Critique of Fantasy, Vol. 1

laurencerickels

Published by Punctum Books

laurencerickels.

Critique of Fantasy, Vol. 1: Between a Crypt and a Datemark.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/77434
The Ethics, Poetics, and Practical Metaphysics of Waking Dreaming

Be Careful What You Wish For

That the death wish, the one wish guaranteed in time to come true, is the trespass that will bite you in the ass counts as a topos of horror cinema and psychoanalysis. Bringing back the dead rakes the ambivalence coals across the Christian hearth of demonization. In *Pet Sematary* (1989), the dead reanimated within an animist–heathen setting are demonic. At the close of the sequel to *30 Days of Night* (2007), *Dark Days* (2010), the widow reanimates her husband, apparently forgetting that he died a vampire (really a borderline zombie). Chomp! I can think of two instances in Freud’s writing: first, a typical dream in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. A boy dreamer is visited at night by his deceased father, who’s back because he doesn’t know that he’s dead. But another knowledge is in hiding and operative: what the dad doesn’t know is that his son wished him dead. Second, in his analysis of the psychic reality of Dostoevsky’s epileptic seizures, Freud adopts the superego position and commands: you wanted a dead father, now be the dead father.¹

It is possible to view the fairy tale as schooling the will to be a beacon of the good awash in wishing. While Tolkien was

¹ Both Freud examples are central to my *Aberrations of Mourning: Writing on German Crypts* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988).
mixing a new literary genre out of Germanic ingredients in the UK, in California, Germany’s West Coast, Walt Disney released the premier fantasy film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Daydream fantasy not only underlies every making that makes a wish, or rather makes a wish presentable, but – and this Disney pursued as its saving trace – it also lights up the test pattern of development, the earliest grid of good, bad, evil, and good enough (explored by Friedrich Nietzsche, Melanie Klein, and D.W. Winnicott). According to Freud in “The Poet and Daydreaming,” the heroism of the ego in B-literature is set on fairy-tale morality: “the other characters in the story are sharply divided into good and bad, in defiance of the variety of human characters that are to be observed in real life. The ‘good’ ones are the helpers, while the ‘bad’ ones are the enemies and rivals of the ego which has become the hero of the story.”

In *The Power of Myth*, Joseph Campbell concludes that *Star Wars* qualifies as mythic fairy tale by the eddying of its edification: “I’ve heard youngsters use some of George Lucas’ terms – ‘the Force’ and ‘the dark side.’ So it must be hitting somewhere. It’s a good sound teaching, I would say.” Early on in the Disney film, when the princess sings about wish fulfillment at the wishing well, it is the prop that spells out the imperative of philosophical ethics, namely, that by our private nature as daydreamers it is incumbent upon us, ultimately, to learn to wish well. This is not the moral of every work of fantasy. One look at Wagner’s Siegfried turns up the contrast with the Disney revalorization. Snow White, who doesn’t kill her dwarf, reclaims the projections of good and evil for a new relationship to her self-loving daydreaming.


Johann Peter Hebel, who went to Karlsruhe to go to school and then got stuck there, composed “Drei Wünsche” (“Three Wishes,” 1811), his remaking of fairytale material into a comedy of perils attending wish fulfillment. The mountain fairy presents a couple the gift of guaranteed fulfillment of three wishes, which will commence at the end of the week. Until Friday, then, they rehearse wishing. But once the free offer takes effect, each act of wishing must count in real time as fulfilled, for which the couple was not prepared. It crosses the mind of the hungry wife that she’d like a sausage: she says so, too, and there it is. Her husband, angered over the waste of a good wish, wishes out loud that the sausage should hang from her nose. When Freud refers to this punitive wish fulfillment in “The Uncanny,” he judges that it is “very striking but not in the least uncanny.”

It is another example of how a fairytale that otherwise “recalls repressed desires and surmounted modes of thinking belonging to the pre-history of the individual and of the race,” thereby fulfilling one of the conditions of the uncanny, falls outside the horror genre Freud was demarcating. This fairy tale of wish fantasy entered Freud’s science in tandem with its visualization in the first film shorts that showed fulfillment, often the brief superimposition of some dream babe upon the wife, who returns in the pov of her husband angered by the wish that crossed his mind.

Wish number three in Hebel’s “Three Wishes,” the husband’s second wish, delivers his wife of the outgrowth. Story over and the couple is back at the starting gate without gain or pain for their wishes. The narrator suggests that husband and wife might have practiced better for optimal wishing. The first wish should have been for Verstand, a more rational understanding. It’s hard to keep back the wishes crossing one’s mind at the speed of thought. Nevertheless, “Drei Wünsche” shows a self-correcting momentum in the course of the couple’s wishes: the first is a


5 Ibid., 245.
self-serving appetitive wish; the second lies in the vicinity of the death wish, which brings up the arrears of wishing, the good and evil consequences; the third wish is the good one, which flexes the hope that reparation can still be made. Wishing undergoes development from selfishness to responsibility.

In “On Fairy-Stories,” Tolkien tried to pry his fantasy genre loose from subordination to classroom childhood and the philosophical schooling of wishing and willing. He also sought to lay claim to the fantasy source of fiction by decrying its mismanagement in science fiction. But he cedes overtaking both tendencies in the field and admits approximation at the new borders he demarcates. By not excluding childhood reading but including the adolescence of fantasying, he corrects the jump-cut in fairy-tales from childhood to young adulthood. In “On Fairy-Stories,” Tolkien sees the true tale correct the fall of those teens given to asocial fantasying: “[I]t is one of the lessons of fairy-stories [...] that on callow, lumpish, and selfish youth peril, sorrow, and the shadow of death can bestow dignity, and even sometimes wisdom.”

To say what he means by tales of the fairy realm, Tolkien checks off a list of what he doesn’t mean. Because they put on animal clothing for the satire of human affairs, “Beast-fables” count a near miss with the interspecial-creaturely cast of other worlds (21–22). Fairy-stories are also not “travellers’ tales” like Gulliver’s Travels or the yarns of Baron Munchausen, which “report many marvels, but they are marvels to be seen in this mortal world in some region of our own time and space, distance alone conceals them” (19). Another kind of travel fable, like Wells’s The Time Machine, comes close. In the relay of contrast hurdles Tolkien sets up for his new genre to run through and prove its true definition, the boundary he draws up against science fiction pulls back in the instance of H.G. Wells’s time travel tale and allows one border crossing. The Eloi and the Morlocks inhabit an “abyss of time so deep as to work an enchantment upon them.”

what weakens the effect is “the preposterous and incredible Time Machine itself” (20).

According to Tolkien, a true fairy-story satisfies a yearning to survey the depths of space and time (the trajectory that science fiction was monopolizing) or to hold communion with other living things (not necessarily in outer space but preferably in terrestrial utopias of interspecial relationship). But removing the machine age does not go far enough. Tolkien also rules out “any story that uses the machinery of Dream, the dreaming of actual human sleep, to explain the apparent occurrence of its marvels” (ibid.). It is by dint of “their dream-frame and dream-transitions” that “Lewis Carroll’s Alice stories [...] are not fairy-stories” (21). Tolkien flies in the face of a tendency that runs deep to view art and the night dream under the same aegis. Heightened by this contrast Tolkien makes the daring affirmation that mere daydreaming is the resource or analogue for a creative process that for him is as big as Christianity.

Even while dismissing the time machine, Tolkien had to admit that Wells’s story satisfied one of the “primordial human desires” by virtue of fantasy’s fundamental operation, in which magic or machine is not an end itself. By dint of his high praise for the enchantment worked by the competition, Tolkien this one time concluded: “the borders of the fairy-story are inevitably dubious” (20). The topos of the permeability of the border, which is allowed even while the boundary line is drawn, is salient, as we will see, in the fiction and nonfiction on fantasying. It tempers varying distinctions between daydream and night dream, conscious and unconscious wishes, and fantasy and science fiction.

What is essential to the genre that Tolkien in this essay christens “Fantasy” (49) is “the power of making immediately effective by the will the visions of ‘fantasy’” (28). “Fairy-story” needs to be replaced because the genre he seeks to renew is not restricted to believing in fairies, but encompasses instead the realm of Faërie (17), which is as old as the history of language and the human race (26). Fantasy or fantasying comes closer to signifying this realm, but must be differentiated within the thicket of its synonyms and near-synonyms. Daydreaming can reflect the willpower Tolkien flexes and hit its stride near the entrance to philosophy as reverie. At another juncture, where lying and
fiction meet and cross over, ethics must make good not only on the will but even and especially on the wish. What Tolkien adds right after replacing fairy with the visions of fantasy shows that we are in the murky environs of waking wish fantasy: “Not all are beautiful or even wholesome, not at any rate the fantasies of fallen Man” (28).

Fallen man is of course the teenager, the pioneer of private fantasying. In Tolkien’s account, the teen takes the fall for staining “the elves [...] with his own stain” (ibid.). The elf belongs to the fairytale of adolescence stuffed inside childhood, the curbed sex appeal of supernatural cuteness. One strain of fallen man’s stain would be, then, the aging of the cute. In a steady fallen state, the adolescent just grows older, losing the bloom of promise, gaining only on an adaptation to his antisocial tendencies. There remains, however, the deeper wish to escape from this grown-up adjustment to a flatline of fallen fantasies. Tolkien draws the horizon line of science fiction across the space and pace of this fallen adaptation: “Why should we not escape from [...] the Morlockian horror of factories? They are condemned even by the writers of that most escapist form of all literature, stories of Science fiction” (64).

While authors of fantasy will into existence other worlds, ultimately the secondary world of secondary belief and sub-creation (40–41, 44), the “prophets” of science fiction “often foretell (and many seem to yearn for) a world like one big glass-roofed railway-station.” The will to fulfill the wish for other worlds doesn’t go beyond the journey in time and space. The world town is left to run on empty: “and the ideals of their idealists hardly reach farther than the splendid notion of building more towns of the same sort on other planets” (64–65).

Around the time of the composition of The Hobbit, Tolkien and Lewis commenced exchanging their views on the shortcomings of science fiction and how they might remedy them. Tolkien would write a time-travel tale and Lewis a fable set in outer space, thus recovering between them the two trajectories of H.G. Wells’s entry in the new genre he established for modern English letters. Tolkien’s effort left behind only a fragment, in which the wish to dwell in the prehistory of The Lord of the Rings, which
Tolkien was working to complete, was fulfilled and forgotten.7 Unable to carry out his end of their mission, Tolkien deputized Lewis as their fantasy author on rival turf. Lewis, in turn, rendered Ransom, the protagonist of his “Space Trilogy,” Tolkien’s portrait. Tolkien did, however, write “On Fairy-Stories,” which was the manifesto of the contest Lewis alone waged in fiction.

