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# CINEMA AND THE METAMORPHOSIS OF GREAT EPIC TALES

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## INTRODUCTION

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It has been said that the modern world has been characterised by the disappearance of great literary epics. Not only because there is hardly anyone today who reads *The Illiad*, *The Odyssey*, *the tragedies of Sophocles or Euripides*, *Dante's Divine Comedy*, *Don Quixote by Cervantes*, *Milton's Paradise Lost* or the novels of Dostoevsky, but also because the great ethical, political, social and religious projects behind them have melted away. That is to say, not only is it the great literary works which are in crisis, but also the values that they communicated. This is also true from the point of view of the Christian tradition; the Biblical narratives like the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Christian story par excellence, are no longer being used as a point of reference for new generations. It seems that we are no longer living in epic times and that we content ourselves with limited perspectives, limited values, and limited periods of history. Perhaps the fall of the Berlin Wall was, for the West, the definitive expression of this breakdown.

In our culture, however, new stories are continually being created. This is because it is an integral part of the human condition to attempt to understand oneself through narrative, especially when it is one that outlines the fundamental choices we are faced with at some point or other in our lives. Through these narratives, every culture offers us stories and exemplary models which convey a certain set of values. A moral code is then communicated through the heroic deeds of certain characters, and remains associated with them in the emotional memory of a specific generation or culture.

The aim of this booklet is to reflect upon the extent to which the fundamental values of the human condition are still being communicated through new mythologies, although the storyline and names of the characters may be different. Since the cinema has become the main broadcaster of such mythologies, in that it portrays certain codes of behaviour relating to our culture, we will be focussing on it in this booklet. More specifically, we are going to analyse four epic film productions: *The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars* and *The Matrix*. We haven't chosen them for their cinematic qualities –which, although spectacular, could be another issue for debate– but rather because they succeeded in reaching a huge audience, and are now shaping the imagination of generations to come.

## 1. CINEMA AS PART OF THE CULTURE OF ENTERTAINMENT

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In our post-industrial and secularised society, new cults and new liturgies have appeared, and we give this area the generic name of *entertainment*. Entertainment is set against the world of work in that it allows us to enjoy ourselves freely, in contrast to the stress and obsession for efficiency in business; so liberty takes over from productivity, and passiveness takes over from action.

In pre-industrial societies, the domains of leisure and business were more integrated, because productive activity was carried out with greater happiness, just as other aspects of human life were also more integrated than they are today: personal creativity, the community-oriented nature of life, man's contact with Nature –all these made for a more laid-back rhythm of life.

In contrast to this, in a dual society like ours, where work is completely separate from leisure time, it is not surprising that a whole culture of entertainment has developed as a necessary counterpart to the world of work. The issue is in knowing whether this area of leisure *rejuvenates us, or simply helps us to escape*, and in the latter case, thus alienates us and distances us even more from ourselves.

As well as sporting activities –on which there would also have been much to say, for example, the fact that they are capable of bringing a group of people together, of allowing people to identify with certain well-known figures and also the fact that they perform a cathartic function, releasing aggression, (though at times, they can also provoke it)– let's consider the culture of visual forms of entertainment, from among which we are going to highlight the cinema. Known as the seventh art, one of its characteristics is that it brings together elements of other art-forms: the narrative of the novel, the drama of theatre, the evocative nature of painting, the rich sounds of music... It takes all these aspects and, with great intensity, changes them into a powerful medium for communicating messages, capable of educating or even distorting the moral code of its audience.

The four epic productions that we have chosen are what are known as “cult films”. Their popularity among today's generations (from 8 year-old children to adults of 30) shows that they must touch some essential fibre of our conscience. They are neither “difficult” nor sophisticated films in their content, that would make them accessible only to an élite group of people, but are instead aimed at a mainstream public audience, and designed to be seen by millions of people.

The common characteristic of them all is not only their fantastical element, but also their mythological nature, in that they deal with stories (*mythoi*) in which the titanic, merciless battle between moral and cosmic forces is played out. It gives them a sense of being somehow outside of time, though some of them appear to be situated in a not too distant future (in the case of *The Matrix*), and others in the far-off future (*Star Wars*,

though according to the story it happened “many years ago”); or in the recent past (in the case of *Harry Potter*) or the distant past, with a more medieval atmosphere (*The Lord of the Rings*). We also see another significant trait of our culture, in that everything is now imbued with a sense of rationality. The mythical aspect is thus contrasted with the logical one, and set in a society where social and political projects are saturated in technology and bureaucracy.

In a world where epic sagas and ethical issues have been reduced to that which is technical and practical, many from today’s generations are able to identify with characters who confront extreme situations that subsequently bring out the best and most generous parts of their nature. Myths are therefore able to *bridge the gap* between reality and fantasy, offering an opportunity to throw light on one’s own situation and making it possible to view it from another perspective.

The fact that we are dealing with sagas (two trilogies, a hexology and a heptology) means that they cannot be absorbed instantaneously. Instead, they mirror the development of great classical compositions: they are slow and majestic in their development, with an introduction, an unfolding of the plot, and a final outcome. In spite of their being aimed at a public that is greedy for immediacy, these tales are capable of maintaining a sense of the unknown in their audience for years, leaving the fate and destiny of their characters to form in the imagination.

## 2. FOUR EPIC FILM PRODUCTIONS FOR FOUR EPIC TALES

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Before analysing the values that they communicate, we are going to put these productions into context and look at their storylines.

### 2.1. The Lord of the Rings

The script of this trilogy is based on a literary work of extraordinary scope and quality. Its author is John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892-1973), a writer born in South Africa, but educated from his childhood in Great Britain. A lover of languages, he became Professor of Medieval Philology in Oxford. A practising Catholic, he counted among his friends such people as C.S. Lewis. Together they used the symbolic genre to raise the moral conscience of their time, and they also formed part of a small group of writers in the Oxford University circle called *The Inklings* (“signs”, “forebodings”). The literary production of Tolkien is extensive and complex, and a good part of it was not published in his lifetime<sup>1</sup>. He created a whole imaginary world, like a parallel universe, with great meticulousness and attention to detail, in which the very sound of characters’ names was capable of evoking the narrative atmosphere and the personality of the characters. *The Hobbit*, his first outstanding work, appeared in 1937. It was criticised in some circles for being an escapist novel, at a time when Europe was on the brink of war. Some people did not understand that this was precisely his way of involving himself with his time, in creating a great metaphor of the human condition<sup>2</sup>. He continued his work during the Second World War creating what would become *The Lord of the Rings*. It was published in the years 1954-55, as a parable of the struggle between Good and Evil, taking its inspiration from Celtic, Saxon, Germanic and Scandinavian myths. Year after year, English readers have considered it to be “the best book of the twentieth century”. The work of Tolkien, the creator of myths, has to a certain extent influenced the outlines of the other three sagas we will be looking at. It was brought to the screen by the New Zealand director Peter Jackson (born 1961)<sup>3</sup>, who retained the three parts of the original work. Thus we have the trilogy: *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001); *The Two Towers* (2002) and *The Return of the King* (2003).

