

Thoughts on life & LOST

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A few introductory points

- **This essay includes many spoilers: if you haven't finished season 5 and don't want to be spoiled, do not proceed.**
- When discussing my thoughts I'm often referencing to Christian mythology – **not** because I consider it special in any way, but because my knowledge in other religions is too lacking to make adequately fluent and cohesive references
- I am using the terms "good" and "evil" quite liberally, just for the sake of readability: in actuality, the battle on The Island may not be between an "evil" side and a "good" side, but just of two sides of opposing, mutually exclusive goals. By "good" I refer to the side that I as a viewer am made to sympathize with by the LOST plotline up to this point. In any case, at this point I'm quite certain that Jacob and the Smoke Monster are of opposing alignments.
- By the abbreviation "US" I mean "Universal Story" (see first chapter)
- By "god" I mean a general concept of a metaphysical creator force in the universe; by God I refer to the Christian overlord.

SOME BASICS FOR UNDERSTANDING MY INTERPRETATION

On the Levels of LOST

I've been asked by many people why I find LOST so fascinating. Here's the answer: all works of art become truly alive only by interpretation, one of the brilliant things about LOST is that the story works so well on multiple levels of depth, and the viewer can choose on which to base his or her interpretation. This makes LOST accessible to people of various interests and backgrounds. I would divide these depth differences into three major tiers which can all be enjoyed either separately or as a cohesive, satisfying whole. My categorization is as follows, in order of increasing mental challenge they pose:

Level	Components	Description	Plot examples
1	The Adventure & Drama	The parts of the LOST story arch that is anchored in the everyday real world: not much brainwork or analysis required, easy watching.	- Romantic character relations - The Hanso – Widmore corporation rivalry (possibly)
2	The Science & Intertextuality	Making relevant correlations between the scientific (literary, scientific etc.) elements of LOST and other works of both fact and fiction	- Time travelling - The electromagnetic properties of The Island - References to mythologies and religions
3	The Metaphysical & Philosophical	Coming up with coherent explanations about that which is not explained on the show	- The origins & true nature of The Island and Smokie - Analysis of the opposing metaphysical sides of the story and the possible real world relevance of this

In this treatise I discuss mainly level 2 and 3 interpretations. Older material (on level 1) along with miscellaneous notes can be found here (in Finnish): <http://www.honeyacid.net/kampela/lostminna.pdf>

The Concept of the Universal Story ("US")

- The same elements of an "universal story" are repeated over and over again in the world and/or universe; each culture and/or religion has selected certain bits of this story and turned them into a religious, cultural and/or philosophical system
 - o This could explain how mythologies and religions around the world and from different time periods contain such striking similarities
 - o However, the concept of a US might also give room to other kinds of metaphysical thought and reasoning or at least allow room for a metaphysical reality, especially if the US is not considered to be an inherent property of nature but more of an iterative addition by a cognitive being, or, in other words, the Story or Meaning of Life

- Human thought (or more specifically cognition and recognition) was a product of the recognition of the uncountable iterations of the US in nature
 - o In this sense, the US is a part of itself. In the Old Testament (OT), the US is pictured as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil of which man is forbidden to eat lest he would also eat of the Tree of Life
- To summarize, everything that human beings both are and create stems from the US; altering the basic blueprint of the US would alter the whole of humanity.

THE ISLAND

2nd and 3rd Level Bits About the Island

- The Island is the cradle for the earliest cognitive beings; the biblical equivalent to this is the Garden of Eden from which Adam & Eve were banished after disobeying God
 - o It is worth remembering that Adam & Eve weren't banished from Eden exactly because they ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, but *because they could have eaten of Tree of Life*, as Gen 1:22-23 states:
 - "22 And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever;*
 - 23 therefore Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken."*
 - o The US element of banishment from a divine/eternal place is re-enacted on the island by the banishment of those who turn the Frozen Donkey Wheel (which in itself resembles the eight-spoked wheel of Buddhism which represents enlightenment or the simultaneous loss AND gaining of cognition)
 - The conditions of the banishment are similar both in LOST and the Bible, the main condition being that the banished individual can never again return
- The Island is the stage for the original iteration of the original US - the Original Story that keeps repeating itself both in time and space. What happens on the island is reflected back into every repetition and echo of the US, both in time and space. Thus changing the course of the original US on the island (or "editing the original US blueprint") would also alter mankind by altering that which first brought them cognition.
 - o It would be possible to edit the story so that "Adam and Eve" would actually eat of the Tree of Life; maybe this is the natural resource what the modern expeditions (or at least some of them) on The Island are looking for (also see the chapter "Smokie's Agenda")
 - The Island can also be an iteration of the Tree of Life in itself, of which people (at least Richard Alpert) have "eaten" and thus become immortal