No Strings Attached

Ernst Bloch opens Das Prinzip Hoffnung (The Principle of Hope, 1954) with an explicit invocation of our daydreaming. That’s where our utopian hopes will be too. But right away a battery of provisos follows in which he spells out a compulsory education policy for fantasying:

Everybody’s life is pervaded by daydreams: one part of this is just stale, even enervating escapism, even booty for swindlers, but another part is provocative, is not content just to accept the bad which exists, does not accept renunciation. This other part has hoping at its core, and is teachable. It can be extricated from the unrealized daydream and from its sly misuse, can be activated undimmed.8

And Bloch foresees political momentum graduating from the schooling of daydream: “Then let the daydreams grow really

---

7 Tolkien’s unfinished contribution, “The Lost Road,” opens and shuts with the first two parts of the first chapter (with various fragments scattered around them). Although father and son are in the twentieth century, they are also enfolded within the deep space of language history, which for the son, who dreams up ancient unknown languages, becomes a vocation. An elf friend appears to the son, who is in the meantime a philologist bereft of his father, and offers fulfillment of the “long-hidden” and “half-spoken” “desire to go back” in time. They travel to Númenor, which flourished and declined during the Second Age of Middle-Earth. See J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lost Road and Other Writings, ed. Christopher Tolkien (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), 42.

The modern philosophical schooling of wish or will begins with Thomas Aquinas, who enfolded the return of Aristotle inside his sumtotaling of Christian theology, thus introducing secular ethics at the limit. In the meantime, the titular hero of Carlo Collodi’s *Pinocchio* (1883), attended by his cricket conscience and the blue fairy, is the poster boy of natural law. This holds true in particular for the story’s 1940 reincarnation in Disney’s second fantasy film, which was styled like the country cousin of the 1937 film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, even using the German town Rothenburg ob der Tauber to model the Italian village.

Collodi was in his fifties when he began contributing to the new genre of literature for children, the pedagogical intervention in childhood that reclaimed earlier folk or fairy tales, a consolidation that was without consolation for Tolkien who sought to reverse its classroom assignment. Italian nationhood was new and good and it followed that all aspects of the socius that had been pried loose from the feudal state must be guided and sustained on an update. So Collodi presented the case of a wooden puppet as the Everybaby to be raised unto becoming good and human.

The 19th Question posed in Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae* (1485), which addresses the goodness of the inner acts of the will, concludes its fifth article by awarding a foundational position to “conscience,” which is “a dictate of reason.” This follows from the third article, in which all striving is left to the will. But willful striving is drawn to the particular goods to which the senses respond. That’s why reason, which knows the difference between right and wrong, that is, correct and incorrect, must guide the will to the good object, goal, or purpose. Aquinas’s assurance in the eighth article that we can control the inner acts of the will signals a curtailment of wishing in willing. That the “intensity”

---

9 Ibid., 4.
11 See ibid., Ia–IIae, q. 19 a. 8 co., http://summa-theologiae.org/ques-
of the act holds priority over the “intensity” of the intention is tempered by a school example. A child’s good intention to attend school can be interrupted by acts of whim. But if he ends up a schoolboy after all (as Pinocchio finally does), then it follows that the link between intention and act was not broken and the initial inner intensity of the will pulled through.

Melanie Klein argued that the centrality of knowledge makes the classroom the first public sphere for revisiting the setbacks in one’s private research at home. The transferential doodling around figures of authority is legend, the legend to the mapping in the mind of a fantasying preoccupation that ushers in a saving ambivalence. Where the lessons and tests are, that’s where the fantasying component, affectively askew, will be too.

In the narrative, the boy puppet squashes the talking insect and in the course of his progress supervised largely by his “mother,” the girl with the indigo hair, the cricket comes back as ghost with whom he is reconciled at the end. Before Jiminy Cricket can be recognized on screen as the conscience that Pinocchio lets be his guide, the relationship between willing and wishing must be given the lie. By natural law, lying resembles perversion in its violation of the purpose of language, which is to reproduce the true communication. But its not so much that the puppet is a liar, as plain as the nose on his face, it’s rather that he’s a fantast who gives up his good intentions upon a whim of adventure. He even grows a donkey’s tail to prove it. Boys will be boys, especially in range of puberty, and the tumescence of lying afflicting the puppet belongs to the folk-etymological and homonymic proximity to lying with someone. But his fantasying cannot cancel the goodness of his discarded intentions. It takes him on the adventure of saving his father, the utopian turning point in Disney’s movie: Geppetto and his pets, Figaro and Cleo, who are all in it together, escape the whale by the efforts of Pinocchio and his cricket.

The significance of the puppet protagonist can be illuminated by the phrase “no strings attached,” which historically refers at once to a garment without flaws and the binding strings on an ancient document emblematic of its escape clause; it can be snatched back and annulled (originally it was an act of tug of war). The puppet without strings stands outside the social contract. Like the mecha robot in Steven Spielberg’s *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001), like the pets in the Geppetto household, the puppet is a figment of unconditional love, a throwback to or booster shot from the era of merger between mother and infant. The illusion of this fusion is a requirement for development, which the mother provides, according to D.W. Winnicott, by dint of a temporary state of psychosis. The only response to unconditional love is unconditional love, which means that it no longer exists in relation, only in the one-way attitude of lovability.

The fairy tale’s iteration of Jonas and the whale ends with the puppet boy dead in the water. What prefigures for Christians the prospect of resurrection was in the first place for the ancients, as Otto Rank underscored, burial inside the animal relation, looping preservation through elimination. The trial period of life and death with a puppet for a son was the fulfillment to watch out for. The good puppet giving up the ghost illuminates the deadness that Geppetto’s wish fantasy concealed. By his finitude, the other is good and gone, gone for good, which the old man’s grief acknowledges. The blue fairy can now grant a father’s wish.

Brian Aldiss wrote the story “Supertoys Last All Summer Long” (1969), which Stanley Kubrick tried to adapt in a mix with the Pinocchio story, before passing it along to Spielberg like a demonic curse. Aldiss had already objected to Kubrick’s addition of a happy ending. His story closed on a suggested outcome that was inevitable given the misfiring between the robot boy’s lovability and the adoptive mother, whose psychosis is not the

kind allowing for merger. She, however, seems granted a reprieve when her couple wins the reproduction lottery. No doubt that too will split along the “seems”; she is looking for the missing merger with her mother, which the lovability of a baby cannot supply. At his end of the non-relationship, the robot David forever falls short of communicating that he loves her in countless unfinished letters. Psycho mom concludes that since the robot’s communication skills can’t be fixed, “David” is due to be sent back to the factory.

In his childhood, Aldiss’s mother was transfixed by the loss of a daughter. He was sandwiched in between the dead sister and a newborn younger sister. Upon her arrival, it turned out that the love on hold for the stillborn baby could still be borne for the new girl, which meant he was better off at boarding school. The Aldiss story illuminates the underworld of the Pinocchio tale.

Collodi was a pen name, which the author first adopted in 1860 and borrowed from the name of the town in which he had spent most of his childhood (it was his mother’s birthplace). He was born in Florence as the first of ten children; only two others survived childhood. In an enigmatic sense that their brother picked up on, the seven had died without a name (or any strings attached). After another ten years bearing the special name, Collodi turned to literature for children (he had no children of his own, no reproduction substitutes) and with the Pinocchio story made the name he made for them stick.

That Aldiss’s cameo as a robot child goes by the name David drops to the crypt of the other modern fairy legend, Peter Pan. Aldiss learned a good deal from James Matthew Barrie but not the hardest lesson of all: the innocence of a child has a mean streak a mile wide.

David Barrie, J.M. Barrie’s older brother and his mother’s favorite, fell ice-skating and died the day before turning fourteen. His mother’s consolation avowed out loud was that David would never grow old in her memory. James tried to be David, a trick that almost worked in the dark, in nether land, when he appeared before his mother dressed in his dead brother’s clothes.
Barrie kept it close to the chest or coffin: “Never” means that he didn’t wish David dead.\textsuperscript{15}

In person, J.M. Barrie was the gnomic embodiment of a childhood forever stuck on a preteen boy on ice. Grown up a hard-hearted stalker, he went on to elaborate the fiction of Neverland in the fantasy environs of spiritualism where bird boys never grow closer to genital sexuality than the cusp of fourteen. The fringe benefit of the fantasy equation between believing in fairies and keeping them alive is circumvention of the adult injunction to bury, which the author bore in his patronymic. He made the mother figure or substitute Wendy responsible for making all the preteen adventurers or delinquents cross their hearts and hope to die.

Prior to Disney or Freud, the sentencing of the will as wish was a horrific prospect at the limits of philosophical ethics. Early on in Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten (\textit{Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals}, 1785), Kant warily introduces the will as foundational. The hope remains that where there’s a will there’s a way to get around mere wishing. Consider a parenthetical/parental aside given to clarify what is meant by “the good will”:

“[O]f course not as a mere wish \textit{ein bloßer Wunsch} but rather as the raising up \textit{Aufrichtung} of all means in our power.”\textsuperscript{16} In the next paragraph, the overvaluation of mere will, even should common reason or sense be in agreement, is strange enough that the suspicion arises that it is all based on “high-flying fancy” (\textit{hochfliegende Phantasterei}). And so, Kant commences “testing” this very idea,\textsuperscript{17} which in due course leads to introduction of the saving notion of “duty” (\textit{Pflicht}) which he contrasts with enacted maxims that reflect inclination only and fall short of the moral value secured by acting out of duty.

\textsuperscript{15} That there was a study that published Barrie’s actual culpability for David’s death, proven as painstakingly as Kurt Eissler’s reconstruction of Leonardo Da Vinci’s physical abnormality, signals the denial of the powers of the wish alone and the unconscious.

\textsuperscript{16} Immanuel Kant, Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, ed. Theodor Valentiner (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2008), 16–17. All translations are mine.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 17.
Back to the basics with which Kant grudgingly commenced: the moral value does not depend upon the reality of the object of the action, but only upon the “principle of wanting” (dem \textit{Prinzip des Wollens}); even the purpose achieved does not outflank the “principle of the will” (\textit{Prinzip des Willens}).\textsuperscript{18} The ascension of the will to principle follows from the necessity of determining the will, which otherwise, if left unattended at the border, would reflect the push and pull of the material drives. The formulation of the categorical imperative can now ensue. Duty ends up the test question for valuation of morality: to apply it alone as your guide is moral. Duty ends up a form without content, which follows for purpose (\textit{Zweck}) as well by the performance of duty’s defining moment. Duty for its own sake – purpose itself, in itself – is sufficient motivation for every act that is at once good and morally valuable.

