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## Serving the Dark One is morally OK? Or how I learned to stop worrying and love Ishamael

Submitted by [Souvramael](#)  
Posted on 9/21/2007 10:43:24 AM

This is a rather long theory so let us break it up into several parts, which we will consider separately.

- 1) What is the Wheel of Time?
  - a) it doesn't exist
  - b) it is finite
  - c) it is infinite
  
- 2) Can the DO break free in principle?
  - a) yes
  - b) no
  
- 3) What will happen if he does?
  - a) destruction of the Wheel and total oblivion
  - b) 'Dark Ages' where the world is full of evil and a good 'Creator' figure takes the DO's place, while the DO becomes non-interventionist.
  - c) linear time with neutral people - neither utopia nor dystopia, aka our own world, where the DO, in breaking his prison, is forced to become non-interventionist.
  - d) dystopian linear time where the Shadow covers and the land and evil reigns.

### Quote of the Moment

Blood and bloody ashes!

-saying in Tanchico

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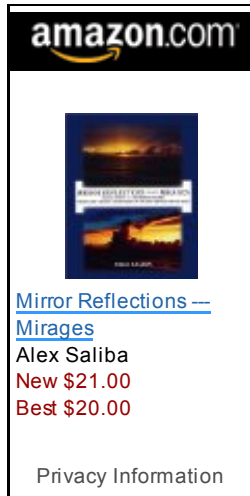
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After outlining possible paths, I will consider the morality of serving the DO.

The Wheel of Time is the mechanism which weaves human lives, southreads, into the Pattern which forms the substance of reality for each Age, as defined by RJ. I can't remember whether an 'Age' is ever defined, but let us consider it as the periods on a time graph when the DO's power peaks before being checked. The purpose of the Wheel is to keep the DO imprisoned. The evidence for its existence is overwhelming, and if noone objects I'll exclude 1a straight away.

Now we will consider several logical paths from the above.

1) If it is assumed that the DO cannot break free in principle, then the whole question of what will happen if he does becomes moot. What this



wotmania: feed your wheel of time add...

means is that the Wheel of Time is woven in such a way as to exclude the possibility of the DO being freed. The Creator (there almost certainly is one for a universe with such an artificial cosmology, as the chances of it evolving by chance approach zero) is an omniscient being, outside of Time, who works the loom and can gaze into the future via a time graph, being outside of Time. The loom in general maintains order and harmony within the fabric, which is a circular garment, despite the savage creature within which tries to tear itself out of it at one point while the garment spins around it. Every time the fabric comes around again, it is changed slightly by the loom. If the Creator notices the yarn becoming chaotic, spangled and ripped further on, It will take actions to remedy the problem in time. Spew out ta'veren and Heroes in an emergency. Radically increase ta'veren powers as needed. If the savage creature has nearly poked its ugly head out of the garment, smother it over with chance. The Dragon is prostrate at Moridin's mercy and the DO is moments from being free. Moridin has a change of heart, procures the Choedan Kal and seals the Bore with Rand and their new best buddy Semirhage. An impossible scenario, but less so than the DO getting free, which is ABSOLUTELY impossible. Another consequence is that it makes no difference as to whether there have been infinite or finite turnings, 1c or 1b. Given enough turnings, with legend fading to myth fading to nothing, it makes no meaning to the observers, DO and humans, trapped alike within the Wheel, their fates, eternally or otherwise, dependent on the Creator's whim.

Hence consider I) 1? - 2c - moot

2) Let us consider 1c, that the Wheel has seen infinite turnings (something implied by the books - there are 'neither beginnings nor endings to the turning of the WoT'). Also let us assume that 2a, ie that the DO can break free in principle. But in this case, HOWEVER low the probability of this happening in any particular Age, it WILL happen eventually given an infinite number of turnings.

The DO explicitly states as his intention to slay the Great Serpent, which can lead to either 3a - what Ishamael apparently believes, 3d - which the Forsaken and Darkfriends hope for i.e. eternal dominion. However, if the Wheel has been turning infinitely long, these possibilities are impossible. 3c is not possible for the same reasons.