The plot is this: in the country that is known as Middle Earth, kings and creatures of various species live alongside each other: elves –immortal beings–, hobbits –innocent beings–, orcs –dark creatures–, dwarves, trolls, ents... and mortal beings, humans. Each king has a ring, but there is one ring that is greater than all the others, created by the Dark Lord Sauron, in which is held all his power. This ring is lost in a crucial battle after which Sauron is defeated, but is found again, and the Lord of Darkness sends his followers, the *Nazgûl*, spectral horsemen, through all of Middle Earth to get it back so he can rule the region again. The only way of freeing themselves from his growing threat is by finding the place where the ring was created, in a volcano of Mount Doom, in Mordor, the Dark Lord’s territory. Frodo, a young hobbit, takes on this responsibility because the other creatures aren’t able to, as they have been tempted to find the ring and succumb to the enchantment of its power. Frodo relies on the help of a small group of friends (*the Fellowship of the Ring*) who will accompany him on this dangerous mission. So the trilogy tells of the heroic deeds on their journey of initiation through a landscape of the mind and the spirit, in which the outside world becomes a reflection of

the inner one, and in which the protagonists are tested to the limits of their physical, ethical and spiritual faculties. As a result of facing such trials, they will undoubtedly suffer, but they will also grow and see their characters transform.

## 2.2. Harry Potter

Behind this epic production can also be found a literary creation, although it isn't of quite the same scope as the last novel we looked at. The writer is the Scottish author Joanne Kenneth Rowling (1965). Her creativity has given life to a young apprentice of magic, Harry Potter, who in spite of his weak and fragile appearance, is called to great missions. His parents, also magicians, died in a fatal battle with Voldemort, a powerful and dark sorcerer. On being orphaned, he is taken in by his aunt and uncle, an average middle-class family who mistreat him. On reaching the age of 11, the fact that he belongs to the world of magicians is revealed and he is brought to Hogwarts, an unusual boarding-school, in a world that is parallel to the real one, in which he will meet real friends and great teachers, but where he will also have to confront fearful and powerful enemies.

His training takes place over 7 years (from age 11 to 17), because the writer explains that this is the amount of time needed to become a magician. It is not by chance that this symbolic number is chosen. For each year, there is a book which relates to it, one for each stage of his apprenticeship. Up to now, five have been published: *The Philosopher's Stone* (1997), *The Chamber of Secrets* (1998); *The Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), *The Goblet of Fire* (2000); *The Order of the Phoenix* (2003). The final two installments, which still have to come out, will be called: *The Green Flame Torch* and, according to some reports, *Scar*.

The quality of the characters created, the details of this marvellous world, (so near to our own and yet so much more exciting), the intrigue and outcome of the adventures... has made *Harry Potter* into a *best-seller* in the domain of children's literature, so much so that we hear talk of "pottermania". The books have been translated into more than forty languages and have sold more than fifty million copies. The first two books were brought to the big screen by the director Chris Columbus, director of films like "Home Alone" and "Mrs. Doubtfire".

## 2.3. Star Wars

Unlike the two previous film productions, the storyline of this double trilogy was written by the film's director, George Lucas, in order to be brought to the big screen. From a cinematic point of view, the first of these two trilogies is the oldest production we are going to look at: *A New Hope* (1977), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and *Return of the Jedi* (1983). The second trilogy was taken up in 1999 with *The Phantom Menace*, followed in 2002 with *The Attack of the Clones* and will conclude in 2005 with *Episode III*.

The remarkable thing about the second trilogy is that, in the order of the narrative, it actually precedes the first. The protagonist of the first trilogy, the Jedi Luke Skywalker,

is the son of Anakin Skywalker, the protagonist of the second. Through pride, his father becomes involved with the Dark Side, but is freed by his son. The plot is simple, but possesses a strange combination of both futuristic and classical elements: the peace of the galactic confederation is threatened by the ambition of a few planets that want to dominate the galaxy. The Confederate Republic has at its disposal an élite group of people, the Jedis, who through their ethical and warrior-like qualities, are entrusted with taking action against and neutralising the aggressors. The fact that some of the Jedis cross over to the Dark Side leads to the creation of a tyrannical emperor who attempts to take control of the Galaxy.

Empires, republics, ambassadors, senates and senators... all of this evokes the mythical side of the Roman world, but here it is projected into the future. Hopes are placed in a few Jedi who have still resisted the pressure of the Emperor. The action centres on the Jedi Anakin and Luke Skywalker, father and son, who take different stances before this power. It seems that a third trilogy is planned for after 2005, that will take up the thread of the first, when order within the new intergalactic republic is established.

#### **2.4. The Matrix**

As in the previous case, this concerns a script written for the big screen, and created by the same people who would be directing it: the Wachowski brothers. This is part of the cyberpunk genre, which appeared in 1982 with *Blade Runner*, one of the great hits of the science-fiction genre, in which human beings have to confront the threat of robots, or in other words, the supremacy of machines over man. Apart from the influence of Tolkien, there are also references to various other classics, like *Alice in Wonderland* written by the mathematician Lewis Carroll, in which it is difficult to clearly define the boundary between reality and fiction. The dialogue is dense, laden with questions and metaphysical meditations on the human condition: the possibility of being free, the chances offered by fate, and questions on many other human dreams and illusions. The first part appeared in 1999, after being five years in the making, and the last two releases (2002 and 2003) were filmed simultaneously, and were three years in the making. The trilogy describes the scenario of a world that is controlled by machines, in which human beings live in a virtual computer-induced reality. *The Matrix* is the name of a great computer that is built by these same machines in order to absorb and live off human energy. The few people who realise that their lives are subject to the machine are either swallowed by the machine, or pursued to their death. Those who manage to escape the control of the *Matrix* hide in Zion, a subterranean city which the machines cannot access.

