not recognized much of his guilt. The state in which Oedipus finds himself cannot stand secure against circumstance. According to Tiresias:

And other horrors you could never dream of  
Will teach you who you are, will drag you down  
To the level of your children. 5

If the analogy evoked earlier between Oedipus and the elderly man is recalled, this passage as well as foreshadowing Oedipus' disgrace foreshadows Oedipus' lessening the distance between his understanding and his origins. This in time occurs as threads of evidence unite to bind Oedipus to a recognition of his sinful existence. In this darkest hour, though, Oedipus glimpses some of the forthcoming light.

So will I die at last

By the decree of those who sought to slay me.  
And yet I know I will not die from sickness  
Or anything else. I was preserved from death  
To meet some awful, some mysterious end. 6

Oedipus, with an understanding of his source of being and a recognition of his acts of horror, prophecies with accuracy. His end in "Oedipus at Colonus" is described by an awed messenger as most marvelous. Sophocles, though, poses a number of disturbing questions in his prelude to this end. Oedipus embraces the grove of the daughters of darkness as his resting place after long wandering. Irascibility is still very much a part of the ragged blind man. There is no reconciliation between Oedipus and his son of Oedipus and Creon. All these occurrences are of puzzling significance. Ultimately, though, there is the question of the significance of the marvelous end of Oedipus. To understand these disquieting enigmas requires an outlook which views Oedipus' final days as the conclusion of a metaphysical journey.

O queens, O goddesses, terrible to behold!  
Since my first refuge was this shrine of yours,  
Close not your hearts to Phoebus and to me.  
When by his oracle the god proclaimed  
The many evils that have come upon me,  
This too he promised: that after many years  
I should at length attain my final rest,  
Rest from my sorrow and my weariness,  
When in some land that made a stranger welcome,  
I found the shrine of the Dread Goddesses. 7

The immediately puzzling aspect of Oedipus' embrasure of the Dread Goddesses is that he is to find rest in a forbidden garden under such unlikely auspices. The Eumenides, formerly terrifying demons of vengeance, have at this time altered their function sufficiently to be called the Goddesses Benignant as well. Now holding sway over the city of Athens and its households, the Eumenides seem to be strange comforters for the king who brought a plague upon his city and the son who destroyed his household. When the duality of their dread and benignant nature is considered, however, the Eumenides are appropriate providers of succor for Oedipus.

As was mentioned, the original function of the Eumenides was to plague those who had spilt kindred blood. They relentlessly pursued their prey throughout the world. There is a close correspondence between the function of the Eumenides and that of guilt. Like the Eumenides, guilt plagues and pursues those possessed by it. Oedipus, as much as any man, has become a victim of this painful sensation.

Chorus: It is dreadful, sir, to waken long-slumbering sorrow

Yet high are our hopes that the truth will be told at last.

Oed.: What now?

Chorus: Of your anguish beyond all relief, all cure,  
The grief that has held you fast.

Oed.: As a stranger, a guest, I implore you not to uncover

The shame I have had to endure.

Chorus: Wide spread is the story and grows no less in the telling

Let us hear it rightly told; we are eager to learn.

Oed.: Have mercy! 8

It is manifest that Oedipus still recoils at the thought of his actions. Yet, Oedipus also protests.

But I know this: if I could tell their story,  
Then you would see that I did not act myself  
So much as I endured the acts of others.

Was I by nature evil? Was I as a sinner,  
I who repaid an injury done to me?

If I acted knowingly, even then

You could think me wrong, but I knew nothing.