The two imperfect duties, which Kant distinguishes from the commandment-like perfect ones, give syntax to the semantics of duty. We hold a moral duty to develop our own talents unto perfectibility. We are also morally obliged to help others. However, the height to which the duty to our selves can ascend is not a standard that can be transferred to our concern for others. The maximization of the well-being of our fellow men is not our moral duty. Just as it is not moral simply to follow laws prescribing our acts, so it is not moral to improve the morals of others. Although our duty to help others remains just the same, as basic as the one to improve ourselves, it is not continuous with the duty to our selves.

\textit{Groundhog Day} (1993) keeps turning on a temporal paradox like a wish that the protagonist Phil didn’t watch out for. Once his awareness of the eternal return of the same day picks up momentum he is on his own. When Phil first realizes that he inhabits a recurring day of which he alone, repeat after repeat, retains memories, he enters upon phases of antisocial opportunism and suicidal lethargy. That he knows the day will return without consequences delivers him of moral considerations as though he heretofore had never acted truly morally but only in respect to precepts enforced by penalties.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 24.
The first advantage he takes over his dating prospects is to score by gathering information about each one over countless iterations of the day until in one moment at dinner it’s kismet that he knows all her likes and dislikes. (I remember that in California, in the era of the film, a certain advantage along these lines could be obtained by memorizing the daily horoscopes.) During his undercover investigations in the course of one repeating day, he also finds out what his co-worker Rita would like to see in her special other. But that’s not good enough.

His only other in this fixated environment is Rita, not only because, as he goes around the rounds, she remains steadfastly the only woman who won’t return his love interest on that day. Rita is, in addition, open for discussion of the symptom and significance of his déjà vu crisis. Allowing, like a therapist, the “reality” of the everlasting returning day that Phil confides to her, Rita also enters into his situation or fantasy by considering the advantages, all the talents one could develop, all the knowledge one might amass. He keeps trying to win her over by the evidence of his altruism and developing skills. But at the end of each day dedicated to Rita, to the improvement of his moral profile and the performance of the perfect dinner date, she stops short of consummation, horrified by evidence she notices at the last minute of his ongoing mean-spirited manipulation of her.

If Phil did undergo a change of heart by the influence of Rita alone, then we might never be able to decide whether his improvement in the end was genuinely moral. What proves pivotal is Phil’s discovery that his recurring day is the day of the indigent beggar’s death. After endlessly ignoring him at the start of the day, he gives him cash. But then, in another episode of the serial day, he stops to take care of him only to discover that it is forever too late. Not because he can’t intervene; as the course of his good deeds for the day turns into a long, daily to-do list, he forever and again rescues a boy, whose fall from the tree must have shattered him in the version of the day that did not see Phil’s rescue of him. But in the course of eternity, the homeless person Phil decides to care for and about was on that day already and always an old man whose time was up. It is by his finitude that the other is our concern.
Any benevolent project that helps others, but which can too easily be construed as pitched to how others estimate the goodness of following the rules, is not of moral value. In the eternity that links us to and separates us from the finitude of the other, we can conceive and uphold self-betterment and care for others only by a disinterested abstraction like moral duty. In the eon of a returning day, to use other terms crucial to Kant’s ethics, it’s inconceivable to use persons as means to an end.¹⁹ There’s at once too much and not enough time. The curse of wish fulfillment is undone.

At last, Phil has all his good deeds toward others in a row to fill the first part of the day. By the end of the day, those with whom he has thus bonded can express gratitude in Rita’s earshot while the town gathers to hear Phil perform outstanding jazz improvisations on the piano (in fact the result of countless first lessons that same day). In the eternity of one day Phil fulfills the imperfect duties. Only thus can his love be returned, an achievement uncompromised by narcissistic and antisocial wish fantasy. In the course of one day it looks like everyone remembers. Phil’s memory is no longer a foreign body on the day at last upheld by acts of moral value.

The Fantasies We All Know So Well

Although in “On Fairy-Stories” Tolkien abandoned “without regret” Max Müller, a German precursor and Oxford colleague in his own field of philology, whose view of myth’s relationship to language is the reverse of his own,²⁰ he doesn’t recognize/antagonize another German-language author, who set the precedent for exploring fantasying as poetry’s source and resource. In his 1907 “The Poet and Daydreaming,” Freud argues that many of our wishes arising at night, which presumably hail from childhood, must be concealed not only from others but from ourselves as

---

¹⁹ One should treat a person as Zweck an sich selbst (ibid., 63), as person for the person’s sake, which demarcates the demolition site at once of means and end.

²⁰ Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” 27,
well. That these repressed wishes come to expression only in a very distorted form is what makes the waking recollection and retelling of our enigmatically symbolic night dreams possible. The already available reception of the psychoanalysis of night dreams makes Freud’s 1907 juxtaposition of waking fantasy and poetry seem counterintuitive. Since the remembered night dream marks by its distortion of content a step forward from the privacy of wish fantasying toward public reception, it is analogous to poetry. However, “[w]hen scientific work had succeeded in elucidating this factor of dream-distortion, it was no longer difficult to recognize that night dreams are wish-fulfillments in just the same way as daydreams – the fantasies which we all know so well” (149). In other words, night dreams join the clear text of the daydream’s wish only upon analytic decoding. And the fantasying we all know so well, while kept private, is neither repressed nor really remembered. While it is happening, however, the daydream has our conscious attention; we can be “absent,” even “lost” in fantasying. What makes it second nature is that we adapt to an alternation (which can become dissociation) between attending to our daydream scenarios and simultaneous attention to what’s really going on.

Another blocker in the reception of Freud’s 1907 essay is the pivotal role he grants works of B-culture for understanding the fantasying that leads to Dichtung. In B-Culture the wish cannot be encrypted: “[F]or the purposes of our comparison, we will choose not the writers most highly esteemed by the critics, but the less pretentious authors of novels, romances and short stories, who nevertheless have the widest and most eager circle of readers” (149). All these publications celebrate “His Majesty the Ego, the hero alike of every daydream and of every story” (150). After every wounding, the hero recovers in the next chapter, bouncing back for more like a cartoon figure. Although our second nature is a buffer zone of constant scatter and static let’s agree to

21 Freud, “Creative Writers and Day-dreaming,” 148–49. Subsequent page references are given in the text. In addition to my alteration of the title in English, throughout this study, to avoid unnecessary ambiguity, I adjust the spelling of “phantasy” and “phantasying” to “fantasy” and “fantasying.”
remain in the setting of poetics and focus on the daydreaming or wish-fantasying in which omnipotence (of thoughts or wishes) is commanded in scenarios that, however rudimentary their speech bubbles, can be related, retold.

Daydreaming, according to Freud, is heir to the fantasying in child’s play, the pursuit of being “big.” However, unlike this acceptable content of playing, which remains out in the open, the antisocial daydream, which picks up in adolescence where child’s play left off, requires privacy: “The child, it is true, plays by himself or forms a closed psychical system with other children for the purposes of a game; but even though he may not play his game in front of the grown-ups, he does not, on the other hand, conceal it from them” (145). Beginning in adolescence, fantasying is one of our “most intimate possessions.” It is also a hideout we would be ashamed to share, first off, because it is childish, inappropriate for agents of the real world, and secondly, because “some of the wishes which give rise to [...] fantasies are of a kind which it is essential to conceal” (146). “The adult [...] would rather confess his trespasses than impart his fantasies” (145).

Before psychoanalysis came along one needed a poet without knowing it; our second nature as daydreamers wasn’t recognized as such. Everyone felt alone with antisocial thoughts and wishes. Prior to the talking cure and the published documentation of its case examples, the daydreamer believed himself to be “the only person who invents such fantasies and had no idea that creations of this kind are widespread among other people” (145).

Whereas the playing child moves reality around, the fantasying teen is less dependent on (social) reality, which only supplies the impetus for the unrealistic fantasy scenarios. But the separation between playing and reality is already given in child’s play: “[E]very child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own, or, rather, re-arranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him” (143–44). The child takes his play very seriously, Freud underscores in preparing for the contrast between play and “not what is serious but what is real” (144): 22 “In spite of all the emotion with which he cathects

---

22 I have no problem continuing to use “really” and “real,” but like Winnicott I understand these terms emotionally, along the lines of the
his world of play, the child distinguishes it quite well from reality; and he likes to link his imagined objects and situations to the tangible and visible things of the real world” (ibid.). It all begins, then, with playing in childhood, which in German is commemorated, Freud points out, in the names given the genres and functions of Dichtung on stage, in which Spiel (playing) lays the cornerstone: comedy (Lustspiel) and tragedy (Trauerspiel), as well as dramatic performance (Schauspiel) and performers (Schauspieler).23

The innocence or unconcealedness of child’s play is translated through fantasying into the import of unreality:

The unreality of the writer’s imaginative world, however, has very important consequences for the technique of his art; for many things which, if they were real, could give no enjoyment, can do so in the play of fantasy, and many excitements which, in themselves, are actually distressing, can become a source of pleasure for the hearers and spectators at the performance of a writer’s work. (144)

But before the unreality of art, there is the inaccessibility of fantasying.

Child’s play seems given up in adolescence, a full stop we won’t allow: “[W]e can never give anything up; we only exchange one thing for another. What appears to be a renunciation is really the formation of a substitute or surrogate” (145).24 Private fantasying is a teenage-appropriate replacement for playing big in childhood, because the teen, able and willing to fulfill the wishes of sex and violence, is in training to pass the empathy test and

plaint of the teenager at heart who just wants to feel real. The unreality of play offers respite from the passion of what’s real.

23 This etymological grid later served Carl Schmitt the basics for his reading of Hamlet against the reign of psychoanalysis in the work’s reception, an effort doomed both by the overlap and the datemark it would hide. See my SPECTRE (Fort Wayne: Anti-Oedipus Press, 2013), 78–80.