The hopes of the survivors are placed in the so-called *Chosen One*, that some identify as Neo, a young, insecure computer hacker who, little by little, begins to realise his mission thanks to his conversations with the Oracle, and also the unconditional support of his partner and a small group of friends that believe in him.

### 3. ARCHETYPAL CHARACTERS

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In these four sagas we will meet five categories of archetypal characters.

#### 3.1. Anima: The female element

The protagonists of the four sagas are heroes who fulfil their mission at the peril of risking their own lives and, in two of the cases, sacrificing themselves for the sake of the mission<sup>4</sup>. Both Frodo Baggins and Harry Potter have a fragile physical appearance and there is nothing remarkable about them at first sight, except perhaps their weakness. They neither possess arrogance nor powerful qualities. Frodo is an adolescent hobbit with hairy feet –particular to his species–, and Harry is a skinny eleven year-old child with glasses. It is his apparent insignificance that is precisely the key to his personality and mission. Since he doesn't consider himself to be the centre of the universe, he is able to put himself at the service of others. These characters don't realise they are carrying out anything particularly extraordinary and this is what allows them to be the instrument of a cause which is beyond them. The description of Frodo reflects this transcendence in what is described as the luminosity and clarity of his expression, while Harry Potter is marked from birth with a strange scar on his forehead, traces of a battle with Evil which took place shortly after his birth.

Luke Skywalker (Star Wars) and Neo (The Matrix) present different characteristics, in that they are two strong, handsome young men who are capable of using violence as a last resort<sup>5</sup>. In spite of this questionable element, which we will look at later on, the Messianic nature of these characters is patently obvious: Neo is constantly referred to as “the Chosen One”, and his character gives the others a chance to follow him in faith and trust. Anakin and Luke Skywalker are also recognised from birth as being special, and people in whom the hope of the community is placed. On the other hand, the long dark clothes of Neo have a clear priest-like connotation, just as the Jedi Knights have a sacred character, evoking some sort of warrior-monks.

But the priestly and messianic nature of the protagonists is shown most clearly in the way they confront the power of Evil that unleashes itself on them. Each one of them acts as a shield for not only their own community, but also the whole world. The restoration of Good, or the victory of the King of Darkness is dependent on their final triumph. In the four sagas, this confrontation is played out by a gradual progression towards the very core of this Evil. Each protagonist undertakes a journey which brings him face to face with obstacles that are more dangerous each time than the last, bringing him to the very Hell he must vanquish in the final battle. The four protagonists gradually realise that the restoration of Good and maintaining the balance of their world depends on their actions. Furthermore, they discover that the key to their mission is in their own dedication, which takes on the character of a sacrifice or offering. In each of the four cases, the protagonists fully develop their moral and spiritual potential, and at the end of the story are on a higher level in this respect than they were at the start. The other people of their world are thus blessed because the protagonists decided to accept their mission.

### **3.2. ¿Producir para exportar o producir para comer?**

Although the characters we have discussed represent *animus*, that is, the active and masculine part of the soul, a great deal of importance is also given to the presence of *anima*, the female element, which balances and complements them. Just as Beatrice in *The Divine Comedy* inspired Dante's journey from the underworld, attracting him to the higher spheres of Paradise, so do these female characters bring out the best in their heroes. In the middle of an extreme situation, when the hero is at the limit of his capabilities, the female character appears, unconditionally encouraging and sustaining him. Thanks to the love received from her, he is then able to recover his strength and fulfil his mission.

### **3.3. The Great Master**

Just as *animus* complements *anima*, the counterpoint of youth is old age. It may seem that the choice of a few young, handsome protagonists merely celebrates the myth of youth, (that is beauty, strength, agility...). However, an important place is also given to the wisdom and authority of tradition. Thus appears the archetypal and ancient figure of the Great Master. Without being directly implicated in the action, his role has a determining influence on the main protagonist. His experience, knowledge, and highly-developed powers that are used with such discretion, give a sense of gravity and security to the young heroes, as well as widening their horizons. The function of the ancient Master consists in making the protagonists realise the real significance of every decision and step they take.

### **3.4. The power of the group**

A fourth element appears in these sagas: that of the value and strength found in friendship. The importance of the group shows that everyone has a role to play and a contribution to make. In the four stories, the friends that accompany the main protagonists are varied characters, quaint even, and they come from a variety of origins, types and species, with the resulting physical, psychological and social differences. None of them are perfect and none would be able to triumph on their own, but instead they all need the help, the qualities and the skills of others in order to fulfil their mission. On many occasions they give up their own likes and preferences through loyalty to the friendship that unites them, and the common cause with which they have been entrusted.

The vulnerability of the protagonists and of their friends makes them not only more believable but also encourages us to identify with them.

### **3.5. The personification of Evil**

Finally, all of these characters have to face one common element: the growing threat of Evil. Although the characters who represent incarnations of Evil never show themselves clearly, the signs of Evil are unmistakable. The personification of Evil is all the more

fearful when it seems to be everywhere and yet does not reveal itself openly. When it does appear, it is masked, covered in black cloaks or given a metallic voice or body which conveys the dehumanisation of Evil. In *The Matrix*, it is represented by the very power of the machines, which live off human energy. More particularly, it is identified with a computer program. This program is personified through an agent whose code has become jumbled up, and who devotes himself to capturing the rebels and changing anyone who touches him into doubles of himself. This exorbitant multiplication of the agent shows the suffocating atmosphere caused by self-centredness, in that it attempts to make everyone become like ourselves. It leads us to consider in greater depth the fundamental alternative that is put forward by the four films.

## 4. THE FUNDAMENTAL ALTERNATIVE

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To our way of thinking, these four tales contain significant elements of the great epic tales of the past, in that they recreate the age-old challenge: the struggle of good against evil. This conflict is presented in new guises and with new names, but with the purpose of bringing face to face the radical alternative of the individual and the collective conscience: these contrast the cause of justice, loyalty, fidelity, and innocence with the desire for power, which tries to destroy and devour the life of others.

*The Lord of the Rings* and *The Matrix* explore this in greater depth, but *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars* also deal with this dilemma and raise the same issue in the mind of the spectator. On first viewing, the simplicity with which this question is raised may appear banal, or too black and white perhaps, but this very issue has been part of the Christian tradition for generations. An example would be the meditation on the *Two Standards* by Ignatius of Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*. This could almost have been the inspiration for much of the iconography in these films. The first Standard represents the kingdom of Lucifer:

“Imagine that leader of all the enemy, in that great plain of Babylon, sitting on a sort of throne of smoking flame, a horrible and terrifying sight” [SE,140].