Hence the only path from here is to 3b. The Age of Legends is described as being close to utopia. Hence its likely in such a situation that the world will become a dystopia, but like the AoL with no interventionist deities. However, there is a need for a good imprisoned Creator figure who swaps places with the DO. (Otherwise, 3b becomes equivalent to 3d). Now you have the swap. Persecuted Lightfriends trying to free the Creator.

Hence consider II) 1c - 2a - 3b

3) Let us assume 1b, the Wheel of Time has been spun a finite number of times, and that the DO can break free in principle, ie 2a. In such a scenario, 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d are all possible. Let us label these paths:

- III) 1b - 2a - 3a
- IV) 1b - 2a - 3b
- v) 1b - 2a - 3c
- VI) 1b - 2a - 3d

And consider them in turn.

III) If the DO can break free, no matter how low the probability, eventually he will in a finite number of rounds/Ages/game sessions. If that results in eternal oblivion for the soul pool - no more threads available to be occupied - well that's just too bad, but inevitable.

IV) There will be a series of Dark Ages. This is identical to II, except that here the Wheel turnings are finite instead of infinite. However, this point is moot since no observer inside the Wheel, at least in the AoL, would have been able to tell. So we shall consider IV equivalent to II.

V) The DO breaks free, creating linear time. However, since he is now outside Time, he is no longer able to influence the world. It becomes essentially like ours in its cosmology, governed by (ever accelerating) evolution.

VI) The DO breaks free, and his presence permeates linear time. The Creator is unable or unwilling to contain him. (Note that in both situations, if the Creator WERE to intervene and put the Dark One back in, it would be equivalent to I, and if the Creator and DO were to swap places, it would be equivalent to II, the only difference being that the Wheel would have to be patched up, or replaced.) There follows a linear time, also governed by evolution, but heavily influenced, or dominated, by evil.

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From the perspective of an educated person within the Wheel, say from the AoL, we have reached a few conclusions on what the actual nature of the Wheel is.

#### I) Slavery

I have a piranha which I keep in an aquarium, ie a prison. Being not very intelligent, and without further information, it doesn't realize that it is a prison. Ultimately, though, it doesn't matter, since if it were to break out, it will not be able to have a proper social life amongst humans. In fact, it would die, unless I throw it back into its aquarium in time, for its own good. I imprison the piranha in an aquarium, nor do I shove my hand into the aquarium, I rather value my fingers. Nor am I evil for

enslaving the fish, as I am sure you will all agree. That is another metaphor for the Creator and the DO.

But human souls are also enslaved within the Wheel. Yes, they have a measure of free will. They can decide to go right or go left, they can decide whom to marry, can even decide to serve the DO (how else to have a hope of breaking the Wheel?, but in the majority of cases for baser reasons). But they are essentially constrained by the glass walls of the aquarium. In a million reruns of the aforementioned Moridin and Rand scenario, Moridin would keep the Dragon bound and will free the DO. But...he won't. Not in the WoT universe. He will express remorse at the last minute and help Rand seal the Bore. Or he'll slip and break his neck on the grass. Whatever happens, the DO doesn't get free. And Moridin will remain a slave along with the rest of humanity.

#### II, IV) Dark Ages

The WoT is the platform for a finitely or infinitely long battle, or game, between the Creator and the DO. They agree to swap places whenever one of them manages to break out. While we consider the DO to be evil, that is not necessarily so; to play with the Creator implies an intellectual gap between him and us so great as for our concepts of good or evil to be non-applicable to them. Yes, the DO from his influence does exert what we perceive as an evil force - however, maybe the DO is constrained while imprisoned to radiate such a force. Heck, maybe its the rules of the game. In any case, humans within the WoT are still effectively slaves, pawns for higher pleasures.

#### III) Total Oblivion

The inevitable. I believe when Moridin says that 'death holds no fear' for him, this is what he means. It will come sooner or later, and why not appreciate and understand the causes of your own and the world's final demise?

