CIRCLING

Patriotism

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Featured Movie Trailer (*Hellboy II: The Golden Army*, 2:11):

https://youtu.be/Yjivaeh5YOk?list=TLGGxTjZeM4eaYEyMzAzMjAyMg

Is the Covid-19 crisis and civil unrest making you feel like Bob in this scene (3:31)? Bob says at 1:12, "The simplest way to put it? I have problems. I worry about diseases, so . . ."

https://youtu.be/I104h3QIcgk?list=TLGGdI9qa6ipp4IyMzAzMjAyMg

No matter. The 4th of July Weekend approaches. Time for a patriotic break.

Do you want a big happy? Do you want to feel good?

Well, read this post and watch all the way through the last video. Warning: You'll have to go through Hell first. But it's more than worth it given Hellboy's story of true love.

Editorial:

Do you hear this often? Even get tired of it?

"That's so binary."

"I'm not a binary thinker. Are you?"

"That's Cartesian dualism."

"Jane Doe is dualist."

"We are one."

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“Solidarity.”

This kind of thinking has produced the Cancel Culture that’s plaguing Western Civilization. It’s destroying our historical narrative, our ability to know up from down, our common sense, our rule of law, and even our police forces.

If we allow this to happen, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Let us explain.

So far, Praxis Circle has been emphasizing the importance of our choices. Our free choices ultimately define us as people. We have focused on the opening scene of *Shane* several times, where the legendary cowboy asks the farmer to put down his gun so he can make his own free choice to stay or leave. With the gun at rest, Shane chooses to do what the farmer wants him to do. He leaves. These mutual acts of trust between total strangers carry the two all the way through the movie to peace in the Jackson Hole Valley once more.

Shane’s first scene presents many binaries. The biggest? When the ranchers show up after Shane arrives and threaten the farmer and his family: “Get off our land or else.”

The binary situation is that the farmer, who calls himself a homesteader, thinks he owns the land, and the boss rancher thinks he does. Rather binary. The rancher wants to drive his cattle to market though the farmer’s land, which would destroy his crops. The opening scene illustrates the conflict when the bad guy posse’s horses step all over the farmer’s garden as they come into the camera, then again when they leave the scene.

Such real binaries present themselves to all of us every day in life. How many choices do you make each day? Try to count them.

In fact, *Shane* presents the situation that actually existed throughout North America as European civilizations interacted with North and South American Native civilizations, and as the inner workings of early Americans dealt with each other – working for a good life and even “progress,” they hoped. The movie *Shane* portrays the deadly conflict that actually existed between ranchers and homesteaders in Colorado in the early 1890’s.

There was significant violence. Something had to give, and it did.

But surely there are more than two options in the *Shane* situation that would avoid the violence and murder that would follow. No? The Colorado ranchers could have found other ways around the farms, built railroads with stops next to the cattle herds, or the farmers in the West could have moved their farms just a little more in any direction. *Shane*‘s Scene One is just another example of overly simple “binary thinking” from the 1950’s when the movie was made. Right? While good and evil was easy to see then, given a world of Nazis, Fascists, and Communists, times are much more nuanced now. Simple in the past, complicated now.

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Well, the problem is binary situations rarely start out that way. Most people don't like them much unless they feel they can force a choice on others. In these situations, on the receiving end at least, the choices aren't binary. They are Mafia-like offers you can't refuse. Human beings prefer a handful of real choices.

Most often in important matters, there's a long history of personal experience among each situation's agents, both as individuals and as groups, where cool reason is applied and compromise attempted. Such a process often produces outcomes that narrow many prior choices down to only two, but rarely are any human choices truly binary. Humans strive to keep their options open, and it's often – tragically – only later when we understand that, indeed, time had run out.

Do I go to this college or that one?

Do I accept this job or that one?

Do I accept this proposal of marriage or move on?

Do I help this person or that one?

Do I try this medical treatment or that one?

Do I adopt or employ this religion or that ideology?