Saint Ignatius could well have taken these images from his reading of chivalric novels, in which the heroes struggled against monsters and dragons, archetypal symbols of the collective unconscious. In the same way, in *The Lord of the Rings*, the flashes of lightning in the land of Mordor and the forbidden language spoken by Sauron behind the flames (the Eye of Sauron also represents a disturbing omnipresence), are a perfect expression of this Standard, as is the figure of Darth Vader in *Star Wars*, or the atmosphere created by the apparitions of a disguised Voldemort in *Harry Potter*.

In contrast to these manifestations of Evil, the *Spiritual Exercises* also present the Standard of Good:

“consider how Christ our Lord puts Himself in a great field of that region of Jerusalem, in lowly place, beautiful and attractive” [SE,144].

Good does not impose itself with force, or invade lands, but simply reveals itself and offers itself to people without any aspect of theatricality. Its “lowly,...beautiful and attractive” appearance is represented in *the Shire*, the home of the *hobbits*, themselves a very small and discreet species, where Frodo and his friends live. We also meet Luke Skywalker living among a peasant family, on a minor planet. Harry Potter, at the start of the story, is confined by his relations to a sordid place under the stairs, while Neo rises from the grey mass of the middle class. Not only is there nothing spectacular in all of their origins, but also their very insignificance and marginality even, is crucial to the story, just like it was in the narrative of Jesus’ birth.

The fundamental aspect of an epic, whether it be literary or cinematic, is in the force of its very images. Its real qualities can be found here, not just its artistic ones, but also its ethical and spiritual ones. As C.S. Lewis said: “You have to allow the images to express their own morality...But if they don’t reveal any morals to the spectator, you shouldn’t

attribute any to them. Because then the morality that gets attributed to them will only be a cliché, or even a falsehood that has been taken from the surface of the mind<sup>6</sup>". Thus, a good story (whether it be literary or cinematic), does not reveal its own values in an artificial way, but rather communicates them through its narrative and symbolic elements. In other words, the primary element of a good film is in its story and the symbolism which issues from it.

The aim of this booklet is to break down what lies behind these four epics and judge how far they are imbued with ethical and Christian values, though these may not be explicitly presented.

In the *Exercises* of Ignatius, the journey towards Evil is presented as a progression which begins with the desire for riches, followed by vanity and culminating in pride (SE,142), while the journey towards Good begins in poverty, is followed by the emptiness of humiliation and reaches humility, a peaceful land in which all the other virtues flourish (SE,146).

Such dynamics can be seen in the development of our four tales. Sauron, Valdemort, Darth Vader and the program called Smith are presented as incarnations of absolute Evil, understood as the blind desire for self-gain: riches, kingdoms, peoples, glory... a power that destroys everything it touches. The worst part of Evil is thus presented as its implacable strength to devour, its insatiable, crushing power that swallows others.

The best symbolic narrative achievement is found in Tolkien's work, where the Ring represents the physical manifestation of sin, and by sin, we mean this compulsive desire for power: wanting more at the expense of others. "The Ring is an object full of power and strength that gives energy to whoever possesses it, though this will always be given in relation to the possessor: it will give much power to the strong and little to the weak. This is why everyone strives for it. Because for everyone it signifies the breaking of the barriers that surround them (...). The very desire for the Ring can corrupt the heart, because it drives one to aspire to that which doesn't correspond to the nature of the creature that possesses it. It brings with it a mark of Evil and it is only by destroying it that one can achieve freedom<sup>7</sup>".

Where the four tales show their degree of morality is in the way the protagonists confront Evil. This is because the temptation is to fight Evil with Evil: to exterminate this dark being that confronts them. The more dark and terrifying it is, the more justified one would be to eliminate it. This is what distinguishes a simple adventure film, which contains scenes of violent confrontation, from an epic saga. The tale's moral quality reaches its highest point –and even goes as far as transcending the story, and representing something more spiritual– when the protagonist, instead of fighting evil with his hatred for it, sacrifices himself to it in the name of others. This is clearly shown throughout the plot development of *The Lord of the Rings* and at the end of *The Matrix*.

But in the case of Frodo, his heroic deed does not come about gloriously, but rather through the humiliation of temptation. Thus he passes through the different stages of the *Exercises* in a surprisingly literal way: poverty, humiliation, humility. All the dark beings throw themselves at him, each one of them leaving him wounded both in body and mind; at the same time, the implacable power of Sauron devours his vitality, and the nearer he gets to the land of Mordor and the Mount Doom, the weaker he becomes, right up to the point of giving in to temptation and not throwing the Ring away.

However, the Ring ends up being destroyed thanks to his “general sanctity<sup>8</sup>”. The fact that Gollum gets it involuntarily is because he survived due to the compassion Frodo had felt for him. Humiliation is an essential part of the process, so that the protagonist’s weakness is not just a hindrance, but rather the way in which he ends up achieving even more greatness and purity. This is why it is not the honour or triumph of the protagonist that is called into play, but rather the mission he accepts and ultimately gives himself up for.

Emptiness being seen as a path towards abundance reminds us of the grain of wheat which must die in order to yield fruit (Jn 12,24), a sign of the Paschal mystery. Herein lies the Christian character of the tale, that is also expressed in the canticles of Isaiah’s *Suffering Servant*: “he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; (...) and as one from whom men hide their faces. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Is 53,2-4).

The same Christian and sacrificial nature is seen through the figure of Neo (*The Matrix*), who becomes progressively weaker through his confrontation with the agent Smith, even to the point of going blind. Yet it is his blindness which allows him to perceive things in a different way, a way which goes beyond the physical senses and brings about a mystical transformation in him, which will be the very pillar of his final sacrifice.

#### **4.1. Is God absent?**

This religio-mystical revelation is not at first evident. Rather, what is striking in the four tales and what they also have in common is their silent respect of God. The Transcendent Being is implicitly present in all of them.

In one of his letters, Tolkien writes that “the religious element remains absorbed in the story and the symbolism<sup>9</sup>”. However we shouldn’t search for a personal God here, but rather an immanent one.

