

Notes on Religion: to be taken to Casinean Empire

JARM

Religious freedom is practiced and religion is a private matter: visited first in order to learn enough to know where to go next.

Why do the Wise not argue for freedom of religion? Is it not incompatible with the virtue of Wisdom to silence dissenting voices? I have benefited substantially from this Freedom, as arguably have the missionaries of the Way who operate in Jarm: it allowed me to learn and allows them to operate. Where is the line drawn between practicing small-F freedom and large-F Freedom? Can one be virtuous and not know, if one can be heretical and not know?

THE IDOLATORS

The Iron Confederacy (Suranni) and Asavea worship deities and approach religion very differently from the Empire. 'It will please the gods' considered identical to 'it is moral'. Comparable to how a lot of Eternals are seen by Heralds.

Appeal to authority is morally comforting. You need not ask for yourself what is right or wrong: thus even those of deficient moral faculty can look up what to do in a given situation. Is there a danger that the lack of rigidity and the diffusion of authority inherent to the Way causes people to overlook the general material benefit - right action - in favour of the longer term benefit viz. the propagation of the impulse to Virtue?

The Way trains the human spirit - is there a danger that your religion may be actively dangerous to your empire by encouraging firebrands et al - similar to how worship of the Adversary is dangerous to the Suranni nation by encouraging damage to the social order upon which their military rests? Is this a problem? What stops another Vahti's Penitents situation - in the IC or Asavea they would have been executed if they displeased the equivalent of Conclave or Synod - is it not Vigilant to put structures into place to prevent that?

In Asavea, too much religion is seen as a danger because what when the religion and the state disagree – is not training the human spirit to be powerful very similar to training someone to reject authority? (So why is Freedom, surely the ultimate expression of this view, not a virtue?)

Is the concept of sin and the fear of spiritual retribution a worthwhile one for the Way? Excommunication is not the same – there are thousands of Suranni sinners, but name three people the Synod has ever excommunicated. Are you saying the Empire is truly that virtuous?

SARCOPHAN

For the Sarcophan, religion is something you are and do, not something you believe. You do it for the same reason the Brass Coast don't wear black or the Urizeni ignore the fertile valleys of Redoubt in favour of living on the tops of mountains.

Metaphor: Vitalism – cannibalism? The Sarcophan believe that the – though they do not use the word – Virtue of a dead person can be physically passed on by consuming their body. Is this incompatible with Vitalism? (How?)

SKOURA

Refused point blank to discuss philosophy with me on the grounds that doing so would be pointless. I was escorted off the property.

FARADEN

Doctrine of Seven. What evidence for the Doctrine? If another virtue were to be added would it become Eight? If one were to be removed would it become Six? If a Faraden went into the Gateway would they come out with fives written upon their soul?

Why these Seven? Why not Hatred instead of Loyalty? A lot of the alleged behaviours of the Marches and the Highborn and the Navarri look a lot like the behaviour of Hatred cultists, to wit, rabid xenophobia, but are called Loyalty and Pride with what feels like intellectual dishonesty. Is disliking a

Virtue enough to make it false? Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.

Doctrine of the Labyrinth. The Faraden have all kinds of teachings about the Labyrinth, though they have another name for it. Why is it that you teach that it is unknowable, and yet teach that Virtue guides your way through it? Is it not Wise to gather information about such a crucial challenge rather than suppressing it?

Justice. In Prosperity the Faraden gave a relic to the Empire: certainly it is not Just to hide it: why is it Prosperous or Wise to do so?

AXOS

On the subject of the Labyrinth: Axos believe it is a trap. That the wilful survive it and the weak are devoured: why are the weak abandoned to their fate? The dangers of the Labyrinth are legend – why not attack them directly? Surely if there is one destination for the Human Soul then there is one Labyrinth – is it not then the path of Salvation to bend your power towards making the Labyrinth less hostile? (Why should enlightenment be hard?)

You lose your memories when you enter the Labyrinth? Why is this considered a step on the path towards virtue? Surely losing information like this can be nothing but a step away from virtue? The Axou certainly believe so, and do every single thing they possibly can to record it – and for this they are branded heretics. Why?

What is the difference between the Imperial ritual of Whispers through the Black Gate and Axou necromantia? Is WttBG itself blasphemous, if necromantia is? If it is not blasphemous to interact with souls at all, should we pursue other approaches?

COMMONWEALTH

Virtue. What **is** Virtue? Why is it practiced? Why were the Seven chosen again - wasn't it because they were compatible with the Empire, not because they were proven to help the soul? - so Virtue does have other uses than Salvation. Are Virtues worthwhile on their own? The Commonwealth believes so. The *Gemeinsamwesen* is not about the hereafter - it is about life, not what follows. That is what they have evidence on, that is what they can affect, so that is what they wish to work on.

Commonwealth priests know of rites very similar to *liao* ceremonies - Insight and Exorcism especially - Consecrate, Hallow and Anoint are known but are seen as bad because they damage free will (much as *Ylenrith* would see the majority of such auras). They will Exorcise at the drop of a ceremonial hat and tried to exorcise me (it didn't work). Against other drug use.

Thus the Commonwealth have fewer problems than the Empire has had integrating conquered orcs religiously - the whole Abyss vs Labyrinth issue isn't relevant. A powerful soul can traverse whatever lies after death however its particular essential nature allows it to - what makes the soul powerful according to the *Gemeinsamwesen* is the same regardless of its nature.

Going back to the *Asavea* / Iron Confederacy point - the Commonwealth believe small-V virtue outside of the ruling oligarchy to be helpful to an enlightened society, while the idolators broadly consider it harmful. The Empire appears pragmatically to believe it to be helpful, but this isn't why it's practiced - just how the Way was developed (y/n)? - so does this mean that the Way is a fundamental truth about psychology? The Commonwealth believes the Way to be like unto a stepping stone on the way to the *Gemeinsamwesen* - why are they wrong? Or are they? Are the Way and the *Gemeinsamwesen* perhaps compatible if the issue of virtuous auras can be overcome?

SUMAAH

Given what was said under Jarm about the right to be wrong - why is Sumaah's solution not the correct one? Why is it Wise to allow people to follow wrong paths?

Not much experience of Sumaah. Was very nearly arrested for talking blasphemy, heresy or idolatry. I managed to impersonate a merrow long enough to recant everything I had said and done, and I managed to escape pursuit and get myself to a regio of Day before I could be destroyed.

EMPIRE