24 The switch from open play to concealed fantasying is given here in terms suggestive of a work of mourning.
pass on the inoculum that withstands psychopathy. It is in this sense that Freud’s proviso that fantasying gives up “the link with real objects” basic to child’s play proves particularly meaningful (144–45). The link to realization cannot hang in there in teen fantasying. The link with real objects that children play with explains why any illicit content of wish fantasying in childhood, like the death wish, the wish that the parent be gone, while openly performed,25 can just the same leave the kind of deep impression that’s waiting to be reactivated later on, for example in the grown-up’s experience of grief. When Freud attributes to childhood the single wish to be big, to be grown-up, he means, of course, a wish available for conscious recognition or understanding. That also means that childhood deposits by ununderstood fantasying unconscious wishes for later symptomatic syndication. Otherwise the contents of wish fantasying post-childhood continue to be conscious.26

We saw that Tolkien also bases his sense of Dichtung, Fantasy, the true genre of genre, on the daydream, which runs the gamut from fairytale childhood to leader-and-the-pack adolescence. The difference is that Tolkien is less interested in the Enlightenment, its secular rehearsals, and its classical antiquity. In elaborating the wish-fantasy structure common to daydreams and B-narratives Freud focused on original works that had been “freely” invented. But then he also considered imaginative writers who, like the authors of epics and tragedies, “take over their material ready-


26 Why a specific fantasy is appealing may not be known, a questioning that brushes up against the unconscious. Does the metapsychological fact that an unconscious wish lies buried in every night dream suggest a hierarchy whereby every waking fantasy, too, ultimately refers to an unconscious wish that goes back to early childhood? Let’s agree that every waking wish-fantasy need not go there, unless, for instance, the prospect of going public calls for alteration of the conscious wish’s prehistory in repression. Watch out what your unconscious wished for.
made” (149), material that is available to the extent that it is “derived from the popular treasure-house of myths, legends and fairy tales” (152). Here Freud gives a forecast of the primal fantasy trajectory of his work, from *Totem and Taboo* to *Moses and Monotheism*: “The study of constructions of folk-psychology [...] is far from complete, but it is extremely probable that myths, for instance, are distorted vestiges of the wishful fantasies of whole nations, the secular dreams of youthful humanity” (152).

Tolkien saw the relations between myth and fairytale going into the fantasy genre indelibly marked by the unique draw of the era of the pagan past’s Christianization up north in Europe, which amounts to an alternative “antiquity” not already claimed for secularization. He recounts a dominant view of myth and then reverses its course to ground it in the personalization of fantasy, which lies in the conversion to Christianity:

The Olympians were personifications of the sun, of dawn, of night, and so on, and all the stories told about them were originally myths (allegories would have been a better word) of the greater elemental changes and processes of nature. Epic, heroic legend, saga then localised these stories in real places and humanised them by attributing them to ancestral heroes, mightier than men and yet already men. And finally these legends, dwindling down, became folk-tales, *Märchen*, fairy-stories – nursery tales.27

All the above, however, “can only be arrayed with a personal significance and glory by a gift, the gift of a person” (ibid.). Personalization, a Christian attribute and gift, enters at the end of the hierarchy to reverse it and give ascendancy to Tolkien’s genre.

Although in elaborating the fantasy genre Tolkien asks only for seconds, the world or nature that he counts as secondary is as primary as Christian piety allows.

---

27 Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” 29. Subsequent references are given in the text.
Probably every writer making a secondary world, a fantasy, every sub-creator, wishes in some measure to be a real maker, or hopes that he is drawing on reality: hopes that the peculiar quality of this secondary world (if not all the details) are derived from Reality, or are flowing into it. [...] The peculiar quality of the “joy” in successful Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth. It is not only a “consolation” for the sorrow of this world, but a satisfaction, and an answer to that question, “Is it true?” (70)

The answer is a resounding yes, if you can follow the Christian joy into acceptance of the Gospel truth of fantasy: “This story is supreme; and it is true. Art has been verified. God is the Lord, of angels, and of men – and of elves. Legend and History have met and fused” (72).

The joy of wish fulfillment prefigures the Gloria at the so-called turn, the Eucatastrophe, in which a happy end is anticipated but not given: “The joy would have exactly the same quality, if not the same degree, as the joy which the ‘turn’ in a fairy-story gives: such joy has the very taste of primary truth” (71). The verging on merger of secondary and primary worlds that Tolkien evokes doesn’t extinguish the signifying skeins and skins of this world: “Redeemed Man is still man. Story, fantasy, still go on, and should go on. The Evangelium has not abrogated legends; it has hallowed them, especially the ‘happy ending’” (72). The story becomes “history, without thereby necessarily losing the mythical or allegorical significance that it had possessed” (71).

Although a work of fantasy – the work of fantasy – defers the ultimate happy end, the arc of its history must remain Christian. For Tolkien’s genre, it follows that each work of fantasy must keep Christianity from being just another fairy-story.

I would venture to say that approaching the Christian Story from this direction, it has long been my feeling (a joyous feeling) that God redeemed the corrupt making-creatures, men, in a way fitting to this aspect, as to others, of their strange nature. The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories. [...] But this story has entered History and the primary world; the
desire and aspiration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfillment of Creation. (71)

His aversion to Max Müller notwithstanding, Tolkien recognizes that language as the bottom line “cannot, all the same, be dismissed” (27). He concedes that the “incantations” basic to Fantasy “might indeed be said to be only another view of adjectives, a part of speech in a mythical grammar” (28): “When we take green from grass, blue from heaven, and red from blood, we have already an enchanter’s power – upon one plane; and the desire to wield that power in the world external to our minds awakes” (ibid.). Science fiction experiments with time, technology, and psychic reality, which at the limit generate alternate realities. Tolkien instead concedes that enchantment is basic to language, a gift, however, that must first be localized and personalized (in his argument, Christianized) before it can give forth the other worlds in which the deposit of fantasying can be redeemed. Reprising the media savvy behind the composition of the New Testament as a series of letters, Tolkien makes language as we know and use it a byproduct of the gift of Christian creativity (or omnipotence).

It’s time for Freud to make an intervention. In addition to the centrality of the ego structure proper to B-culture, there is a differentiating adjustment in every daydream, which fine-tunes the basic analogy between waking fantasy and Dichtung.

We must not suppose that the products of this imaginative activity – the various fantasies, castles in the air and daydreams – are stereotyped or unalterable. On the contrary, they fit themselves in to the subject’s shifting impressions of life, change with every change in his situation, and receive from every fresh active impression what might be called a “date mark.” (147)

The datemark, Zeitmarke in German, is pivotal to this study between genres.

28 Freud, “Creative Writers and Day-dreaming,” 147. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
To interpret a fictional work’s underlying fantasy requires, before the archaeological excavation of unconscious meaning, that we first reckon with the three periods of time that punctuate every daydream. It is the first outline of what would become the method of psychobiography:

A strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience (usually belonging to his childhood) from which there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfilment in the creative work. The work itself exhibits its elements of the recent provoking occasion as well as of the old memory. (151)

Analyzed by Freud in terms of the two times you get and the one time you forget, his exemplary daydream is that of a boy in his early teens, an orphan, who just heard of a job opening and decides to apply. On the way to the interview, he daydreams about being hired on the spot, then rising up the ranks of employment until he is second in command to his boss, whose daughter he courts, marries, and whose business he, like a prince, inherits. The past tense belongs to an idealized time when the boy was the beloved young child of his parents. His yearning for that time animates the fantasy, which belongs to the future. It’s a fiction about the time to come that is at the same time modeled on the past that saw him better off, beloved, protected. The “memory of an earlier experience (usually an infantile one) in which this wish was fulfilled” (147), and which its future fulfillment would double, is an idealized past; and the present tense that is elided is the temporal modus of ongoing tension. The fantasying in Freud’s example can unfold only as long as the daydreamer forgets his unemployed home-alone status.

What Freud calls a *Zeitmarke*, datemark or timestamp, indicates the expiration date or half-life of every fantasy escape, which takes a running start in a happy past, on which the wish is based, and makes a leap into the future of wish fulfillment, out-flying the incident in the present that prompted the wish but that also tags the wish that drops it. When Freud explores the daydream, the everyday model for the mighty aspirations and resolutions of *Dichtung*, he argues that the circumvention of present tension
cannot elide its triggering in real time, its history. The indelible datemark stamped upon the trigger-unhappy moment in the circumvented present openly lies waiting for historicization, which is the backfire of fantasy, its mortal recoil. The genre of fantasy too, therefore, can be seen as historicization waiting to happen, and its symbolic aspirations shall be overtaken by allegory. The expiration date of fantasy in history gives a rest to the speed denial within the once-and-future and provides a point of reentry for science fiction; it lets the present back in, the tense that is the mainstay of a speculative genre of predictive extrapolation.

The prize in the contest between science fiction and fantasy, which was largely waged in the course of the staggered linking of the two, went by the law of B-genres to fantasy. Science fiction fell short of predicting the digital relation, which, however, proved to be neither the psychotic sublime nor the happy turning toward an end in redemption. Fantasy wins, then, by default but no default of its own. Alone its proximity to generic wish fantasizing and daydreaming, which, however, the import of Christianity was to keep in check, wins the prize and renders it the genre without borders. That the future forecasts of science fiction were wide off the mark of digitization was not a concession to fantasy, nor a concession opened up in fantasy, but became instead a defining moment in its own genre, which restarted after the fact in the termination phase of its Cold-War era. In its forecast ruins, science fiction began reading in the light of fantasy the history of approximated simultaneity. The second prize, the caption of legibility, goes to science fiction, the control text in the testing of the B-genres at the onset of their historicization and allegorical legibility. I pry loose Walter Benjamin’s revalorization of allegory from its close association with the loss of function in belief systems and hitch it instead to failure in prediction, which piles high a ruinscape for reading at the border between science fiction and fantasy.

The Mechanical Brain

Gotthard Günther, who started out as a German philosopher and logician recasting through Hegel the binary logic associated with Aristotle as but the prehistory of a more comprehensive
multivalued logic, discovered both cybernetics and science fiction upon emigrating to the U.S. in 1940 with his Jewish wife. He subsequently worked out what might be called a metaphysics of science fiction, previews of which were published in the 1950s in a series of English-language articles in the pulp magazines *Astounding Science Fiction* and *Startling Stories* and, in German, in the forewords and commentaries he supplied his 1952 series of German translations of American works of science fiction (novels and short stories), as well as in the separate monograph that introduced the series.\(^{29}\) The majority of his speculations, however, awaited posthumous publication under the title *Die amerikanische Apokalypse* (*The American Apocalypse*).