In *Star Wars* we find that reference is constantly made to the Force and its gifts. With the restoration of the Republic, comes the re-establishment of the *Force*. The Jedis are practically monk-warriors with a very strict moral code that allows them to be open to the effects of the Force.

The Jedi creed states:

*“There is no emotion, there is peace.  
There is no ignorance, there is knowledge.  
There is no passion, there is serenity.  
There is no death, there is the Force”.*

And the Jedi Oath says:

*“To act not for personal power or wealth  
but to seek knowledge and enlightenment.  
Never to act from hatred, anger or fearbut*

*only to act when calm and at peace with the force.  
Never to act out of aggression but only in defense”.*

The Knights of the Jedi also have a code of honour<sup>10</sup>. This almost makes this mythico-mystical creation seem convincing and attractive, so much so in fact, that a few years ago in Australia, a new religion appeared on the Internet under the name of “The Knights of the Jedi”.

In the four films, power is not identified with the divine, but rather with the diabolical. Divinity is instead present where power is absent.

We can then understand why God is not explicitly revealed in the four tales: if God is conceived as the absence of power, and if goodness and innocence bring the protagonists to the point where they are willing to sacrifice their own lives, then God, who represents the fountain of all goodness, loyalty and innocence, also disappears in a subjective sense, and is instead revealed through the characters. God is implicitly present in the innocent gaze of Frodo, in the discreet nature of Harry, in Luke’s noble character, in the trust placed in Neo by his friends, and his final decision to surrender himself.

The silence of God in these stories is, just like in our own world, His very way of appearing to us. God is present in his very absence, allowing people to use their free will and bringing people to realise that the highest form of existence is in one’s ability to give life to others.

This awareness of God, and His seeming absence, is precisely His most real and radical way of making Himself present in the world. Such an immanent Presence explains why the four tales end happily. Their “happy ending” is not merely a superficial one, due to divine intervention or *Deus ex machina*, which would intervene to resolve a situation in an arbitrary way. It is instead, both a result of this sacrificial surrender that we have seen, and the implicit faith that is so much part of the characters.

## 5. AMBIGUITIES

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Up to this point we have picked out the elements that would make these four epics worthy successors of classic tales. Now we must look at the aspects that are not quite as clear, in order to arrive at a balanced judgement.

### 5.1. Selfmade men

In *Star Wars* and *The Matrix* there are traces of the American myth of *self-made man*, “the man who makes his own fortune”. The Jedi and the rebel forces that resist in Zion are people who distinguish themselves from others through their personal achievements of intelligence and willpower. This would lead to the risk of encouraging the growth of an élite group that is separated from the others, the only group that is then capable of saving itself.

The social and political implications which issue from this are by no means harmless. The halo of self-determination is present in the final dialogue of *The Matrix*. Fed up with his relentless resistance, Smith asks Neo why he continues to fight him, and Neo replies: “Because this is how I decided to do it”. This emphatic statement coming from him is of a different style to the self-sacrificial surrender that he is simultaneously making before the origin of the machines. Nevertheless, maybe it is a necessary response too.

As people, we grow and become more able to make our own decisions and accept their consequences to the end. We are talking about a process of learning which brings us to a higher level, where our focus moves away from ourselves. Although there is a time for self-determination, this ceases to be healthy when it becomes an absolute, and when others and their circumstances are seen only from one’s own subjectivity. Then the individual becomes only interested in self-growth, rather than becoming more aware of the idea of reciprocity and the common good, of which he forms a part. There is no such thing as personal growth if it is at the expense of others.

### 5.2. The justification of violence

The violent confrontations that occur in *Star Wars* and *The Matrix*, and the long battles which take place in *The Lord of the Rings* against orcs and other abominable creatures, seem to justify using the recourse of violence. In dealing with great epic achievements in which we see the confrontation between Good and Evil, the problem is not in the presence of violence as such, but rather the treatment that it is given. The art of attack and defence could not be absent from tales of this type, given that it is one of the ways in which humans are forced to deal with conflict. The question lies in judging what attitudes are being justified and encouraged.

The strategy which is usually used in the majority of films consists of focussing all the perverted traits of evil onto the villain, up to the point where he becomes dehumanised. In this way, the spectator’s hatred for him increases and, with it, the desire to exterminate him. The more evil he is, the more reason there is to kill him. This

conditioning towards hatred encourages a culture of violence: the violence suffered is then an excuse for the violence that is carried out. So the moral and spiritual nature of every violent scene should depend not on whether “the baddie” is killed, but instead if he is just disarmed or stripped of his power. The confrontation can then act as a way of highlighting the protagonist’s courage and valour, and not as a way of encouraging our feelings of hatred towards an enemy that must be eliminated at all costs. What should be sought is the conquering of evil, rather than the extermination of the enemy. So we are presented with a criteria which is fundamental to our judgement of the moral justification of violence.

### **5.3. The possible confusion between the mythical, the magical and the mystical**

In the four films, a mythico-magical atmosphere is created, which at times delves deeply into the mystical. We should then clarify the nature of each of these three domains. We have already looked at the mythical aspect: with this as a background, the constant battle between Good and Evil stands out. The fact that this confrontation has a fantastical element rather than a historical or realistic one, is shown in the cosmic nature of the powers and characters that confront each other, in the presence of other beings that are not all human. In the same way, the superhuman strength of the protagonists makes them tireless, and their actions extraordinary. The purpose of this excessive display is to highlight the fundamental confrontation that the four stories are trying to relate. In other words, “the imaginary beings show what they are like inside through their external appearance: they are visible souls<sup>11</sup>”. As for the magical aspect, it is tied into four different issues.

#### *a. Magic as entertainment*

In the first place, magic is linked to entertainment. In the four films, we see episodes that are merely diversions of the imagination, reversing and playing around with the laws of Nature. Thus, the desire to fly becomes something real in the *quidditch* games with magic broomsticks in the Hogwarts boarding school, or in the spectacular leaps made by Neo and Trinity across the city rooves that remind us of so many other comic book characters (Superman, Spiderman, the X-men...), all of these having been brought to the big screen in recent years; we also come across the dream of being able to make oneself invisible through the marvellous cloaks that can baffle one’s opponents at the opportune moment... If it were only a source of amusement, the magical element would not present any problem, because we would be in the domain of playful imagination that is both necessary and justified in the narrative.