THE BIBLICAL GOOD GUYS

As previously stated, LOST features many character stereotypes or roles found in the mythologies around the world. At least to a western viewer, the influence of the stories of the Bible on Lost is clearly visible. The most obvious reference to biblical stories is the plentitude of character names of biblical origins (Jacob, Benjamin, Abaddon). Similarities can also be found in the tasks these characters perform both in the Bible and the Lost versions of the US. Below, I will discuss some of the similarities between some of the characters of Lost and the core mythology of Christianity – the trinity of the father, the son and the holy ghost, the sacrifice to end all sacrifices and the promised resurrection at the end of the world.

Juliet as Jesus: The Sacrifice to End All Sacrifices

At the end of season 5, Juliet (presumably) sacrifices her current self and detonates the H bomb to alter the flow of events and time. Juliet's act of innocent sacrifice makes the polarities of the two universal opposites ("good and bad") reverse: every coin still has two sides but black turns to white and death into life, as in the Bible when the death of Jesus brought forth an eternal life for mankind. (This polarity change is symbolically reflected by the fact that the black and white colours in the episode-ending screen (the one with the word "LOST" on it) are reversed in the ending screen of the last episode of season 5.)

Juliet dies and similarly resurrects herself by her act (as we'll probably see in season 6 :)) and by her selfless act giving a metaphorical "chance of resurrection" to the rest of the LOST crew. Quite possibly she is similarly giving The Island a chance to heal itself and restore the original balance of the blueprint of the US.

The Holy Trinity: threefold alignments from black to white

- The US version of the Holy Trinity might not be a story of a god with three sides to him, but instead a characterization of three forces inherent in nature and in a possible God: "good", "neutral" and "evil". The trinity symbolism can also implicate that there are microalignments within the large-scale alignment-"entities" in the world, i.e. that both good and evil contain also their counterparts
- Multiple father-son-ghost trinities within the LOST universe can be pinpointed and examined, and here are my best guesses so far:
 - o The Good (OR Evil) Father: Jacob (see next chapter) (or Christian)
 - o The Neutral Son: ??? (many possibilities, including but not limited to Jack, Locke, Juliet and Ben)
 - o The Evil (OR Good) Holy Ghost: The Monster
- The alignments of the aforementioned archetypal characters is subject to much debate, and I'm guessing the "facts" we've been given may prove to be something completely different during the final season

Ben as Moses: Less than Perfect Doesn't Cut It

In the final conversation between Ben and Jacob, Ben confesses to having believed in Jacob for a long time and suffering in his name but never having received any proof of Jacob's existence. This is strikingly similar to the what happened to Moses in the Bible, as Ben himself points out: Moses disobeyed God only once, and as a punishment was made to wander in the desert with the Israelites, never to reach the destination. However, where Moses resigned to his punishment and was later taken to God's side, Ben chose not to forgive and killed his old "god". The implications of this to the story and to Ben remain a mystery until the final season. (I'm guessing Juliet's (or somebody else's) sacrifice might create a "loophole" for Ben to still get in "god's" good graces despite having killed him.)

God's treatment of Moses (and many other characters and various populations in the Old Testament) implies that before the Sacrifice, God/god was evil: he/it created imperfect beings and then demanded perfection of them. However, the Sacrifice bound this evil side of metaphysics by some sort of an unwritten rule – or, indeed, some sort of a loophole where god has fallen victim to his own rules! – a neutral, innocent sacrifice was made on part of the imperfect human beings, and God/god was no longer able to wreak havoc upon them.

Jack as Jesus: The Appointed Healer

- During the first seasons, Jack Shepherd is guiding (shepherding) the losties
- Jack has a father complex about his father like Jesus would surely have had on his dad, and they're both afraid to fill their fathers' large shoes and live up to their expectations
- Jesus and Jack are also both pictured as healers in their respective stories
- However, so far Jack hasn't exactly sacrificed himself (i.e. his life) and thus makes a non-believable candidate for the role of Jesus

JACOB

Biblical Jacob and his brother Esau

In the Bible, Jacob is son to Isaac and Rebecca, twin brother to Esau and father to Benjamin. Esau, a hunter, is said to have been the favourite of Isaac while Rebecca preferred the more feminine Jacob. In the Old Testament Jacob steals Esau's birthright, which is their fathers' blessing of the firstborn son, by deception; having learned of this deception the shocked Isaac still acknowledges that Jacob will still remain blessed even though having acquired the blessing by a lie. Maybe this blessing by Isaac was like the mark of Cain God bestowed upon Cain, which - in effect - made Cain immortal?