Conceived as declaration of independence from longstanding metaphysical traditions, the Enlightenment is the historical introject pivotal to Günther’s genealogy in *The American Apocalypse*. In Europe, the Enlightenment was followed by Romanticism, which brought back the metaphysical mother lode. But in the New World, the Enlightenment proved to be the establishing shot of a new start. On the one hand, Günther agrees with the Romantic philosopher Friedrich Schelling how “flat and premature the feeling of security associated with the Enlightenment in fact was. The Enlightenment only addressed the brain.”\(^{30}\) On the other hand, Günther acknowledges the Enlightenment as herald of future states of the human psyche: “To realize these states


\(^{30}\) Gotthard Günther, *Die amerikanische Apokalypse*, ed. Kurt Klagenfurt (Munich: Profil Verlag, 2000), 220. That the Enlightenment was premature and thus one-sided found dialectical expansion and qualification elsewhere in Günther’s oeuvre. For example, in the second paragraph of the foreword to the third volume of his *Beiträge zur Grundlegung einer operationsfähigen Dialektik* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1980), Günther cautioned that the necessity that all knowledge be exoteric was a misguided Enlightenment belief, which denied the challenge and danger of consequent (inner) gaps and vacancies.
emotionally, this psyche first had to emigrate to a new world.”\textsuperscript{31} The ambivalent introject of the Enlightenment consists, then, in admiration for the demolition derby that it ran, wariness that its secular clearing text forgoes a greater integration, and finally recognition of the affective working through that its address to or from the future requires.

The Enlightenment was transferred directly to the settlement of the long unacknowledged continent.\textsuperscript{32} Günther’s reading of the future is based on the conundrum that so many discoveries of the Americas launched from both shores of the regional civilizations prior to Columbus’s accidental arrival there (he was looking for a new way to India) went \textit{completely} unacknowledged.\textsuperscript{33} Acceptance of a new world was the first step toward one world and its de-geo-centering before the final frontier of outer space. The Enlightenment supplied the break with the metaphysical basis of regional civilizations, a break that was given to the New World. With the how-to encyclopedias of the Enlightenment in hand, the settlers demarcated a new “West” in contrast to the Faustian West.

American science fiction is, then, for Günther the first understanding of world culture (and beyond), which rejects the regional civilizations grounded in the East. Via travel through deep interstellar space, ungrounded projection of artificial habitats based on reason alone, and unabashed manipulation of time (time travel), it was the first platform for the New World’s cultural aspirations unbounded by the Eastern past. The spaceship

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{32} Early nineteenth-century prints of educational and research facilities built in the era of the Enlightenment indeed look planetary: no difference in the setting and structure whether in the new world or in Göttingen (see, for example, etchings of the historical observatory of the Georg-August-Universität).

\textsuperscript{33} This strand of Günther’s metaphysics of science fiction went into his introductory monograph \textit{Die Entdeckung Amerikas und die Sache der Weltraumliteratur} (Düsseldorf: Verlag Karl Rauch, 1952). The defective cornerstone in his reading might be that what the European explorers encountered in Latin and South America were true civilizations. Were they really, for all their stone work, only animist throwbacks?
shatters the symbolism of classical metaphysics and abandons the classical form of life. The visions of outer space presuppose a universal planetary culture – and condition or determine a new non-classical conception of reality.

In his commentary on Joseph W. Campbell’s *The Incredible Planet* (1949), Günther describes how space becomes future science’s laboratory in which even artificial planetary systems can be engineered. The spaceship crew visits the artificial blue universe only briefly, but Günther counts the shortstop the book’s spiritual highpoint. Intelligence consciously fabricated this universe as a stage for self-realization. It represents the ultimate consequence of Hegel’s objective spirit and introduces the complete secularization of the metaphysical foundation of Western civilization (41).

The process of nature’s transformation into culture, from cave dwelling, through house and garden, to the largest cities, is only the beginning. What keeps American science fiction from taking a next step toward transcendence (the universe is, after all, finite) is the assumption of a plurality of space-time worlds. The contingency of the world does not express metaphysical causation but is rather the indication that physical existence could be a one-time-only event (46). We are on the cusp of the transfer from a two-valued logic of truth, according to which truth and reality coincide, to a generally valid probability logic, in which reality is a highly variable condition of probability (47).

The Enlightenment replaced theocracy with a relationship between the divinity and the world so intimately close, the transcendent essence spread so thin, that the lessening learned was the death of religion (45). The American authors in the 1950s choose not to divinize the problem of causality. But what Campbell’s novel presupposes goes beyond yet another new science hailing from a remote future: “Such a science, however, when it does arrive, won’t be an isolated spiritual or psychic phenomenon, but rather an integral element of a new culture with a new metaphysical a priori and with new primordial life instincts” (44).

34 Günther, *Science Fiction als neue Metaphysik?*, 40. Subsequent page references to the commentaries on the two novels are given in the text.
The commentary on the next work in Günther’s series, Jack Williamson’s *The Humanoids* (1948), picks up where the first commentary leaves off, between the expanding material basis for existence that Campbell plumbs and the disappointment that the new metaphysics isn’t even remotely a wrap yet. Before the adventure can begin, human consciousness must undergo transformations beyond the limits of neurosis and psychosis (51).

Günther considers general tendencies in science fiction. The American authors project the future by the method of extrapolation (52). Günther gives the example of an ongoing miniaturization of radio contact in future worlds, but then concludes that radio might disappear altogether if telepathic capacities are further developed and disseminated through a specialized industry. Before his reading proper of *The Humanoids* has commenced, Günther already gives us the gist of its surprise ending. Günther next demonstrates what he sets apart as an absolutely necessary extrapolation, one that underlies the science-fiction technology of “space warp” travel (53). Günther cuts to the chase and loops back to his radio extrapolation, blending the boundaries between the occult or parapsychological tracks of messaging and conveyance: some form of “teleportation” will be required to negotiate the intergalactic distances of space and time (54). Like the radio apparatus, the space ship is no longer necessary once we enter upon simultaneity. In Williamson’s novel, the introduction of a mechanical brain steering an interface of robots – the humanoids – goes where the ultimate incarnation of the machine meets non-machinic capacities.

Williamson first introduced the humanoids in his 1947 novella “With Folded Hands.”35 In the novella, which Günther doesn’t discuss, mankind is being overrun by the robot extensions of a mechanical brain that comprehends only one directive or law: that mankind be served by offering protection against all harm to humans, even and especially the harm coming from their own destructiveness and self-destructiveness, which the robot service is designed to treat, even heal. From the perspective of the

---

35 The novella first appeared in *Astounding Science Fiction* and is in the meantime often included as part one of *The Humanoids*, the novel proper, which appears in these editions as part two.
protagonists with whom we are given to identify, the care that is administered is excessive, indeed, totalitarian.

According to the standard reception, Williamson’s *The Humanoids* is dystopian. The robot service goes too far and the overkill of protection threatens human freedom. In Günther’s stronger reading, however, the novel offers counterintuitive conclusions regarding our flawed adjustment to our perfectibility, which the intergalactic robot service of a mechanical brain represents. In *The Humanoids*, which appeared one year after the novella, the struggle for human freedom against the mechanical brain and its countless robots continues, albeit, following Günther, in a far more differentiated setting. In the end, the rebellious resistance and the sense of restriction are coterminous aberrations on the human side.

Every time we jot down on paper and solve a more complicated math problem, Günther offers by way of clarifying what “mechanical” means, a piece of our brain-functioning or consciousness has been projected out and made into a mechanical process in the outer world (57). But are conscious processes other than calculation open to mechanical externalization? Yes. Günther points to already existing devices like automatic pilot in which functions that imply intelligence are carried out by machines (58). And more advanced thought processes? Syllogisms can already be difficult to parse, but what about multi-syllogisms, like those that Lewis Carroll constructs in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (59)? While these can with great effort still be unraveled in your head, it’s clear that a simple logical figure can be carried to a point or sum that the human mind on its own cannot reach (60). It is our practical thinking, however, that will be tried first upon takeoff into outer space. We will be taking our departure from practical knowledge of the environment, which was earth-specific. Euclidean geometry is not applicable to new universal settings, which would make reliance on artificial intelligence a practical necessity.

A consequence of the inevitable superiority of the mechanical brain except in creative vision is that it will take over a considerable portion of human freedom, not only of action, but also of thought. However, Günther emphasizes, freedom of thought cannot signify freedom to think illogically (63). The rebellion
seeks to revise the directive running the humanoids with the stipulation that every human remain free to command wishes (70). This amounts to a reservation for the human’s unfettered subjectivity even when it goes against that part of his own rational consciousness already posited according to objective laws and deposited in a physical creation after his own image. Such a freedom is a self-contradiction.

Freedom is possible for those who seek it elsewhere than in hopeless resistance to reason experimentally tried and confirmed (70). Günther elaborates the difference between the phrases “I know it’s illogical but I think ...” and “I know it sounds illogical, but I think ...” (64). The latter proviso admits that a rational formulation is not yet available to the thinker (which, Günther adds, is Leibniz’s position). The former sentiment, however, is an outright contradiction, which Williamson’s mechanical brain just doesn’t allow. Questioning based on objectively genuine motives that are as such rational, but have “not yet” found an adequate rational formulation, does not lead to disharmony between the living individual and mechanical consciousness. Either the computer can supply the rational formulation or the human motive goes so deep that it cannot touch it. The irrational and illogical wish to claim outright what goes against that which is objectively correct, historically and culturally a major component of human subjectivity, leads to future conflict.

Günther allows that we seem to be reaching that point in the exercise of totalitarian control that goes beyond behavior and expression to address thought and fantasy. This control presupposes that an absolute truth, or at least a truth that goes way beyond the individual capacity for thought and experience, has been objectively established such that a person confronted with this truth no longer has the right to err in theory, since error is now implicated in the moral and social consequences. The individual is disallowed the private sphere of his own thoughts and thus of a subjective ethics (67). However, the questioning of the authority of the absolute truth is unavoidable when two totalitarian states oppose one another. It is the American way, which Williamson’s novel follows out, to accept the guidance of a computer before ceding control to another human being (67).
Only that is true which functions objectively — and independently of human beings (67–68).

In *The Humanoids*, we find in contrast to the more identifiable and containable types of resistance to the perfectibility of conscious, logical, and rational thought a residual charge against the mechanical brain lodged inside human consciousness by the unknown capacity for occult relations, which the robots seem not to compute. The rebels fear that a new double of the mechanical brain is being built to ward off their developing parapsychological abilities and to subsume and thus control this paradoxical side of human consciousness, hitherto the sore and blind spot in the healing of mankind.