#### *b. Magic and technology*

Secondly, magic is linked to technological development. This aspect is present in many science-fiction films, in which spaceships break the speed of light, thus reversing the coordinates of time and space. It is also seen with other technical and scientific issues

such as the question of life on other planets, or the question of immortality... It is in these areas that the genre of science-fiction brushes with the issue of eschatology, in two different ways: either by presenting an extreme opposition between the forces of good and evil (thus revealing an apocalyptic perspective), or by presenting a harmonious world, in which science and technology are at the service of both spiritual and human values, (revealing a utopic view). In the films we are dealing with, both of these ideas are seen: in some of them, the machines acquire a dark and threatening aspect, while in others, they reach a scale of great perfection at the service of the humans that operate them.

### *c. Magic and power*

Thirdly, magic is connected to something much more delicate: it symbolises the use of power. It is a metaphor of the way in which humans can exercise or abuse power, an integral part of the human condition<sup>12</sup>. Magic is again linked to science and technology and it is here that the ambiguity of progress lies. Machines and technology show their positive side in the way that they are at the service of human values, and in harmony with the resources that Nature has to offer. However, when they are in the hands of a compulsive desire for power and an obsession with production, they become perverse and dehumanised, taking away man's life force, which then ends up being devoured by something that man himself created. *The Matrix* is the result of this reversal: the human being becomes trapped in the computerised world he designed. In *The Lord of the Rings* we also see the desolate, and even infernal aspect of modern society, where the woods near the tower of Isengard are destroyed in order to spread the industry of war.

### *d. Magical and Mystical*

Finally, magic is related to the supernatural, and this is where we go deeper into the mystical. The difference between the two is that magic is used for gain, (though in its more innocent dimension it is just a form of distraction, in its more dangerous dimension it seeks to acquire power), while the mystical side only reveals itself when there is dedication and trust. In this way, when Harry has to go to platform number nine and three-quarters, just ten minutes before the express for Hogwarts leaves, a question of trust and faith occurs to him. This brings him to a sphere that is higher than that of mere entertainment, and gives him an insight as to how he should use his powers. Magic also becomes something mystical when the person practising it no longer becomes its handler but instead becomes its receptacle, when he stops trying to control it and lets himself be guided by it. The magician becomes wise and mystical when he stops acting for himself and instead allows himself to listen to and interpret the signs and voices of a Transcendent Dimension that he knows he cannot have power over. This is what gives a spiritual nature to both Gandalf, the wise magician in *The Lord of the Rings*, and Harry Potter. They appear to possess an essential humility, (though this only occurs gradually in the case of Harry), that makes them aware that they are at the service of a Cause in which trust and commitment are more important than their powers.

#### 5.4. The industry of entertainment

The fourth ambiguity refers to the moral justification of the economic cost of these four epic productions and the flow of money that they have generated. *Star Wars* (1977) was the first phenomenal box-office success and in its day recouped 700 million dollars<sup>13</sup>. This means that it was seen by around one hundred and fifty million people. The two episodes of the new trilogy recouped 925 and 648 million dollars respectively. The cost of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy was 300 million dollars. The first part recouped 860 million, the second, 925 million, and the third, 918 million. As regards the number of spectators, this means that each episode was seen by nearly two hundred million people. In Spain alone, *The Fellowship of the Ring* was seen by seven million people, recouping 31 million euro. The production of the first *Harry Potter* film cost 139 million dollars to make. It brought in around 975 million, and the second episode, *The Chamber of Secrets*, brought in 869 million. The cost of *The Matrix* trilogy rose to a total of 600 million dollars, which was sufficiently recovered, given that the first part alone brought in 460 million, the second 738 million, and the third, 423 million. Keanu Reeves signed a contract for 10 million dollars for taking the part of Neo. If we compare these figures with those of the transfer of football stars, we see that they are quite similar: David Beckham was bought by Manchester United for 42 million euro and his annual contract is for six and a half million euro, on top of his monthly salary.

In a world in which two-thirds of humanity live below the poverty-line, is it not then an offence that such vast quantities of money are spent on mere entertainment?

On the one hand, it has to be said that behind every cinematic production, there is a huge group of people. You only have to wait until the end of the film to realise the number of people that took part in the making: not just the main and secondary actors, but also the directorial team, the technical team (cameras, lights, scenery, digital effects...), costumes, décor, sound, all types of consultants, extras (twenty-six thousand in the case of *The Lord of the Rings*), the locations where it was filmed... all of these working together in the years it takes to make the film. In short, cinematic productions bring together a big group of people for one common purpose. This means that the cinema industry is not only a business, but something that creates a group of objectives, tastes and interests. These communities grow to such an extent that, in the case of the four productions we are looking at, it led to a whole new iconography that is expanding through video games, role-playing games, posters, dolls, networks of fans on the internet... in all, an anonymous conspiracy of likes and interests that feed off these very myths.

As with everything, the flow of money we are talking about is not something arbitrary. Leisure and entertainment fulfil a psychological and social function that can easily be manipulated. For this reason, we should be cautious of the messages transmitted through the film industry. The issue lies in being aware of what entertainment brings to our culture and whether it is separate from it, or an integral part of it.

This is because the honesty or dishonesty of the film industry makes use of the honesty and dishonesty of our system. It is well known that not only is there market research carried out that investigates tastes of the audience, but also that there are studies into how to manipulate people's minds and contaminate their values. This would suggest that entertainment encourages us to be reduced to a state of stupidity, instead of

encouraging our critical mind, which is capable of questioning and evaluating the products that are offered.

### 5.5. Dark things to be uncovered

The question we should focus on in relation to the films we are dealing with, is what type of subliminal messages are being communicated. These films were produced by the North American film industry, an industry that cannot be viewed as innocent since, having invested huge quantities of money into the films, they will only get this money back if they can guarantee their success in the North American market. So the films are mainly aimed at a public that is for the most part, conservative.