Also, it is worth noticing that some Talmud scholars believe Jacob may have actually been the one supposed to get the blessing, ie. that Esau's piety was false. In any case, Isaac's blessing made Jacob a ruler over his brother. However, Isaac promised Esau, *"By your sword you shall live, but your brother you shall serve; yet it shall be that when you are aggrieved, you may cast off his yoke from upon your neck."* (Gen 27:39-40)

This might be a reference to the fact that towards the end of season 5, the Smoke Monster appears as a manifestation of Locke (often pictured as a hunter as is Esau) in order to "exploit a loophole" and kill Jacob. The exact nature and consequences of this loophole is still unknown, bar some semi-educated guesses. At this moment, my favourite guess is that this loophole, broadly defined, is the ability to do evil ie. deceive, brought on by the dawn of cognitive activity (which is, as previously stated, possibly the metaphorical consumption of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil) and therefore an useful milestone when trying to determine the place of the line between men and animals.

Jacob & Egypt

An interesting side note is that Jacob's son Joseph was later sold into slavery in Egypt by his jealous brotheres: later, after Joseph had gained fame & renown, Jacob and his other sons went to live with him in Egypt. Him having lived within the ancient Egyptian civilization would explain the inspiration behind the Egyptian motifs and symbols seen in Jacob's house and in the Temple and the huge statue on the island (and possibly even the counter hieroglyphics at the Swan station, provided that Jacob had something to do with the DHARMA Initiative crew and/or the building of the electromagnetic force release system.

THE SMOKE MONSTER

Smokie: The Basics

The Smoke Monster (or Cerberus, as it is often referred to) has been a central figure on the LOST mythology since episode one. The modus operandi for the Smoke Monster deals with killing or sparing individuals on contact: those saved include Locke (who said to have *"looked in the eye of the island, and what I saw was beautiful"*) and Ben (to whom the monster appeared in the form of both smoke and Ben's dead daughter Alex). The monster has also killed several characters, of whose mr. Eko might be the most prominent example.

Now, by the end of season 5, it has become quite implicitly clear that Smokie can manifest itself in the physical form of people who've been on this island. Smokie has emulated both living persons (Walt) and dead ones (Locke, Christian).

The Smoke Monster in the Bible

- The Book of Revelations 9:1-2 and 9:11 state:
*"1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss.
2 And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and*

the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.”

“11 They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue he hath the name Apollyon.”

- In the iteration of the US that LOST focuses on, The Dharma Initiative drilled a hole too deep, literally reaching into the underworld and inadvertently setting free the Smoke Monster
 - o Amusing side note: compare this to the dwarves of the Tolkien mythology who dug too greedily and too deep and released the Balrog of Morgoth – a being of shadow and flame :)
- In other words, the Smoke Monster is the “essence of hell”
- The connection between the Smoke Monster and Matthew Abaddon isn’t clear at this stage.

Smokie’s Agenda

The Smoke Monster has been seen to kill some of the characters while saving others with logic that is not yet wholly clear. Some possible alternatives are discussed below:

- The Monster is not evil or good, but a neutral, impartial judge of souls like the Egyptian Anubis; those the Monster chooses not to kill are good (because evil has no hold over goodness, and/or sees/has no reason or justification to kill good people) OR
- The Monster is either good, neutral or evil, and tries to prevent any edits or alterations people on the Island might make to the OS OR
- The Monster is evil; those the Monster chooses not to kill are evil too (the Monster saves them so that they may continue their evil work that impacts the Original Story)
 - o This latter option is or at least was less credible, since Locke was saved by the Monster while having been portrayed as a generally “good” character since season 1; however, as always, a mindfuck plot scheme that turns the tables may await just behind the corner
 - o After S05E17 it became quite clear that Locke, before his death, was a “good guy”; however, after he was brought to The Island as a corpse, the Smoke Monster copied his physical appearance and in Locke’s form could enter Jacob’s cabin and try to kill him (this deed was actually accomplished by Ben, not Locke, who in effect “killed his old god”.)

TO BE CONTINUED. MAYBE.