

Temple of Set Reading List
Category 16: Good and Evil
Gut und Böse
as of February 26, 2003

MA: Much of human history can be explained, if not excused by the conflict between those of low intelligence (who consider good/evil objective) and those of high intelligence (who consider good/evil subjective). Certainly it begs the question to use those very terms to distinguish one extreme from the other! The Church of Satan sought freedom by attempting to **reverse** the good/evil norms of society; the Temple of Set seeks freedom by attempting to **escape** those norms - and preexisting ones - and to encourage its Initiates to construct enlightened, individualistic definitions. This is as much an art as a science, and the quest must be undertaken and pursued with logic, caution, common sense ... and apprehension of the *Agathon*.

16A. *Political Ideas and Ideologies: A History of Political Thought* by Mulford Q. Sibley. NY: Harper & Row, 1970. [Deutschland: WU: 22a/11] (TOS-1) (LVT-1) MA: "Until you've read and digested this material, you really oughtn't to talk about 'political philosophy' any more than someone who hasn't read an anatomical textbook should try to hold forth on anatomy. I teach university courses surveying the history of political theory, and this is far and away the most lucid, objective, and comprehensive survey text I've yet found. It has two conspicuous omissions - Nietzsche and ancient Egypt - and it is oriented towards the political rather than the more abstract or conceptual branches of philosophy. So you won't find Kant, Schopenhauer, Sartre, etc. here. The author [wonderful name!] was a very distinguished and a very controversial Professor of Political Science at the University of Minnesota. If you wonder why something like this is TOS-1, trust me. After you've absorbed the knowledge it contains, you'll wonder on what basis you held political opinions before reading it." J. Lewis VI^o: "Go read a textbook? In this case, yes. Sibley's book lacks dryness of text and contains doors opening onto the essence of politics. It is valuable for far more than explanations of sandbox politics."

16B. *Nietzsche* by Karl Jaspers. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1965. [Deutschland: *Nietzsche und das Christentum*, Piper-Verlag, München, 1985 (WU: 37c/1845)] (TOS-4) MA: "Trying to get a grip on Nietzsche through either his own writings or those of others is a bit like trying to get an octopus into a straitjacket. He thought at a level which the German language did not anticipate, and so there is bitter controversy concerning the proper translation of many of his terms and texts into English [to say nothing of their proper meaning in German]. After going through a number of editions, translations, texts, analyses, and criticisms, I have come to rest on #16B as the most useful for the Setian who wants to 'get at' Nietzsche as quickly and accurately as possible. Jaspers, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Basel, Switzerland, is one of the acknowledged giants of the academic community. In this book he sought to make the reader 'think Nietzsche's thoughts with him', and in my opinion he succeeded. There are sections on both Nietzsche's life and his philosophy, which must be considered together for the latter to be meaningful. 500 pages." DW: "This book is in three parts. Read all of it, but the second is the part to reread. Great material providing interesting springboards for Setian discussion."

16C. *The Annotated Jules Verne: Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* by Walter James Miller. NY: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976. (TOS-4) (LVT-4) MA: “English-language editions of this story prior to this edition have been appallingly distorted and shortened by incompetent editors and translators. Verne was a genius far beyond his reputation as a mere yarn-spinner, and his moral philosophy is sublimely subjective. The annotations in this edition will help to illustrate Verne’s expertise in a variety of arts and sciences. Walt Disney must be given credit for bringing many direct quotes into his celebrated film: [Nemo: ‘I am not what you call a civilized man! I have done with society entirely, for reasons which I alone have the right of appreciating. I do not therefore obey its laws, and I desire you never to allude to them before me again.’]” J. Lewis VI^o: “Captain Nemo is not, he says, a civilized man. His deliberate separation from the consistency imposed by society has produced a new man, a superman intent on creating a new world.”

16D. *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien. Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 1967 (2nd Edition). [Deutschland: *Der Herr der Ringe*, Klett-Kotta Verlag, Stuttgart, 1984] (TOS-4) (LVT-4) MA: “*LOTR* is not on this list just because it is a stirring adventure tale, but rather because it illustrates a very significant point about good/evil: that ‘evil’ can be destroyed **only by a greater ‘evil’ or by accident**. Saruman attempts the former and Gandalf the latter, and Gandalf succeeds ... to the satisfaction of egalitarian readers [but who would want to hang around Middle-earth after all the excitement was gone?]. *LOTR* is thus an argument for Christian morality, which is immediately evident from *The Silmarillion*, whose philosophical sections - the ‘Ainulindale’ and ‘Valaquenta’ - are transparently adapted from *Paradise Lost*.” J. Lewis VI^o: “Issues of ethics and morality are central throughout the three *LOTR* volumes. The Initiate embarking on the path to eternity needs more than the simple wish to survive; he must comprehend and define both ‘good’ and ‘evil’.”