All that I did I did in ignorance. 9

In "Oedipus at Colonus", Oedipus' speeches come in reverse order to that above. Oedipus may attempt to mitigate his deeds with some validity by stating his actions were done in ignorance. Oedipus may even extend himself to the point where he states he was simply exacting just deserts from those who sought to slay him. When he is forced to speak of his past, however, Oedipus cannot hide the pain his actions have nurtured in him. Despite the protective veneer of total innocence, it is all too apparent that Oedipus was not simply meting out just deserts when he acted in ignorance. It is all too apparent that for himself Oedipus cannot provide an excuse sufficient to nullify a feeling of culpability. As well as citing ignorance and justice, Oedipus cites the prophecy of Apollo and his fate. Nonetheless, though each of these factors does indeed qualify Oedipus' actions, to Oedipus they are inadequate to completely dismiss his responsibility.

Oedipus' final resting place in the garden of the Eumenides, then, is indicative of his acceptance of the dread specter of guilt to which he had been so impervious in his younger years. It is a guilt which Oedipus accrued indirectly, as he did not perform the acts of killing his father and marrying his mother themselves of his own free will. Although



## SOMETHING IS GONE

on the uneven shore  
of chunks of rock  
and slabs of sand  
the water swells and slips away  
casting up fish and wood  
it turns over the pebbles  
that run like crabs after the waves  
i gather up its offerings-  
a few shiney stones,  
some smooth glass worn  
by the incessant slap of water on the beach  
and wonder if i will be  
rolled over and over  
and smoothed and shined  
or cast up like a dead fish

--H. Cornelius

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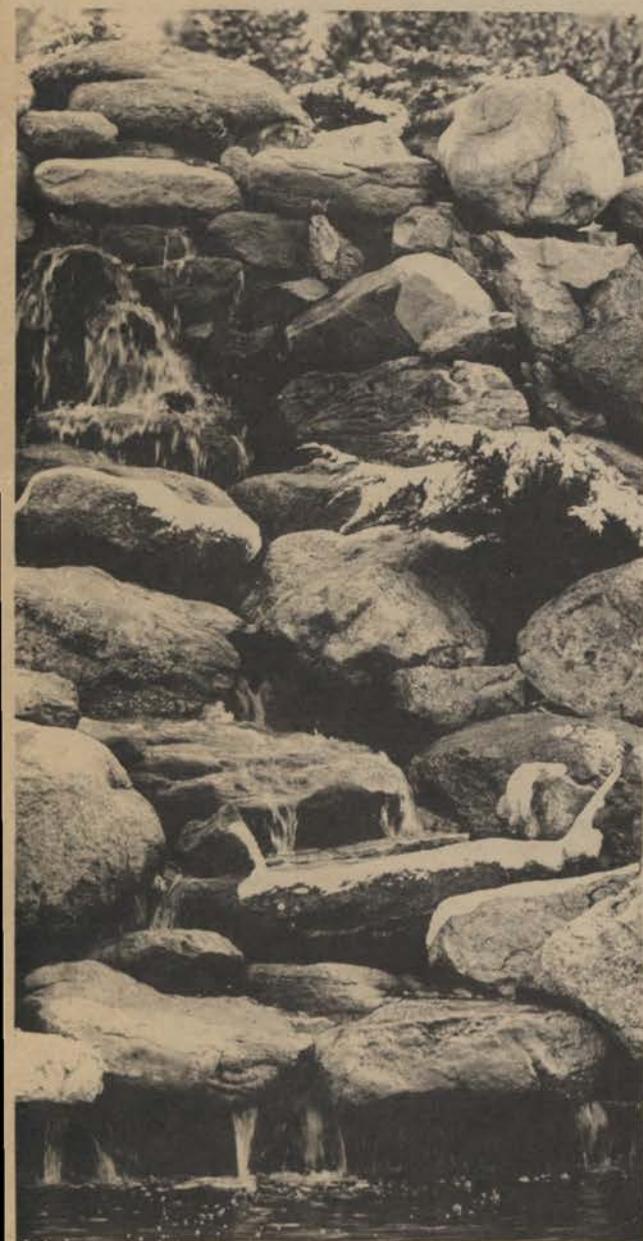
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# INCARNATE FRUITS