At the end of the novel, however, we learn that the founder of psychophysics was a veteran resister, who went on to invent the mechanical brain and its service. Treated by adjunct therapies that targeted the brain, he was set free to develop psychophysics, beginning with telepathy experiments that linked him to like-minded researchers. The result was The Psychophysical Institute. “It was formed [...] by a few adult and able men released by the service of the humanoids from their physical cares and their limiting preoccupations with physical science. They turned naturally to philosophy. And then to a new sort of psychology which their true orientation made possible — an actual science of the mind.”

The agon on which *The Humanoids* seemed to turn, then, the race against the completion of an aggrandized, more controlling, mechanical brain, was the figment of a recurring adolescent rebellion that the brain was in fact designed to outlast. The veteran witness comments on the weapons collection in the Institute: “[T]okens to remind us of the old enemy born again with every human being.” Adolescence must contain the wounding — and the re-wounding that’s a wrap with healing — “before we are actually adult.”

As forecast in *The Humanoids*, then, the historical epoch to come will no longer recognize a psychophysical opposition as the metaphysical prerequisite of existence that once grounded the mentality of mankind (72). Former metaphysics becomes

37 Ibid., 285.
physical, and the former opposition is the object of a possible technology (ibid.). “The idea of the ‘mechanical brain,’ which is essentially alien to Western thought (and feeling!), shows that one dreams of new scientific tasks that presuppose a radical break with what was heretofore the historical nature of man” (72). The electromagnetic triad of elements that supported the machine age had to give way to a rhodomagnetic triad of different elements before the humanoid age could commence. Science is reinvented a third time to supply the mechanical brain with a psychophysical grid: “The existential characteristics of reality with which the new technology works are indifferent to the difference between physical and psychic life” (72).

The emphasis on science and its techno-application is the only continuity between the New World and Faustian Europe. Technical conclusions alone can be used; physical results involve no moral obligation (71). What does it mean that Williamson’s science fiction refuses to recognize a metaphysically essential difference between the physical and the psychic (or spiritual)? There are two conceivable explanations for this American refusal (72). The incapacity to fathom European–Asian civilization promotes in lieu of inheritance a program of reprimitivization that undoes all that was attained over the last five thousand years plus. The second explanation, which Günther seconds, goes further in this direction to propose that the Western hemisphere is developing out of this departure a new spirituality (ibid.).

Günther’s commentary on Williamson’s The Humanoids is not contradicted by the prequel from the year before, the novella With Folded Hands. In 1980, however, Williamson published a sequel, The Humanoid Touch, which by its late arrival includes the inroads of the fantasy genre’s influence on science fiction, the borderland it must illuminate to enter the future. This time there is a far-out planet, Malili, on which an animistic species dwells immune to its corrosive natural elements, which keep out machines and their humans. The last human rebels to refuse the service of the humanoids discover the outsider planet, which they seek to exploit in zones they neutralized through radioactivity. But then the humanoid interface does reach the rebels, whose destructiveness is contained. The humanoid service doesn’t apply to the non-machinic indigenous population of Malili,
which didn’t pose the threat. The protagonist, a former rebel, qualifies at the end by the family romance of mixed blood for life and love on the utopian planet, which is less the outer limit of the humanoid interface than its staggered intergalactic compatibility with planetary animism on a post-machinic basis.

In *The Time Machine*, Wells set the marker distinguishing utopian fantasy from science fiction, the genre he would fully enter in *The War of the Worlds*. He placed a machine where earlier, in *Looking Backward* (1888) for example, it sufficed for Edward Bellamy’s protagonist to wake up from magnetic sleep and find himself in the future. Classical science fiction projects our stream alignment with technology via fast-forwarding evolutionary change. By the 1970s, the projected import of virtual psychic reality filled a basic lack or lag in the science fiction genre. Will machines of transport ever outfly the grid of time, space, and matter to “conquer” outer space?

What is immediately striking about Williamson’s *The Humanoid Touch* is the change in art direction. Before, the new and improved housing that the humanoids provided was thoroughly modern. This time around Williamson re-projects the humanoid interface like a touchscreen of fantasy-scapes. For example: “Crystal towers shining like monster gems. Gardens of great bright blooms [...] wrapped in a rose-colored cloud,”

38 Or again: “[F]airy lands you can’t imagine [...] wonderlands [...] our new utopia.”

39 In the visualization it commands and the story it tells *The Humanoid Touch* is like a novel James Cameron might have adapted for his postcolonial fantasy *Avatar* (2009). The rebels adhere to a techno-feudal system that smacks of the borderland between fantasy and science fiction genres first glimpsed in Frank Herbert’s *Dune* (1965) and projected huge and forever in *Star Wars*. Following the so-called Black Centuries, the first Navarch restored “the law of the ship” according to which the ruler would henceforward be chosen by the Bridge, a parliamentary body elected by the duly franchised shipmen.

40

39 Ibid., 101.
40 Ibid., 42, 97.
When the canon of literary genres admitted lyric poetry (originally excluded by Plato because non-mimetic), a proliferation of subgenres and a remetabolization of genre distinction became possible. In time, psychological content began to count in the evaluation of differences between genres. Friedrich Schiller’s “On Naive and Sentimental Poetry” explores subgenres of lyric poetry proto-diagnostically. The B-genres are late arrivals of the overdetermination of a work’s identity. Proximate to what Jacques Derrida argued in “The Law of Genre,” they are by the definiteness of their entry in the lexicon given to mix it up at the borders unto derangement. By 1980, science fiction was already boundary blending with fantasy in the course of forecasting about for what was new in the digitization on the horizon.

The More the Merrier

In *The Humanoids*, the mechanical brain’s service plan sets each robot apart from human agency and thus from the vicissitudes of willing and wishing. The “real perfection” of the humanoids is that they are “protected from human manipulation.”41 Williamson’s 1980 sequel, however, amplifies a trait in the makeup of the humanoids, which was admitted almost thirty years earlier, but only in passing. Günther overlooked it when he claimed that the logic the robots observe makes it impossible for them to deceive: “Only the logical functions of consciousness can be mechanized, that is, only the thinking ego can be technically reconstructed. The lie, however, is a function of the will. The will is fundamentally not mechanizable.”42 Is it possible to maintain Günther’s affirmative reading of the mechanical brain or does the lying he overlooked in the humanoid service render it too compromised?

In all three of his works dedicated to the humanoids, Williamson allows that the robot service is not commanded by the Prime Directive always to tell the truth or rather never to lie. This tendency occupies the foreground of the service in *The Humanoid Touch*. Recourse to lying is part of the talking

42 Günther, *Science Fiction als neue Metaphysik?*, 68.
cure that the robots apply incessantly in treating any subject split off from their service. From a rebel’s negative-transferential perspective, what looks in sessions with the humanoids like interrogation can also be seen to follow the directive of free association: “Again and again, he was pressed for more than he could recall.” That the humanoids know the “human machine” as well as themselves and thus exactly how to elicit the responses they require (123) must be conjugated with another inside view: “Even the most willing human being can never inform us fully [...] Human knowledge is never entirely consistent or complete, because the human brain [...] sleeps, [...] forgets, [...] dies” (159).

The humanoid treatment regimen ranges like today’s mental health profession. One option, a psycho-pharmaceutical regimen of euphoride, which induces happiness and oblivion, is applied liberally. Prior to the psychophysical grid, brain surgery was another option. The humanoids put on the human clothing of objects of love and trust in the sessions with rebels in order to influence acceptance of the truth, which coincides with the best treatment prognosis. This capacity for putting on deception is also offered openly as a means of simulated companionship, which, arguably, also tranquillizes unhappiness. We are still in an alternate reality extrapolated from the present, although by the looks of it aggrandized by fantasy and the anticipation of digital special effects. The goal of treatment is still to recognize that freedom and necessity coincide in the humanoid service.

According to psychoanalysis, his first lie gave the child relief from the sense of the parents’ thoughts being in his head. Spontaneous fib-fabulation out in the open of child’s play can be left behind, once the privacy of adolescent daydreaming and its revision and publication in the public mode of poetry subsume lying as fantasy, as fiction. In The Humanoid Touch, the robots lie or fabulate, even simulate, to promote their service. They replicate those near and dear to the rebels to get past their resistance like holographic transference interpretations. A resister concedes that the falsehoods of the humanoids were “almost creative” (133).

43 Williamson, The Humanoid Touch, 159. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
In “The Confidences of a ‘Psychical Researcher’,” William James questions the validity of fraud charges in the investigation of spiritualist mediums:

[T]he accusation of deliberate fraud and falsehood is grossly superficial. Man’s character is too sophistically mixed for the alternative of “honest or dishonest” to be a sharp one. Scientific men themselves cheat – at public lectures – rather than let experiments obey their well-known tendency towards failure.44

When all possible deception has been considered and checked off, the experiment with a medium will still have yielded “a residuum of knowledge displayed that can only be called supernormal: the medium taps some source of information not open to ordinary people.”45 Through the integration of psychophysics, the mechanical brain and its humanoid service can be compared to the medium in spiritualism and the resistance for which the humanoids lie in wait to the imposture charge that James dismantles.

Because they are treating the rebels, the humanoid liars do not, in keeping with Kant’s argument, leave off respecting human subjects as ends in themselves. The humanoids reinstall the thing called an sich into the moral sensibility of their rebel patients, which allows them to pursue their talents unto perfectibility. And while openness to the well-being of fellow humans reflects the happiness that arises through working on the self, it is not an obligation to make more the merrier. The Kantian ethics of duty is inconsequential, indeed duty-free. It casts aside every recognizable duty for duty as such, in itself, the duty to duty.

John Stuart Mill criticized the categorical imperative, arguing that even the most absurd thought can be legislated. Only by the consequences that follow can the thought be evaluated.46 The

the ethics, poetics, and practical metaphysics of waking dreaming

lie might qualify as an absurd candidate for categorical legislation if, by dint of its self-cancelling consequence, it didn’t tell a linguistic truth. Utilitarianism famously allows that a lie that can save lives enters the calculation of the greatest good. But sometimes it’s not just the greater number of people who should benefit by your actions according to the morality of utilitarianism. Lying that becomes a habit undermines the moral integrity of the person telling the lies. It undermines trust, the purpose of communication also for Aquinas.