#### V) Earth

Welcome to our world.

#### VI) Dark Earth

Welcome to a world under the Shadow.

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Let us step into Elan Morin's shoes. (Note that this is not necessarily what he really thought - really, it is just what I think he might have thought). In the Guide, it says he wrote books with titles like the 'Reality and the Absence of Meaning', etc. Indeed, what was the point of life? You were born, grew up, enjoyed life, had children, grew old and died. Yet civilization was curiously static - an unchanging utopia - despite the fact that the world population then numbered in the billions, was well educated, lived long, healthy and generally happy lives. This is in direct contrast to our civilization, which has had its ups and downs, but in the

long run has been growing exponentially in its technological prowess. Agriculture = 10000yrs ago, Industrial Rev = 230 yrs ago, Information Rev = 30 yrs ago. Examples can be provided ad nauseam. But in the AoL, there were no computers. Even if the power infrastructure didn't exist, you can use the One Power. But Aes Sedai, the elite, were extremely conservative. Even mass production didn't really exist for Power appliances - notice how all ang'real/ter'greal are different. The only ones which were made in a sizable batch that we know of are the binding rods.

I assume the existence of the Wheel was known in the AoL - after all, they had fragments (myths) about earlier ages, and some people had the voices of their previous life in their heads. Elan had assumed that the Wheel was unbreakable by any means he could imagine. The tyranny of monotony and hence his books with depressive titles. So he was understandably quite excited over the implications arising from the drilling of the Bore and the discovery of an entity which wanted to break free and apparently destroy the Wheel (and remake the world in its own image).

He turned to the Great Lord. The DO might even have presented a pleasant face to the world in those early days. Who knows? (If he didn't, wouldn't he have been isolated and cordoned off from civilization while they could?). Elan might not have wanted to become what we understand as evil when he first went to Shayol Ghul, along with the other Forsaken who joined early on, e.g. Lanfear, who in the Aiel history chapter in Shadow Rising was described as once being a pleasant person. But who knows what effects the connection with the DO, the black cords, has on even a decent person's psyche? Until that is known, it is not fair to judge those Forsaken who joined early on, just as we do not judge the mentally unbalanced but seek to cure them. (On the other hand, those who joined late, when the DO's true face was there for all to see, like Sammael and Demandred, don't have this excuse).

Why did he turn?

Consider the possible outcomes.

The DO is defeated. Try again in another life. What is there to lose? In the long run, nothing, and everything (or nothing) to gain.

I and II are possible, in which humanity is permanently imprisoned within the Wheel, unable to progress and constantly leaking accumulated knowledge. On the other hand, it is NOT certain that this is indeed the case.

If it isn't, then Elan might have imagined himself a fighter for progress. In a world where misery is close to nonexistent, making people unhappy (e.g. by feeding them to Trollocs) might not have seemed particularly

bad, considering the bigger picture of breaking the wheel, unbounding Prometheus and eventually reaching a post-singularity civilization capable of simulating its own universes and using them as its playing fields. So utilitarianism, at least for the present day, can be dismissed. And what is the intrinsic value of good, in a world whose Gods are too advanced to be able to even understand the concept, and in a world where it is in such abundance, but where it fails to make progress?

But if I and II are really the case, then what's the great evil in leading a life of great evil, if its going to be diluted by so many turnings of the Wheel that observers can't tell whether or not there is an infinite amount of turnings? It's like feeling guilty over shoplifting once in a lifetime of say 77 years which is US life expectancy today.

If the result is total oblivion, again, why not? If it CAN happen, it WILL happen, sooner or later. Why not end it and have the satisfaction of seeing your theory come true before your eyes, and to know the REASON for why you and reality fade away into nonexistence on the Day of Return?