PART FOUR  
-- Charles G. Bell

Countless are the paradoxes of pagan thought which Christianity floated -- floated or drowned -- in the sea of faith. Augustine's handling of a single problem must serve as an example; it is the paradox of God's foreknowledge and man's free will. In THE CITY OF GOD (V,9) Augustine shows how Cicero labored with the problem, following the guidance of reason. Cicero could not accept both freedom and foreknowledge; they are rationally contradictory. As Augustine says, "like a truly great and wise man," he chose that which was most to the good of humanity, freedom. This drove him, however, to deny foreknowledge to God or man. Thus to make men free he made them sacreligious, a worse result than if he had surrendered to the superstition of soothsayers and the influence of the stars. "But the religious mind," says Augustine, "chooses both, confesses both and maintains both by the faith of piety." The paradox is not solved (how could it be?), it is ambivalently suspended in a faith which flaunts reason. Augustine concludes: "Against the sacreligious and impious darings of reason, we assert both that God knows all things before they come to pass and that we do by our free will whatsoever we will to do."

If the reason here is made a burnt offering to faith, it is precisely in the Phoenix-flame of that burning that the germ of renewal lies, that is, in the celebration of the ambivalence of life and of the divine. And if the first form of this celebration is, in the late-classical world, reason's abandonment, the distinctive sign of the Western awakening lies in those pre-scholastic attempts, from Fredugis (c. 800) to Anselm (c. 1100) to use reason again -- the new-born reason -- to justify a now instinctive and paradoxical faith. Five centuries of acceptance of the transrational have so re-oriented the mind that Anselm can support in the mode of reason -- can prove -- the necessity of that very Incarnation which to Tertullian was divine impossibility.

This means that the reason, which in Greek speculation had undermined and surrendered itself, has been transplanted, and is growing up again, but cloistered in the wall and holy ground of the Christian system. Automatically it begins and ends in dogma; it is a reason born in servility to its contrary, transrational faith. Yet from that very servility it derives strength; it is unable to undermine itself. As a cathedral which rises through its skeleton of buttresses and bridge-vaults to its height, so that one hardly grasps in the light-filled choir what mysteries of structure hold it there (how different from the rational and self-declaring post-and-lintel harmony of the temple) thus Western philosophy enjoys a dialectic buttressing of which the Greek mind was unaware. Pure speculation, like the digestive tract, can dissolve its own tissue. It is the protection of reason's structure against its proper acid which makes possible the daring towers of Western thought.

The surrender to faith, then, allowed reason to "have its cake and eat it too;" faith sanctioned the mystical marriage of antitheses: Plato's immortality at the cost of negating body, with Aristotle's mortal union of body and soul; Plato's God of changelessness alien to matter, with Aristotle's God inseparable from the world-body. The power to assert both simultaneously was the gift of faith; and

truly from the point of view of philosophy, it was a god-send. Here the journey begins which would lead through the reconciled oppositions of the Scholastic Summa, the glowingly affirmed paradoxes of Pico's Platonic Christianity, the even more ecstatically held antinomies of Bruno and Leibnitz, through the Hegelian dialectic which systematizes God himself as paradox in process, to the modern ambivalence, where contraries are accepted as polar limits of our intuition of reality, of the organic field which we perceive and are. The container is no longer faith, but the existential. Yet the continued affirmation of the existence which contains, is our heritage not from the Classical world, but from the faith which spear-headed the breakthrough -- the Incarnate Word.

If one wishes, in the most immediate way, to see how the first container shades over into the last, imperceptibly yielding place to it, one has only to consider Leibnitz' MONADOLOGIE, where faith and the modern ambivalence are indistinguishably blended. When Leibnitz writes:

According to this system bodies act as if (to suppose the impossible) there were no souls at all, and souls act as if there were no bodies, and yet both body and soul act as if the one were influencing the other.

-- this rational triumph of the transrational is both Theistic and existential.