The starting point for thinking about binaries is imagining yourself in a position where only two necessary choices exist of great consequence either way. In fact, such situations are singular in that you must proceed and, in order to do so, you must choose between the two difficult choices.

In a prior post, we featured this type of choice in the famous scene from the *Matrix* where Neo must choose between the blue or red pill. Humans only live in "real time" and, again, while such real situations can be uncomfortable and tense, movie script writers love them. They make lives and movies. Important, truly free choices place personality and virtue on display.

The whole point of "binary" is that the external and internal situations have moved us into the predicament that presents itself. We must choose because the perceived duty, virtue, or cost-benefit calculus, real or fabricated, of not choosing for whatever reasons is worse than either of the two choices represented. Often there's no time to decide, and the choice made is emotional with all of that prior, situational reason and love built in.

In the last post we described the case of our own *Hellboy*, RE Lee, who found himself in 1861 caught in a situation that, according to the 1619 narrative, had been brewing with slavery agitating societies for 242 years. It's notable that we publish these words today on the 157th anniversary of the First Day of the three day Battle of Gettysburg, generally seen today as one of the War's turning points. By Gettysburg, Lee's Army of Northern Virginia had become legendary in military history. The Northern states around Washington, D.C. were in a panic about what Lee might do.

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Robert had always been a good boy. He had been an Angelboy. He was no Hellboy. He was smart, conscientious, brave, protective of his mother (with a largely dead-beat Dad), admired by all of his peers, the All-American Boy-to-Man of his day, if there ever was one. The girls loved him. He got and stayed married with most of his time on the road. He was a terrific husband, dad, son-in-law, friend, and fellow associate.

Robert couldn't help it if, as a senior U.S. Army officer, in April 1861, he was given the choice by perhaps the greatest American president of all time, Abraham Lincoln, at one of the most important moments in American history, the start of the Civil War, to command the greatest army ever assembled in North America to invade his home state, Virginia, and thus potentially murder (or destroy the property of) his relatives and friends. He didn't ask to lead either the Blue or Gray armies.

It just kind of happened.

The ultimate binary situation. Lee and his life were so darn binary!

We made a similar statement in the prior post: Welcome to life, General Lee.

His response? "No, invading my homeland is not for me."

Instead, a year later in May 1862, when the Blue U.S. Army Lee might have been commanding was at Richmond's doorstep, and after the top Confederate Commander had been seriously wounded, Lee was asked again to take command of the the other army, the Gray one. This time he said yes to defend his family and friends.

Another one of those binary situations. A choice had to be made. This isn't hero worship. As said, What's a hero? (See 3:05 video at top of post.)

We have our monuments and the serious situations we all face every day.

Today, America loves the character Hellboy because we see ourselves in him. Being a sinner might even fit some of your theologies, philosophies, or ideologies – or not. You are probably modestly familiar with this comic book movie series, so we won't introduce it. While in general the *Hellboy* movies were well received, we are not surprised they didn't light up Oscar night. For the most part, they're just plain fun and entertaining.

Hellboy II is a perfect summer movie.

Today, we're most interested in the love story between Hellboy, the B.P.R.D. (Bureau for Paranormal Research and Development) agent, and his girlfriend, Liz Sherman. For our purpose here, it's not important that they save the world. Below (3:22), we present the Liz Sherman's binary situation scene that had been on the movie's director's (Gillermo del Torro's) mind for years.

To get right to the scene itself: Hellboy has received a mortal injury in a fight with the movie's Bad Guy Prince who would conquer the world, and he goes with Liz to Northern Ireland to find the Bad Guy's Golden Army. As luck would have it, he first encounters the Goblin Master

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Blacksmith, a very ugly, strange, and selfish little beasty. Goblin wheels a little wagon of street person's junk attached to his body behind him wherever he goes.