16E. *The Marquis de Sade* by Donald Thomas. Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976. [Deutschland: *Der Marquis de Sade*, Blanvalet Verlag, München, 1978 (WU: 28/18-527)] (TOS-3) MA: “The best biographical treatment of this controversial and notorious libertine. As Thomas assesses him, he was opposed to the notion of progressive philosophy, holding the supreme power of the human race to be its self-destructive power; the extinction of the species is not to be regretted; history is not progress but helpless drifting. Compare this point of view with that of Satanism, which is similarly cynical but holds out certain hopes for the individual’s transcending of the mass neurosis. [A more recent biography is *Sade* by Maurice Lever (NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1993, ISBN 0-374-20298) More text, less of a ‘coffeetable’ book. Lever is Director of the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris.]”

16F. *Parapolitics* by Raghavan Iyer. NY: Oxford University Press, 1979. (TOS-4) MA: "An admirable, beautifully orchestrated attempt to apply the political philosophy of Plato to the modern world. Iyer lays the groundwork with diagrams explaining the hierarchy of mental activity: *Noesis* ('pure vision' - apprehension of the Good [the Agathon]), *Dianoia* (logical 'thinking'), *Pistis* ('believing' - dogmatic acceptance of ideology), and *Eikasia* ('imagining' - the lowest form of image-simplification and instinctive behavior). These forms of activity may be applied to society in a variety of political 'dimensions', governed by various syntheses of *logos* (speech), *will* (strength), and *eros* (sympathy). The resultant political forces may be generated towards the attainment of various goals: self-preservation, power, stability, reason, welfare, perfectability, and ultimately the *parapolitics* of transcendence. This book is a pearl of thought; its sole defect is that it was cast before a world of largely egalitarian readers [it was allowed to go out of print in 1985]. Do not attempt it until you have first mastered #12C, #16A, and #16G. Iyer was Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of California, Santa Barbara. For information concerning other books by this RHP Magus, contact: Concord Grove Press; 1407 Chapala Street; Santa Barbara, CA 93101. Phone (805) 966-3941."

16G. *Political Thinking* by Glenn Tinder. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1986 (4th Edition). (TOS-1) MA: "This marvelous little (228 pages) paperback is composed completely of questions to the reader concerning the great political/philosophical issues of history, together with information on how major political philosophers addressed those questions. The questions are left open-ended, the expectation being that the reader must **think** his own answers to them. This book is thus an **active mental exercise**, not a textbook for passive memorization or indoctrination. Tinder is Professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts."

16H. *The Social Contract* by Robert Ardrey. NY: Atheneum, 1970. (COS-3) AL: "The Law of the Jungle as applied to human behavior. How the fallacy of 'all men are created equal' has created an imbalance - perhaps necessary - in man's potential. A beautifully written book guaranteed to hurt many whose only claim to fame is that they are 'higher animals'."

16I. *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* by Charles Mackay, LL.D. NY: Harmony Books, 1980 [reprint of the 1841 edition]. (TOS-3) MA: "Perhaps the most wonderful book-title since #13C's. A crazy, wonderful, informative, educational, and non-fictional tour of the major manias of Western civilization up to the time of the book's publication. As Andrew Tobias observes in his foreword: 'Once upon a time there was an emperor with no clothes. For the longest time no one noticed. As you will read in this marvelous book, there have been many naked emperors since. There will doubtless be many more.'"

16J. *Collective Search for Identity* by Orrin E. Klapp. NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969. (COS-3) AL: "A useful key to the understanding and utilization of Lesser Magic." DW: "This is a key book to understanding LaVey's thinking. It is the root of our distinction between rites and ceremonies (which Klapp got from *The Folklore of Capitalism* by T.W. Arnold Yale [1937] - which if available I would make a TOS-5). When great books about LaVey are written, they will have Klapp as background."

16K. *Heroes, Villains, and Fools* by Orrin E. Klapp. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962. (COS-3) AL: "Same comments as applied to [#16J]."

16L. *World Civilizations* by Edward McNall Burns, Philip Lee Ralph, Robert E. Lerner, and Standish Meacham. NY: W.W. Norton, 1982 [6th Edition]. (TOS-2) MA: "I am often concerned to see how little knowledge many aspiring Initiates have of exoteric human history. Unless you have a reasonably solid grounding in this subject, anything you derive from this reading list [and most other sensory-inputs] is going to be distorted in your mind. #16L is the best single-volume, collegiate-level survey I've yet found: up-to-date, readable, balanced, and comprehensive. Lavishly accented with color plates, maps, and many photographs & illustrations. It is a pleasure to read, as though one were drinking at a fountain of human adventure. 1,384 pages. See also #16M."