This is true not only of Leibnitz. One cannot study the growth of Western science and mathematics in those luminous texts of the Renaissance and 17th century without noticing that the insights are not born of reason alone. There is a half-mystical fire, a kind of Cult of the Infinite which drives (as in Galileo's New Sciences) toward the study of series and limits. And what is most exciting in all this speculation is the almost drunken flaunting of the paradox. It is of primary importance to remember that at the kernel of Newton's calculus lies the assumption and solution of the appalling contradiction which Greek mathematics had as it were raised up and let fall -- balking as the young Socrates did at endowing hair, mud, etc. with Forms (PARMENIDES: "And I am afraid I may fall into a bottomless pit of nonsense and perish."); thus Euclid III, 10 on the size of the "horned angle" -- that in its manipulable limit a curve is a straight line and a straight line curved; that a tangent is a secant and an area is sum of lines -- that a dimensionless point carries all the properties of its geometrical and physical context: slope, curvature, Maxwellian divergence and curl -- a host of bewildering admissions which would seem to sabotage the whole effort of rational mathematics, but are exactly the alienation by which it arrives at higher birth.

This is the paradox of the infinite in the finite, of the eternal Word among beasts in a stall. Like so much that is essential to the West it was hinted at by Plato, but only in an image, a metaphor. It is the pot-bellied bust of Silenus (Socrates, that outward clown) which opens to great riches. As if Plato the myth-maker had taken the road of regenerative paradox and been called back by the rational voice. As if he was not yet ready to be one of those Wise Men. And indeed, there is something absurd about this mystery, where the alienation becomes a point of transcendence. It makes everything loose its dignity: God ridiculed, tragedy turns to tragi-comedy;

Lear goes hand in hand with a Clown and makes a trial of joint stools for daughters; mind bows to unreason; everything is mocked and made foolish, but in a mode where folly is transfigured, where it testifies to the mysterious and divine. One should not forget the charcoal scratch from the walls of the page-boys' school on the Palastine (Museo Nazionale Graffiti) with the boy doing reverence to a crucified ass and the inscription: "Alexemenes worships his God." Surely the rumour which made the Christians worship an ass-deity had its core of truth which has propagated itself through the ages, transforming all notions of the comic and sacred. Thus in Western culture, the comic has become the centrally expressive form. Did not the lustiest of Western painters, Rubens, crown his career with the grotesque exuberance of the great-bellied Magi and comical beasts wondering at the rollicking (almost farting) child?

From AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE and THE SECOND SHEPHERD'S PLAY to Shaw and Chaplin, comedy has become PAR EXCELLENCE the form of the paradox, of the "Marriage of Heaven and Hell" which is at the core of THE ALCHEMIST, DON QUIXOTE, DON GIOVANNI, HUCK FINN. And its Quixotic heights of reversal are preluded by Erasmus' PRAISE OF FOLLY, in which the relevance to Christ is made clear. This amazing pamphlet heralds a comedy of total ambivalence: beginning with the jesting praise of petty vanities, "old women in heat" who paint and pluck out hairs, it moves through a vitriolic satire on "holy war" and the ruling fools of viciousness, to an inversion of values where the final follies become the inspirations of spirit, Platonic madness, the divine absurdity of Christ and the silly (SELIG, SELAH) children of God: "Except as you become like a little child."

For why should not madmen and fools be saints and heroes of a god so foolish and mad as to assume fallen flesh, with its death and pain? That is the central paradox. In talking of the other Classical antinomies which were creatively fused in Christianity, we have more or less reserved this, the final one, as if for final handling. And the greatest Western work which bears the title of a Comedy, DIVINA COMMEDIA, reminds us what paradox it is, when at the close of Paradise, the challenge posed for Dante by his culminating vision is just the problem of seeing "how the man's image blends with the divine circle and abides in it" (Come si convenne/L' imago al cerchio, e come vi s'indova"), how the human and divine are compatible. This every pagan thinker would have hurled as the unanswerable question not only at Christianity, but at all the primitive religions and salvation-cults among which Christianity arose.