In yet another attempt to get what he wants, something shiny, Goblin decides to lead Hellboy and Liz to the Angel of Death in the hope that the Angel can save Hellboy, who's dying from the wound. This skeletal creature, with no eyes on its face but six on each wing, has full knowledge of destiny.

After entering a cave, the Angel of Death immediately presents Liz Sherman with her binary choice: You may save your love, Hellboy, who will destroy the world, or save the world. And, by the way, if you destroy the world, you will suffer more than anyone else.

Being everybody's high school sweetheart (all lucky men have had one), Liz decides without a thought to save Hellboy. "I'll deal with it," she says.

At that, the Angel of Death asks her to give Hellboy a reason to live . . .

And that's where Hellboy's life gets really complicated – often the case in real life.

Ha! Oh, my goodness. Is it ever. She whispers to him that she's pregnant.

https://youtu.be/s-rl8q9jezU?list=TLGGW5Ak1PR0E_0yMzAzMjAyMg

Afterwards, Goblin gets his shiny thing, and Hellboy fights the well-intended but totally selfish Bad Guy Prince one more time, but now to the death. As a result, Hellboy saves the world to shine for another day, as the sun sets again on the Plains of Eternia (mixing movie and TV show now). In the end, viewers are left thinking it must be Hellboy will destroy the world in the next sequel, *Hellboy III*. In conclusion, we're glad that exact movie was never made. *Hellboy II* cannot be beat.

Had it only been so good for RE Lee with his own Grant and Sherman. Real Confederate Rebels always had the binary choice of fight or unconditional surrender. These two brilliant "Yankee" generals knew exactly how to manipulate the chessboard to their advantage, and they did it without mercy. Also, Lady Fortune after Gettysburg began to smile on them. We might say the Rebel Hellboy Lee fought the Union law, and the law won.

But now in 4th of July week, we'll all live happily ever after, North, South, East, and West.

This final *Hellboy II* scene (2:07) should make all Americans happy. It's the "The End" that's sure to put a smile on your face and a song in your heart.

If it doesn't, there's something wrong with you. Even if you're not a huge Barry Manilow fan . . .

https://youtu.be/nUyaISlGVS0?list=TLGGouAk5Db-NHEyMzAzMjAyMg

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So, don't let Anti-Fa and other rats get you down over the weekend. They're so binary!

Usually, when you hear people, often young white people or university professors, saying, "You're so binary" or "This is dualist," what they're really saying is you're actually a thinking person. In addition, they might also be accusing you of being a Christian or some other kind of *religious* monotheist (always entailing dualism).

Notice how they claim to be open-minded, while then trying to cancel everyone and everything in their wake. When binaries help, they use them. When they help you, they ridicule your thinking and try to mow you over.

This is Cancel Culture.

So, Anti-Fa, keep trying to burn our stores and tear down our monuments, and we'll call out Hellboy. He'll hunt you down, the real Nazi-Fascists ("Na-Fa" for short). The Angel of Death says your choice will be ~binary: to obey the law or go to jail or worse. In the end, that's what the rule of law means.

We like Hellboy's chances.

Thinking through categories is the only way to think or to reason, and "no binaries" is a binary thought itself. It involves the "binary" category and the "not binary" category. Dualisms are everywhere in ***deductive "spiritual" analytical reason*** (Shane the cowboy: you are Shane or you are not), as well as in ***inductive "material" physical reality*** (the farmers versus the homesteaders: no two such parties can occupy the same space at the same time). It helps to see the binaries coming and then use foresight to advantage. Lee, Grant, Sherman, and Shane mastered it, and you can. too.

Now, back to *What about Bob?* He's correct. There are two types of people in this world. Those who like Neil Diamond, and those who don't (0:35).

https://youtu.be/KbuaoR1-G1Y

Liz Sherman and Bob's ex like Neil Diamond. *Sweet Caroline*? Please . . .

Over the weekend, be careful when selecting *Neil Diamond's Greatest Hits* in iTunes. It will take over your device.

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And have a fun 4th of July Weekend. ??

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