16M. *Western Civilizations* by Edward McNall Burns, Robert E. Lerner, and Standish Meacham. NY: W.W. Norton, 1984 [10th Edition]. (TOS-2) MA: "This is an alternative/companion volume to #16L, minus the non-Western sections [which permits greater emphasis & detail regarding the Western ones]. 1,068 pages. A wonderful literary and intellectual experience."

16N. *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* by Frank Miller. NY: Warner Books #38-505, 1986. (TOS-3) MA: "A Setian comic (?) book." Superman: "They'll kill us if they can, Bruce. Every year they grow smaller; every year they hate us more. We must not remind them that giants walk the Earth. You were the one they used against us, Bruce: the one who played it rough. When the noise started from the parents' groups, and the subcommittee called us in for questioning, you were the one who laughed - that scary laugh of yours ... 'Sure, we're criminals,' you said, 'We've always **been** criminals. We **have** to be criminals.'" Batman: "The world only makes sense when you **force** it to."

16O. *The Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins. Oxford/NY: Oxford University Press, 1989 (new edition). (TOS-3) Patty Hardy IV^o: "Altruistic and selfish behavior in a wide range of living forms, entertainingly and convincingly explained in terms of genetic strategy and game theory. This book merits Setian attention as a more modern treatment of the ideas discussed in #16H."

16P. *The Lucifer Principle: A Scientific Expedition into the Policies of History* by Howard Bloom. NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995 (ISBN 0-87113-532-9). (TOS-4) MA: "This historical/sociological book is an argument for Bloom's thesis: that 'evil is a by-product of nature's strategies for creation, and is woven into our most basic biological fabric' (the 'Lucifer Principle'). He further postulates that the LP applies even more to at the group level (what he calls the 'superorganism'), and that this is what actually matters in the course of history. In talking of 'evil' Bloom means no theological concept, but rather the social impulsive, emotional, destructive, and aggressive features of [principally but not just] human social groups. He case-studies several historical episodes to show that 'progress results from this pain' rather than from more tranquil times. Somewhat Hegelian, somewhat oversimplistic - but not without its point. Bloom's credentials are somewhat elusive: 'member of the NY Academy of Science, the American Psychological Society, and the American Political Science Society'."

F16A. *Batman*. 1989. Michael Keaton, Jack Nicholson, Kim Basinger. Directed by Tim Burton. MA: "This began as an attempt to bring #16N to the screen, and succeeded at least in capturing the *noir* atmosphere of its *Metropolis*-like architecture and urban decay. Michael Keaton's Batman is convincing, but not nearly as savagely psychotic as in #16N. This film came close to being a horrific masterpiece, but at some point it was decided to cast Jack Nicholson as the Joker and play that role for comic relief, presumably to make the film acceptable to youthful audiences. The historic Joker was a malevolent fiend in whose *risus sardonicus* death-grin there was nothing the least amusing."

F16B. *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Walt Disney, 1954. Disney Video #15VS. James Mason, Kirk Douglas, Paul Lukas, Peter Lorre. MA: "A thoroughly excellent translation of #16C to a motion picture, less the extensive scientific/oceanographic instruction which Verne packed into his novel. [On the other hand, there are many lingering camera shots of underwater attractions, so Disney's interest in naturalism is upheld.] Disney also changed Verne's rather unimaginative, spindle-shaped *Nautilus* into a magnificent metal 'monster' whose moonlight charges at hapless warships are one of the screen's most dramatic sequences. Atomic energy was still a thing of awe when this film was made, as can be seen from the drama accorded the *Nautilus*' atomic reactor, the design of Nemo's Vulcania laboratories, and the final atomic explosion."

F16C. *Apocalypse Now [Redux]*. 1979. Francis Ford Coppola. Marlon Brando, Martin Sheen, Robert Duvall. MA: "Loosely adapted from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, this film is a sort of *Caligula* of the Vietnam War: Much of what it shows is in fact historically accurate, but in a single collage it appears so stark, obscene, and insane that the viewer tends to dismiss it as merely a baroque satire. Brando portrays an American Special Forces colonel whose obsession with the war leads to his alienation from the ethical rituals expected by the U.S command structure; Sheen is the captain sent to assassinate him. We are left to wonder why the destruction of human life sanctioned by governments is 'good', while that lacking such sanction, even if apparently justified by circumstances, is 'bad'."