When Plutarch in his life of Romulus sceptically repeats fables of bodily ascents to heaven, he gives the usual answer of Greek reason: "To mix heaven with earth is ridiculous." He does not have to quote Plato; this separation of body and spirit Plato shares with most classical minds. Plutarch quotes Pindar:

All human bodies yield to Death's decree,

The soul survives to all eternity;

and he concludes: "We must not, therefore, contrary to nature, send the bodies, too, of good men to heaven." One might equally say (and Epicureans, Stoics and Platonists would all have to agree) we must not bring God, a spiritual being, bodily into the world.

It is just this rational impossibility that Christian writers solemnize. Thus Hugh of St. Victor (DE LAUDE CARITAS): "Magnam ergo vim habes, cari-

tas,"

You have great power, O love; you alone could draw God down from heaven to earth. How strong is your bond with which even God could be bound...You brought him bound with your bonds, you brought him wounded with your arrows...you wounded him who was invulnerable, you bound him who was invincible, you drew him down who was immovable; the Eternal you made mortal...O love, how great is your victory.

So the impossibility of pagan reason becomes the preoccupation of deepest thinkers. What had been bruited about by the fable-mongering masses but rejected by mind, wells up now from the subliminal and possesses the enlightened. It is again the life-giving reversion. Only from the organic matrix of folk intuition can a total regeneration of thought and life arise. It is as if mind itself, in those intuitive depths of spirit, unknown to merely conscious philosophy, had felt its way along the banks of the gorge which reason could not cross, had perceived the point at which a span could be made. No philosopher would have said that was the point, or that the span of an incarnate God was anything but a superstitious absurdity, but spirit addressed itself to that critical narrowing, the separation of body and soul, flux and idea, God and man, and Christ took flesh in the stable of Imperial Rome.

This presented Western Civilization from the first with a strange contradiction. What is human had never before been so denied or so affirmed -- it is a paradox which burns through Western writing: Hamlet's "how like a god" and "Quintessence of dust," Pascal's "What a chimera is man...the pride and refuse of the universe." ("Quelle chimere est-ce donc que l'home...gloire et rebut de l'univers.")

Under this tension how tempting it must have been to take the easy Platonic relief and split the enigma into the components of body and soul, rationalizing it by the age-old prescription of "divide and conquer" -- like that man Socrates tells of in the REPUBLIC, who was seized by a horrible desire to look on mutilated corpses by the city wall, and so approached, head averted and eyes closed, until he was just above them, and then turning his head and thrusting the eyelids up with his fingers, cried out: "There, feast your fill, you beastly organs." As if soul could so easily be exonerated of criminal involvement, or body so easily made a scapegoat for all that reason might not wish to claim as soul's.

But Christianity was clear from the first on both counts; that was its Hebrew heritage. Evil was necessarily an action of the soul, otherwise sin had no meaning. If the "paragon of animals" was subject to these perverse longings, it was not the weakness

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of the beastly organs, eyes, or of the fingers that opened the eyes, but of the will that connived at the rape. As for body, the wish to make it a scapegoat (though that fought its way through the whole Western history) was doomed from the first by the fact that God took a body, and even when crucified, dead and buried, refused to part with it and go back to pure spirit, but raised it up and gave it a glory in the measure of its dark. And this pattern imposed itself on every Christian, as certain Old Testament verses had curiously foreshadowed, as Job: "And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God;" so that all souls at the sounding of the trumpet must return for the fulfillment of their carrion; and however one tried to hold the Neoplatonic line, the separation could not be maintained. It was body-soul, the entire human person that had been paradoxically humiliated and crowned, raised to unparalleled heights by the example of the incarnate God, and simultaneously broken on the wheel of his total sacrifice. The antinomy which had born pagan reason apart was subsumed in the Christ, whose divinity and humanity were unquestionable pronouncements of creed.