One must bear in mind that there is a marked difference between North American films of the late seventies to early eighties, and films of recent years. The earlier films dealt with defending the individual before the State. In these films, Evil was identified with authority, and individuals were seen as friends, no matter what race they belonged to. In the more recent films, a character's moral status is inexorably linked to his race, and we also see a more hierarchical vision of things. It is the leader who is in the right, and not the rest of the world, and one must be ready to die for him. Also, the badness of other characters is seen as an intrinsic part of their nature, and not as a result of specific events in their life. This demonstrates the fact that, as North Americans have become more conservative, so have their storylines. One could ask why people weren't as interested in *The Lord of the Rings* in the seventies, and instead showed more interest in the story of the struggle for liberty against the oppressive Empire of Evil in *Star Wars*. The films we have looked at, (with the exception of *Harry Potter*, where we do see the usual "baddies", but without such a great emphasis being placed on them), are imbued with a dangerous tendency to see things in black-and- white. The "baddie" represents the personification of Evil and constitutes a permanent danger. The only good thing that could happen to him would be his physical disappearance, his death, without any allowance made for him to have one shred of goodness, and without him being given the possibility to change. In this sense, it must not be purely coincidental then that the "wicked" sorcerer in *The Lord of the Rings* is called Saruman, a name almost identical to Ariman, the God of Evil in Mazdeism, (a root of Manicheanism).

Furthermore, the variety of beings from different species that appear in *The Lord of the Rings* could lead to racist interpretations. The *orcs* are black, and all of them are evil, just for the very fact of being *orcs*. The *elves* present some physical characteristics that could link them to the Arian race (being tall and fair), and all of them, without exception, are good. Here then, one's moral standing is automatically linked to one's race. All the beings of Middle Earth are systematically identified through the race they belong to. To exalt Gandalf and Aragorn it is said that "elfin blood runs in their veins". Eowyn (sister of Eomer) fears that "the blood of Eorl will end up being mixed with the blood of a pastor". The men of Gondor are "tall, arrogant and handsome", and the small stature of the *hobbits* is linked to their insignificance. However, this is counteracted by the fact of what Frodo will become among *hobbits*, in that he will bring salvation to all the rest. Still, the only real moral dilemma is raised among mortal beings, that is, man, because they are the ones who have to choose their side, whether it be for or against the Ring of power.

As for *The Matrix*, it runs the risk of giving us a vision of the world from within a sect. The theory of the film is that everything, without exception, is false. Those who appear to be people do not even exist. It is only “our people” who are real people, and anyone not belonging to “our people”, must be enemies that desire the destruction of humanity.

The paradox is huge: “humanity” is identified with a small, exclusive number of initiates.

We might even be listening to Bush when, contrary to the opinion of the world, and with only the support of a few countries that he dragged along after great pressure and many promises, he spoke of the “international community” in relation to the invasion of Iraq.

This idea in *The Matrix* is very similar to the American (and Israeli) idea of “exceptionalism”: we can’t apply the same rules to ourselves as we do to everyone else, because we are the “chosen ones”. For this same reason, others should pay heed to our suggestions, because if they refuse, they will automatically be identified with “Evil”. Furthermore, in *The Matrix*, one must be ready to die at any moment for the leader, the *Chosen One*, because he is the only one who can save the Nation (or humanity); in other words, we don’t matter, but he does. All this in some way undoubtedly influences the minds and values of millions of spectators and affects their way of viewing life as a community. This is because a certain view is evidently promoted by those who control the North American media, (and who are often linked to the more conservative sectors, arms industries, etc.).

Therefore, the question we must ask ourselves is this: why were these stories chosen to make into films, above any other stories? In the past, ancient myths were part of the fabric of a people or culture, and transmitted by word of mouth, while these new myths have someone controlling them, who is a person (or organisation) capable of investing up to 600 million dollars in one project.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

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In our free time, we use an energy that is capable of being channelled in different directions: we can simply choose to relax, getting rid of our tension and pent-up aggression, (and this is why taking part sports competitions can be particularly cathartic); or we can escape from ourselves, and identify with the lives of other characters through our reading of novels, or by going to films or plays; we can relax and enjoy ourselves by listening to music, going to concerts, or simply by being in touch with Nature...

### 6.1. The borderline between entertainment and cult: new urban liturgias

Every culture is aware of these spaces and times set aside for relaxation, and in societies more communal than our own, many of these forms of entertainment have a religious significance. But even in our own secularised society, some forms of entertainment can take on near-sacred connotations and may be accompanied by their own types of

religious rituals. These rituals are present in sporting celebrations, in musical recitals, in the theatre and the cinema. All of these form part of what we will call “urban liturgies”, which have for the most part replaced traditional religious liturgies. The meaning of the word “liturgy” is “action of the people”. Let’s focus on our part of the world, where we have the ritual of going to the cinema: it begins with us consulting the cinema listings at home, followed by us going to the cinema, wondering if there will be seats available for the film we want to see. The queue also forms an integral part of the ritual, as does the buying of snacks to eat during the film. The cinema employees who stand at the entrance are like guardians of the temple, that control the flow of people towards the room of initiation. After them, we encounter stairways and corridors in order to finally arrive at the labyrinth of seating, where the next initiator, with torch in hand, brings us to our specific seat. Next we have the taking off of coats and jackets. The main lights go down. The trailers and advertisements lead up to the main event. Finally, the hall goes into complete darkness and a sacral silence descends. The screen opens up to its full breadth, and the volume of the speakers is raised. Everything is prepared so as to capture the full attention of the spectator, and introduce them to another dimension. A normal sense of time and space disappears, and the spectator is brought into a different world that opens up before his very eyes. One of the things that would most distinguish a good film from a bad film is precisely this: its ability to make the spectator forget ordinary dimensions of space and time. Looking at your watch during a film would signify the film’s failure. Instead, it fulfils its function when it manages to move us to different temporal coordinates, from which we find it hard to return at the end of the film. It is then as if we are returning from a strange journey in which we have lived the lives of other characters, absorbed their world, their messages and values.

Again, the reality which cinema presents us with is not just of a virtual form. We may hope that what we see on the screen might continue in real life. Thus, Elijah Wood, the actor who plays the character of Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*, states: “Without a doubt, there is a sense of responsibility in the character that I can identify with in my own personality. I was in my element playing Frodo. As actors, we are all aware of being seen as if we actually were our characters, and so we have to give a lot of ourselves to the part<sup>14</sup>”. Viggo Mortensen, who plays Aragorn, said: “Thanks to this production I learnt that the group is more important than the individual, and that everything you do, and how you treat others is really important<sup>15</sup>”.

The difference between profane liturgy and religion is in how they are capable of affecting people. While the main purpose of the first one (entertainment), is to amuse people and help relieve their stress, the specific mission of religion is to make a connection with God, through the deepest part of one’s being, and through a community. The texts which can be read in the liturgical acts are not supposed to be some sort of substitute for the lives of those that listen to them, but instead should bring about concrete changes in their lives, and lead to their ultimate conversion. However, the domain of entertainment is also known to affect major parts of a person’s life that religion is unable to reach. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for the lack of attendance at our Sunday liturgies is owing to the fact that people find the celebrations to be too logical and linear.