Same reason for the Dark Earth scenario. It might not be a pleasant world, but it is an INEVITABLE one, in the long run. Why not get yourself a front-row seat? Besides, while the DO is very powerful, he is not necessarily omnipotent even when free. There is a chance that he might be defeated, which I believe was Lanfear's idea with her talk of challenging the DO, and even the Creator, with Rand. Let the DO break the Wheel, then destroy him. If she and Rand using the Choedan Kal wouldn't be able to do it, no-one could. Maybe she didn't love Rand particularly; maybe, she didn't even love power, as such, not in the way LTT accuses her of loving it. She also wants progress, to drive progress, and why not be in the driving seat while you're at it?

As for neutral Earth, well, that's where we're at now. Apparently we have complete free will, are bound by purely physical constraints, but are constantly pushing these constraints further and further away via technology. Achieving such a goal is laudable. The Wheel would no longer grind away all previous knowledge, no matter how hard people try to preserve it and expand upon it. Leaving Moridin a lot less frustrated, amongst other things...

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In conclusion...

1) From the point of view of longterm progress, fighting for the Dark One is unequivocally good. Success is highly uncertain, but there is nothing to lose.

2) Ultimately, it is also OK from a utilitarian perspective. If you're wrong, in the big scheme of things, later good will balance out today's evil. If

you're right, then either all suffering will cease (oblivion), or there will be ever greater opportunities to do good (neutral linear time), as well as bad. Hence an apparently neutral effect from longterm utilitarianism. But then again... progress tends to vastly improve life. In prehistoric hunter-gatherer cultures, life expectancy is in the low 20's and around a tenth of people die violent deaths. Today in advanced industrial countries, life expectancy is 75-82 yrs and the murder rate typically 1-6/100,000. Anarcho-primitivists might argue earlier societies were happier and sustainable, but given the choice I know which period I, and the vast majority of people, will choose to live in. Hence the overall effect might even be somewhat positive.

3) It is wrong from the perspective of the Abrahamic religions and their ethics, by which most of us live whether we subscribe to these religions or not. But even here, there are caveats. 1st, Shai'tan probably presented a pleasant image when he was first discovered. Otherwise he'd have been warded off, guarded and resealed, I'd imagine. The first Forsaken who joined him were not necessarily 'evil'. 2nd, religions need their sacrificial scapegoats. Shai'tan (Satan) is one, as is his chief lieutenant Ishamael (Judas Iscariot?). Yes, according to the Bible Jesus was supreme good, Judas supreme baseness. Yet might they not be swapped, because of the former's self-righteousness and latter's vilification in the face of what they had to do? (If Judas doesn't betray Jesus, how is Jesus supposed to die for our sins?). I'm really going off on a tangent here, the point is even from a Judeo-Christian ethics point of view things aren't entirely clearcut.

4) Depending upon one's viewpoint, serving the DO (helping him break out) can well be morally good. This is not to say the converse, that serving the Light is bad. It's good from the viewpoint of those who strongly believe in 3). Bad from those who value progress especially high ie 1). An interesting consequence is that in a sophisticated society like that of the AoL these ideas that serving the DO can be justified were more socially acceptable, whereas in today's world Darkfriends are regarded as 'witches' and atheists were seen in our medieval past.

5) We need a major rethink about the motivations and characters of the Forsaken, above all that of Ishamael, to a lesser extent Lanfear. (Ironic that by this analysis the two most important of the Chosen are also the most sympathetic - if it is indeed the case that they came to the conclusions outlined here).

While their crimes while serving the DO are not justifiable in themselves by most ethical systems, they might be if considered as means to a possibly better end. There is also of course the question of whether they can be put on trial, i.e. whether their link with the DO, by affecting their mental state, makes them answerable for their actions. That is certainly the case for Semirhage, who is disturbed and needed psychiatric care long before the Bore was drilled, as did possibly Graendal and Aginor to a lesser extent.

The stated excuses for the others are not valid, however, as they were typically based on a desire for power, immortality or some kind of revenge or payback for alleged wrongs. Nonetheless, even in those cases it must be noted that the end they work towards can be considered good, even if by foul means and selfish motivations. The same goes for most Darkfriends and Black Ajah we have encountered so far.

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