Even Thomas Aquinas, in the very passage (Q. 106, Art. 4) where he counters Joachim de Fiore's heresy of the realization of God in time ("The third state, wherein man is to possess the grace of the Holy Ghost more perfectly than he has possessed it hitherto, will take place not in this life but in Heaven."), even Thomas, led balking down the Hegelian road, has made the crucial admission of the fruitings of God, his Church and the New Law: "A thing is not brought to perfection at once from the outset, but through an orderly succession of time."

So in Western Culture there is an orderly unfolding as the germ of the embodied divine elaborates its temporal incarnations in the material of civilization and the arts. But here the writer of an article must call a halt. For that unfolding is simply the history of Western Culture, which is scarcely the subject for a closing page. Yet something must be said.

The early Middle Ages continues the late classical search for Gnosis, as if Christ by his sacrifice had given the nod to Plotinus, abetting the denial of world, flesh and time. It is the Dark Age burden: "nos miseri, cur te fugivim, mundus, amamus," "O flying world, that we sick-hearted love thee." The illuminations and carvings of before 1000 live in the bodiless and spaceless. But as we enter the 11th century, we have passed one of those mysterious nodes the poet Yeats liked to symbolize by his construction of a cone within a cone; and all things, to use his words:

Are changed, changed utterly;  
A terrible beauty is born.

The arts, from year to year, record the increasing vortex of Incarnation. Eyes and face are drawn first into the nexus, as being nearer spirit. Body remains as in Chartres, symbolic, a columnar support of heavenly architecture. By the Renaissance, body itself has been taken into the spiritual storm. The Word has been made flesh in the most dynamic way. Michelangelo's Creating God separates light and darkness with the tortion of physical involvement. Nor is the transformation in man alone. It gathers up nature also, the world-energy, which is entrained like body in the sacred passion. With El Greco this has reached a certain culmination. Man, earth, light,

shade, volume, all are caught up in the celebration of a universal mystery, both tragic and transcending, a Passion and apotheosis of a new kind.

What is happening here can no longer be put in classical art-terms of imitation, pleasing forms, etc., any more than KING LEAR can be dealt with as an Aristotelian imitation producing psychological catharsis. No doubt it does produce catharsis; whatever that may be; but when Bradley set out to define Shakespearean Tragedy, it was not just his reading of Hegel that led him to see it as "the typical form of a universal mystery": "We remain confronted with the inexplicable fact, or the no less inexplicable appearance, of a world travailing for perfection, but bringing to birth, together with glorious good, an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture and self-waste. And this fact or appearance is tragedy." This is exactly the paradox of God in the Gospels, in the New Testament of his

Incarnation, Death and Resurrection.

Clearly, the artist shaping such a drama as this, or painting the "View of Toledo" or "Lacoon" is no longer to be conceived as standing outside the tumult, contriving to stamp the foreseen form or inert material. This is an evolution in which he has become part of the agony. He has assumed in art the position which the heretical Medieval mystic had already assumed in religion. The immanent and personal incarnation through which Eckhard felt in his own soul the birth of God, is being re-enacted on the theater of creative form. And the re-enactment continues, moving outward and onward, with increasingly revolutionary implications, through science, politics, philosophy, all life. The road of the union of body and soul, self and God, was open; it was the Western road, and it was inevitably aimed at Goethe, Hegel, Blake, Whitman, Nietzsche and Jung.

The history of Christian civilization was to be a history of successive and regenerative heresies, slowly tending from the Neoplatonic repudiation of the embodied to its romantic glorification. The heresies were unavoidable; they had their seed in Christ himself; they were his life and the life of the culture that would take his name -- fruits of his symbolic Incarnation.

It was as if the Biblical angels had opened their mouths and voiced the cry of Blake:

"And suddenly there was with the angels a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying:"

"Arise and drink your bliss, for everything that lives is holy."

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