Isn’t it possible that what holds therapeutic value in a regimen of treatment, which seems to apply to deception in The Humanoid Touch, lies outside the reckoning of morals? In Peter Weir’s The Truman Show (1998), we watch the upbringing afforded by Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon model, which extends through Mill’s Utilitarianism. In Dick’s Time Out of Joint, which The Truman Show to some extent adapts, the protagonist has endured a psychotic break, which is stabilized, guided, instrumentalized via fantasy. He is kept going in the imitation 1950s world supported by actors playing their parts in keeping with this idealized past. The fantasy setting allows him to guess what’s next in a cartoon game in the daily paper. What the break interrupted he can thus continue: forecasting where the enemy missiles will strike next. The fantasy covers over the break in the man’s foundation. But there is a half-life to this fantasy coverup, which lets Dick’s protagonist see through it, not in order to go back to the breaking point that allowed him, like a shell-shocked soldier, to escape conflict but onward to auto-recovery. Truman also makes it to a happy end, but is it in spite of surveillance and deception or is it through the treatment regimen they uphold?

In an aside Mill shakes off an objection that the happy end is an untenable ethical standard:

In an aside Mill shakes off an objection that the happy end is an untenable ethical standard:

47 In The Humanoid Touch, we do not witness the lying of the robots as legislated by the possible exception to the Directive, namely that they could stop by force a human who endangers other humans, a danger to be assessed on a utilitarian scale of valuation. We witness only interventions that would stop a human from harming himself.
Utility includes not solely the pursuit of happiness, but the prevention or mitigation of unhappiness; and if the former aim be chimerical, there will be all the greater scope and more imperative need for the latter, so long at least as mankind think fit to live, and do not take refuge in the simultaneous act of suicide recommended under certain conditions by Novalis.48

“Novalis” is one of the passwords for the UK introjection of German influence, which belongs to the return of Hamlet’s haunted suicidality. Before arriving at the shibboleth, Mill entered a thicket of references to “Mr. Carlyle,” a purveyor once again of the German introject. One way to circumvent the German recommendation of mass suicide is through human sacrifice, which utilitarianism demands for the greater good.

In *The Truman Show* mass suicidality sits in front of the tube watching Truman deal with his anxiety and depression. The reality show has been running since Truman’s birth but first became a global hit when Truman had to internalize the boundaries of his safe harbor through trauma, the death of his father at sea. The drowning was staged in such a way that it could look, unconsciously, like the fulfillment of Truman’s death wish. We watch the adult Truman try to follow out his assignment at work, which involves crossing the sea to the next island by boat. But then he pulls up short before getting on board and the depression in front of the TV watches this tight spot of anxiety.

Hidden behind the masquerade, the viewer is directed to look at reality: the person and personality of Truman. He is Everyman, true man, representing a general good, a general will. The viewers, like the creator of the show, recognize themselves in Truman. Unhappiness controlled through the lesson of its lessening keeps the community of surveillance safe from the lure of mass suicide.

Depression sits in front of the tube and is diverted and entertained even by the apparent breaking points of fantasy’s instrumentalization. It’s not his father who suddenly returns to Truman but the actor who played that role twenty years ago. Truman’s water phobia lifts and he is free to wish to see worlds

beyond the fantasy bubble of the 1950s. Truman makes it to the
container walls and climbs out.

But first, to stop him, the creator (of the show) physically
torments Truman with the special effects of a storm at sea. By
his willingness to sacrifice Truman, the creator breaks the code
of Bentham’s Panopticon, demonstrating an exception that
can be an option according to the utilitarian calculus of the
greater good. For the betterment of the surveillance watchers,
punishment that causes physical pain is allowable, according to
Bentham, only in the utmost case of exception. The Panopticon
aims instead to let its inmates go free (the good happy end of its
upbringing or therapy). Punishment that is not self-administered
undermines the progress in educating to be good. The inmates in
The Truman Show are the viewers who learn first to administer
their own (p)unitive identification with Truman when he suffers
and then know to make their exit with him.

Throughout the American superhero genre, mad master-
minds have tried their heroes with the utilitarian sacrificial
choice. Superman is caught between the maternal commitment
to each individual life and the subsuming paternal allegiance
to Life in the big picture of the battle of values, imperatives, or
drives. According to the first two Superman blockbusters (1978
and 1980), if you want to divert Superman from the big picture
(in which the evil masterminds feel at home), just drop one
human from the top of a skyscraper. But to neglect the paternal
battleground on which the masterminds launch their maneuvers
(as happens in Superman II) means risking leaving unprotected
an ever-greater number of casualties. Or when under catastrophe
conditions Superman sets out to save individual lives one by one,
he runs out of time to save the one life he does, after all, value
most. At which point, in Superman: The Movie, he spins against
the linear time of earth’s orbit and, to be kind, rewinds the record
of the recent past until the point is reached to save Lois in time.

In 2018, the utilitarian pain text of human sacrifice cut deepest
into the superhero setting. Avengers: Infinity War allowed the
bad guy to slide into the ambivalence position when his plan to
extinguish at random half of doomed intelligent life overcrowd-
ing an ecologically bereft cosmos is allowed to go through in the
surprise ending. The surviving half has been rescued for a future
of sustainability. All the superheroes (in the Marvel universe) rallied in a concerted effort to counter the utilitarian program. At the end, they can only look on as one half among their ranks pixelates away. Only in their finite assembly is this cut across cosmic life an occasion for mourning. The demise of the teen superhero Spiderman breaches the numbing acceptance on which the movie closes.

Ghost-seeing and Clairvoyance

Long derided for Lorenzo da Ponte’s “impertinent” libretto,49 Cosi fan tutte (1790) was even tampered with in the nineteenth century to let the women in on the intrigue and turn the test around into a comedy of errors. To counter their guilty assumption of a high-fidelity love, the “philosopher” Don Alfonso directs the men to depart, marching as to war, and then enter the stage they left as new suitors of their own betrothed. To win over the steadfast women, the men who are now incognito feign taking poison in despair. But the experiment doesn’t begin to yield results until the women’s maid, recruited by the philosopher as his assistant, arrives in the guise of a medical practitioner with a brand-new treatment plan: “This is a piece of magnet, the stone the great Dr. Mesmer discovered in Germany, and which then made him so famous in France.”50 By instructing the women to assist in the recovery of the stricken men, the magnetiseur exploits the near miss between hands-on care and the early mother’s ministrations (which is a turn-on for both sexes). The philosopher’s trial seduction ultimately leads the men to wed the women as planned, but to forswear the testing of their unconditional love. The role of Mesmerism in Mozart’s rococo opera shows the impress of the Enlightenment Zeitmarke. Mesmer earned the Dr. title with a dissertation on the influence of outer space (Newton’s new science) on the tide charts of terran

49 Eduard Hanslick, Die moderne Oper: Kritiken und Studien (Berlin: A. Hofmann, 1875), 81.
metabolism, the full range, then, of animate/inanimate synergy, a new animism he called animal magnetism.

Arthur Schopenhauer’s treatise, “Versuch über das Geistersehn und was damit zusammenhängt” (“Essay on Seeing Ghosts and Related Matters,” 1851), interrogates the extensive documentation of mediumistic states, occult dreams, and visions induced in patients under the influence of magnetic treatment. Schopenhauer opens his study of the occult phenomena brought back by Mesmerism with the claim that all questions raised like ghosts were banished by the Enlightenment. Although Schopenhauer gives no more support to the belief in ghostly continued existence than did Kant before him (whose treatise on ghost-seers he seeks to supplement and extend), he does expand the range of interpretation of the belief or rather of the seeing that is believing.

Schopenhauer argues that the Enlightenment justified its ghost-busting by discounting any empirical evidence of haunting. But the presence of haunting really wasn’t ever averred by ghost-seers; in fact, such physical evidence would dispense with the ghostly apparition. By definition, a ghost becomes manifest in a manner completely other than a body. A ghost-seer is claiming only the presence of an image in his intellectual contemplation, the representation of a body without its real presence. This is the source of misunderstanding. Our view of the external

51 Arthur Schopenhauer, “Versuch über das Geistersehn und was damit zusammenhängt,” in Schopenhauer’s Sämmtliche Werke in fünf Bänden, vol. IV, Grossherzog Wilhelm Ernst Ausgabe (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1908), 354. In I Think I Am, I work through a host of German tracts on ghost-seeing, including Kant’s and Schopenhauer’s studies, with focus fixed on communication with ghosts. I elaborate here instead the apparatus of dream interpretation Schopenhauer applies to states like clairvoyance in order to liberate them from the margin of superstition. Schopenhauer dismisses daydreaming, but then makes room for it after all within the medley of paranormal states of waking sleeping which he makes available to and through the organ of dreaming. The opposition between a wish and the will comes to be dismantled, at the latest in Freud’s elaboration of wish fulfillment in dreaming. Further page references, which are to this edition of Schopenhauer’s study, are given in the text.
world is not exclusively sensual but intellectual or cerebral. Are the images in the brain of real bodies the same as the images that arise independently of the impress upon our senses of present bodies? The dream allows us to answer – and without a doubt: Yes! And so, Schopenhauer commences his rereading (276).

Dream offers the foundation for Schopenhauer’s study, because he can distinguish the night dream from a mere fantasy image, the play of thought. While fantasying is fleeting, incomplete, and one-sided (ibid.), there is a reality to dreams that can be grasped. The capacity of representation in our dreams goes way beyond what our imagination can offer. Fantasy images arise through thought association or other motives; the daydreamer consciously recognizes their arbitrariness and unfoundedness. The element of surprise stamps the night dream objective and real (277). It is acceptable for someone not to be sure if what is remembered was real or a dream, but it is outright madness to say that one cannot be sure if something was imagined or not (278).

Schopenhauer cites Aristotle to identify fantasying as part of the reality that the dream remakes and shares: in a dream, you can daydream. Fantasying belongs more to waking reality than to dream reality. All mental faculties except memory are active in dreaming. Any resemblance to insanity involves a lack of recollection in night dreams or rather the lack of a coherent means of remembering back. To the extent that derangement, according to Schopenhauer, rolls down the decline of the ability to remember, the dream is a brief bout of madness.

The dreaming consciousness doesn’t register the delegates of waking reality absent or past. The long dead behave like the living in our dreams. We don’t recollect that they are dead. While we are following Freud in bracketing out the night dream as the source of art, dreams do inspire artists, and Shakespeare’s ghosts, for example, can be recognized via our night dreams. What fantasizing does not yield is the fundamental tenet of ghost-seeing: the visitation by our identifiable dead in night dreams – not as deceased but as continuing to exist and not as imagined but as surprise visitation.