The prevalence of the *logos* (the rational), over the mythical, has made us lose our ability to evoke and recreate the Divine Mystery, the mystery of the real *Logos or Word of God*. Furthermore, its power to express itself through symbolism has weakened. As Paul Ricoeur wrote, “the myth does not claim to be merely telling stories or making up

fables, but rather to adhere emotionally and practically to all things (...). In every myth there is an extra meaning, a higher form of significance, and that meaning relates to the sacred<sup>16</sup>. Too many times in our own liturgies, people feel that nothing happens, or that nothing spectacular is experienced that might transform those who have participated.

It is no surprise then that the “profane” liturgies are replacing the officially “sacred” ones. Yet in every culture, it is the sacred which is meaningful, and which really affects individuals and groups. The word “sacred” comes from the Indo-European word “sak-”, which means “to give life to”, or “to make something become real”. The domain of entertainment becomes something resembling the sacred when it is capable of bringing people to experience a different dimension of space and time to that which is real. However, people’s minds (whether individual or collective) can be affected in two very different ways: through alienation or through transcendency. In the case of alienation, the domain of entertainment can encourage one’s baser instincts (hatred, envy, fear, greed...), while in the case of transcendency, the individual and collective conscience is drawn outside itself, towards a higher set of values, leading to a sort of clarity of mind and commitment.

## **6.2. New names for age-old tales**

Our culture can be communicated through various types of tales, and through them we are able to communicate with each other. Whether it be big or small, we are all taking part in one great Story: that of the journey of creation towards God, or in a more secularised language, the journey of more and more complex forms of life in their quest for equality, liberty, knowledge and love

What we have tried to show in these pages is that the success of these four epic film productions is not entirely due to their spectacular cinematography, but rather due to the fact that they manage to connect with fundamental values that each one of us has to face. It would seem then that the western moral conscience is not asleep, as one would usually lament, since these four films belong to the group known as “cult films”. So we shouldn’t be surprised then that age-old myths –or even traditional liturgical texts– are not now being transmitted using the names and places of antiquity. Neither should we feel lost by this fact, but instead we should allow ourselves to be pleasantly surprised by our own culture since it has shown us that it is able to keep on adapting age-old tales, and communicate values which remind us of our own humanity. These stories, though they may not contain a clear Christian message, still manage to transmit the fundamental message of Christ: that the giving of oneself is the most noble and the most human way of living one’s life, and that this is a reflection of, and also a way of admittance to the realm of the divine.

As with everything, one must be careful about identifying the elements or messages that may be tainted. In this respect, one must also judge whether the fantastical genre of these four sagas is used to cover over the actual wars and injustices that are going on in today’s world, or whether it is used to expose them.

Just as the Greek tragedies and chivalric novels of medieval Europe satisfied the collective imagination of the people, the films that we have looked at satisfy the current youthful imagination of the West. It remains to be seen whether the fact that spectators

can identify with the ideals of an unreal world is because it fulfils their escapist tastes, or because it stirs them up, so that they “return” to the real world with a greater desire to act upon such ideals.

In conclusion, let’s finish with the words of the actor Elijah Wood (Frodo): “I hope that the public, on seeing the film, will have their hope in humanity restored<sup>17</sup>”.

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<sup>1</sup> His son Christopher organised these posthumous publications: *The Silmarillion* (1977) and *The History of Middle Earth*, published in twelve volumes during the eighties.

<sup>2</sup> Tolkien believed that fantastical tales had three main functions: to renew, to escape and to comfort. But his concept of distraction was not simply that of escapism, but instead signified “to divert from the path”, “to free oneself from the place where one is imprisoned”. On this and on other points, I refer to the excellent article by Isabel ROMERO TABARES, “La dimensión espiritual en *El Señor de los Anillos*”, *Miscelánea Comillas* 116 (2002), pp.45-127.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Jackson directed films prior to this, such as: *Bad Taste* (1987), *Braindead* (1992), *Heavenly Creatures* (1994) and *The Frighteners* (1995).

<sup>4</sup> Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* and Neo in *The Matrix*.

<sup>5</sup> In this sense, they are like Aragorn, heir to the throne of Middle Earth in *The Lord of the Rings*, the expected king whose coming nourishes the people with hope, and sustains them in times of sorrow.

<sup>6</sup> C. S. LEWIS, *Of This and Other Worlds*, Fount, London 1982, pp.54-55, quoted by: Francis BRIDGER, *Una vida mágica. La espiritualidad del Mundo de Harry Potter*, Sal Terrae, Santander 2002, p.82.

<sup>7</sup> SANTOYO Y SANTAMARÍA, *Tolkien. El autor y su obra*, Barcanova, Barcelona 1993, p.71, quoted by: Isabel ROMERO TABARES, “La dimensión espiritual en *El Señor de los Anillos*”, *Miscelánea Comillas* 116 (2002), p.63.

<sup>8</sup> An expression used by TOLKIEN himself in one of his letters explaining the disconcerting behaviour of Frodo to one of his readers. Cf. *Cartas*, 191, p.295

<sup>9</sup> J. R.R. *Cartas*, a selection of Humphrey Carpenter, Minotauro, Barcelona, 1993, n° 142, p.203.

<sup>10</sup> See on the internet: <http://personal.iddeo.es/bsb1/honor.htm>

<sup>11</sup> C. S. LEWIS, *The Lord of the Rings*, by Tolkien, in: *Tolkien o la fuerza del mito*, Libroslibres, Madrid 2003, p.213.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Francis BRIDGER, *Una vida mágica. La espiritualidad del mundo de Harry Potter*, Ed. Sal Terrae, Santander 2002, p.40-45.

<sup>13</sup> We should point out here that the most successful film of all time is *Titanic*, recouping 1,835 million dollars. Nevertheless, and somewhat paradoxically, it is not listed among the twenty best films of all time, which is an indication of the good judgement of those people surveyed.

<sup>14</sup> *Acción* 138 (2004-1), p.12.

<sup>15</sup> *Fotogramas*, December 2003, p.138.

<sup>16</sup> *Finitud y culpabilidad*, Taurus, Madrid, pp.319 and 323.

<sup>17</sup> *Acción* (2004-1),138, year 12, p.12