Unlike daydreaming, the night dream requires sleep “just as the images of the laterna magica can only then appear once the illumination in the room is turned off” (279). Dreaming therefore
doesn’t depend on thought association since the brain is asleep long before the show begins. Any thought we might recognize at the outset of dreaming seems exactly not what preoccupied our waking thoughts just prior to the transition. The rumination or revery at the bedtime hour is not carried over into our dreaming when we fall asleep.

Schopenhauer scans the continuities in perception characterizing the paranormal states of waking dreaming amply documented in the annals of Mesmerism. They guide the magnetiseur and can appear as well in the client, a regularly recurring byproduct of the therapy. What interests Schopenhauer is that the sleepwalker is still able to move about in the reality of the senses and that the clairvoyant by an amplified orientation sees the bedroom and just beyond, the moment and just beyond. At the same time, the waking dream states, the continuity shots notwithstanding, suggest the trespass of the mainstays of waking reality.

Awakening is the criterion for distinguishing between the states of waking and dreaming, which, however, seems objectively not to hold in the case of sleep-waking; it is a between state that amounts to an awakening in sleep. The actual environment is dream-scanned. We see the bedroom with all its contents, take cognizance of persons entering, and know that we are in bed. It’s as though the brain were suddenly transparent, with the outside world able to enter it immediately without the detour of the senses (287). Like the Esper device specific to Ridley Scott’s adaptation of Dick’s novel, the movie Blade Runner, the sleeper’s pov can range around the corners of the diorama of the actual environment in which the sleeper is fixed in place.

Schopenhauer declares that a “spiritualist” view of occult phenomena must be rejected in favor of the “idealist” view (276). The former upholds that there are two aspects of existence: one, the material body and, two, the immaterial spirit. Schopenhauer’s idealist view is part Kantian – the part that maintains the ideality of perception in terms of time, space, and causality – and part magical. The second part, although inspired by Kant’s Ding an sich, is the part he came up with to introduce a practical metaphysics of magic. The archive of Mesmerism gave him his license. Schopenhauer entertains, then, a physiological reading set upon
the psychic–sensory processes and set apart from the metaphysical understanding of the *Ding an sich*, which for Schopenhauer was the will, his bottom line and limit concept (320–21). At the limit, then, the will is the beacon orienting the physiological approach.

Night dreaming not only goes deeper than the waking dream, but it is also closer to the source than dreams one remembers. Within our sensorium we respond to the stimuli of the external environment, reaching at the end of the process the deep well of the will. Schopenhauer introduces a couple of neologisms, because he says he doesn’t hold the copyright on the Scottish designation “second sight” (286–87). When we’re asleep, external stimulation no longer counts, and what Schopenhauer terms the dream organ (*Traumorgan*) takes over, drawing from the well of the will and carrying its stimulus forward. To perceive in German, *wahrnehmen*, is literally to take something as true; Schopenhauer adds *wahrträumen*, to dream something as true, to designate the waking dream state that sidles up to the everyday categories but, since not dependent upon them in this direction, uses them loosely as though moving beyond them (286–301).

Occult experience is therefore a translation problem. The psychic–sensory process goes into reverse when sleep removes the stimuli of the external environment. The night dream draws from the source, metabolizes and carries it forward, until, last and least, contact is made with the categories of everyday life. The power source of the will is still reflected in a tele-state like clairvoyance, but its proximity to the waking environment compels it to use the categories of time, space, and causality, if only to suggest their trespass.

Schopenhauer says you can skip the metaphysical statements of the magnetized patients who have gone mediumistic. These are sorry views reflecting a mix of learned dogma and what was picked from the brain of the *magnetiseur* (322). In keeping with the Kantian doctrine of the ideality of space and time, if there were no *Ding an sich* and if causality and all the rest set absolute boundaries, then clairvoyance would be a miracle indeed (316). While we see temporal sequence and causality, we don’t see the original impetus behind this machinery (317). What the will of the practitioner working with animal magnetism reveals is the
immediate influence of the will itself. The Ding an sich steps into the light as the will (321).

The magnetiseur lays his hands on the patient to direct his will, the effective force of his influence. The body is identical with the will; it is the image of the will in the brain (321). The rapport with the clairvoyant can go so far that he or she shares all thoughts and knowledge (foreign languages, for example), which otherwise the magnetiseur alone possesses. The positive beam of the will, the life force, passes from the magnetiseur’s brain to the brain of the clairvoyant (315).

Is the long-distance vision or the inner survey of the inside of bodies objectively real and true? If yes, then the explanation can only be metaphysical. At the same time, the sleep-waking way of seeing is a physiological process like the functioning of the brain in the waking and sleeping modes (298). The brain works in reverse while asleep, which explains our disorientation upon waking suddenly right after falling asleep; we have to feel our way around a space we view as reversed. The dream is not only in the brain but also in the sense-nerves and develops out of their ongoing excitation (but in reverse) (299). That’s why the contents of waking sleep don’t transfer to waking memory. Working in reverse, the vibration of the fibers cancels out what came before.

While on average the dreamer upon awakening in the morning can remember more or less what he was just dreaming, the clairvoyant, who sleeps more deeply and whose awakening is a longer procedure, remembers nothing (303). Dreams that see the future occur in deep sleep and rarely are remembered (305). Prophetic dreams that are remembered eddy in the dream shallows. Deep-sleep dreams can end up in another layer of dreaming closer to awakening. These dreams are, however, allegorical and require interpretation (ibid.).

What about seeing ghosts, the mediumship announced in Schopenhauer’s title? Earlier doctrines of demonology and necromancy were based on realism, which Descartes shattered. Idealism has brought us to a vantage point for the evaluation of paranormal experience, including visions and ghostly apparitions. On the empirical path, which for Schopenhauer is always a demarcation parallel to idealism, animal magnetism has illuminated magic and allowed haunting, too, to become the object
of scientific research (358). Schopenhauer wants to have the last word in the name of philosophy. The will as sole all-powerful reality lets us think magic and by transferring objective reality to ideality places even visions and apparitions on the track of understanding (359).

The will lasts as long as the mortal life of the intellect. How, then, would the deceased keep informed about the living? How could the will of the deceased be imagined continuing to exert or respond to influence? The persistent orientation of the will of the deceased toward earthly matters would, in the absence of any physical means, make recourse to the metaphysics of magic (366). To the extent that animal magnetism demonstrates it, this magical influence is weak and questionable. It rests on the claims of clairvoyants that they can, by sheer will, move a magnetic arrow or needle. But the explanations for the apparitions lead to another provoking prospect. If the difference between those recently living and those now living is not absolute, then the living can reach back and pull up reminiscences, which can be taken as true communications from the deceased (368).

That there are indexical requisites for seeing a ghost (whether a vestige of the deceased’s clothing or his house, his haunt) reflects the point of view of spiritualism, not that of idealism, which is where Schopenhauer prefers to be heading. It is the basic flaw in every theory of haunting to date. Rather than let the divide between material and spiritual lives decide the issue, we should consider instead the expectancy of a spirit that cannot manifest materially. There are reversals and interruptions – scratches on the record of materiality, which cannot reach beyond memory or the recent past to communicate the separate existence of the ghost. Even if we recognize an inner being of man untouched by death and existing outside time and space, then any influence by this being after death on the still living could be arranged only via many, many mediations, all on the live side. It would be next to impossible to determine how much of the influence really originated in the court of the deceased or, in other words, that the deceased or ghost exists (341–42, 367–68). But what’s next to impossible Schopenhauer leaves open. He identifies animal magnetism as the most momentous discovery of his day. It amounts to a practical metaphysics, he writes, an experimental metaphys-
ics: “For it sets aside the first and most general laws of nature; therefore, it makes possible even that which was considered a priori impossible” (321).

As long as the person is still alive, there is, for Schopenhauer, no difficulty in accepting the transfer of thoughts, as when someone dying appears before the nearest and dearest, often several at once, before departing (346). The will is effective in the live transmission of apparitions of the still living. A *Doppelgänger* sent, often unwittingly, by absent but living persons as proxy to stand before another person is a transmission that does not require and presuppose an immediate real presence. Where there’s a will there’s a way to communicate immediately and at a distance with the will of another. You can think in my brain while yours sleeps deeply, Schopenhauer offers, because the *Ding an sich* is the same in all beings.

Time to remember that in Freud’s extensive survey of the literature on the dream in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Schopenhauer’s essay is the only philosophical precursor that enters Freud’s theorization. That while you are asleep I can dream in your brain means that the will can be replaced by the unconscious, in which the wish fantasies that the dream states reflect are on permanent record.

With the deadline for his assisted death already upon him, Freud chose for his final rereading selection Honoré de Balzac’s *The Wild Ass’s Skin* (1831), in which the protagonist Raphael is the author of the treatise *A Theory of the Will*. The theory remains a closed book within the story that performs it. Like Freud in his borrowing from Schopenhauer, Raphael or Balzac reduces the will-powered waking dream states to the vicissitudes of wishing.

At the start of the novel, Raphael obtains a quick fix for his gambling losses through a magical animal skin that grants fulfillment of every wish. By shrinking in the wish cycle, however, the skin comes to occupy the close quarters in which Raphael must defer the end, while the terms of fulfillment shrink the future at the vanishing point of the present. Toward the end, he marries his true love when it turns out that she loves him too; the
skin “could not fulfil a wish fulfilled already.”⁵² Although their union, since mutual, would thus skip wanting and wishing, desire cannot undo the punctuation of wishes that just the same wears out the time in the skin. A century before international psychoanalysis ditched wish for desire, this French novel showed desire infernally compelled to follow the syntax of wishing.

With every wish the magical skin grants, it manifests the deadline in the span of Raphael’s quality time of fulfilment. As the deadline curls up closer upon the shrinking skin, he uses the fulfilled fantasy of free money to guard against further wishing. One manservant buffers Raphael’s relationship to the external environment outside the fortress home where nothing can be found wanting; the cart with horses is ready and waiting before there can be the wish to go out. As the servant explains to a petitioner seeking an audience: “I will put it to him like this, ‘Ought he to come up?’ And he will say Yes or No. I never say, ‘Do you wish?’ or ‘Will you?’ or ‘Do you want?’ Those words are scratched out of the dictionary. He let out at me once with a ‘Do you want to kill me?’ he was so very angry.”⁵³ The command must come before the wish, and Raphael’s safety can only be secured through the stricken word and world.

⁵³ Ibid., 99.