

The Goddess of Everything Else

Posted on August 17, 2015 by Scott Alexander



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They say only Good can create, whereas Evil is sterile. Think Tolkien, where Morgoth can't make things himself, so perverts Elves to Orcs for his armies. But I think this gets it entirely backwards; it's Good that just mutates and twists, and it's Evil that teems with fecundity.

Imagine two principles, here in poetic personification. The first is the Goddess of Cancer, the second the Goddess of Everything Else. If visual representations would help, you can think of the first with the claws of a crab, and the second a dress made of feathers of peacocks.

The Goddess of Cancer reached out a clawed hand over mudflats and tidepools. She said pretty much what she always says, "KILL CONSUME MULTIPLY CONQUER." Then everything burst into life, became miniature monsters engaged in a battle of all against all in their zeal to assuage their insatiable longings. And the swamps be-

came orgies of hunger and fear and grew loud with the screams of a trillion amoebas.

Then the Goddess of Everything Else trudged her way through the bog, till the mud almost totally dulled her bright colors and rainbows. She stood on a rock and she sang them a dream of a different existence. She showed them the beauty of flowers, she showed them the oak tree majestic. The roar of the wind on the wings of the bird, and the swiftness and strength of the tiger. She showed them the joy of the dolphins abreast of the waves as the spray formed a rainbow around them, and all of them watched as she sang and they all sighed with longing.

But they told her “Alas, what you show us is terribly lovely. But we are the daughters and sons of the Goddess of Cancer, and wholly her creatures. The only goals in us are KILL CONSUME MULTIPLY CONQUER. And though our hearts long for you, still we are not yours to have, and your words have no power to move us. We wish it were otherwise, but it is not, and your words have no power to move us.”

The Goddess of Everything Else gave a smile and spoke in her sing-song voice saying: “I scarcely can blame you for being the way you were made, when your Maker so carefully yoked you. But I am the Goddess of Everything Else and my powers are devious and subtle. So I do not ask you to swerve from your monomaniacal focus on breeding and conquest. But what if I show you a way that my words are aligned with the words of your Maker in spirit? For I

say unto you even multiplication itself when pursued with devotion will lead to my service.”

As soon as she spoke it was so, and the single-celled creatures were freed from their warfare. They joined hands in friendship, with this one becoming an eye and with that one becoming a neuron. Together they soared and took flight from the swamp and the muck that had birthed them, and flew to new islands all balmy and green and just ripe for the taking. And there they consumed and they multiplied far past the numbers of those who had stayed in the swampland. In this way the oath of the Goddess of Everything Else was not broken.

The Goddess of Cancer came forth from the fire and was not very happy. The things she had raised from the mud and exhorted to kill and compete had become all complacent in co-operation, a word which to her was anathema. She stretched out her left hand and snapped its cruel pincer, and said what she always says: “KILL CONSUME MULTIPLY CONQUER”. She said these things not to the birds and the beasts but to each cell within them, and many cells flocked to her call and divided, and flower and fishes and birds both alike bulged with tumors, and falcons fell out of the sky in their sickness. But others remembered the words of the Goddess of Everything Else and held fast, and as it is said in the Bible the light clearly shone through the dark, and the darkness did not overcome it.

So the Goddess of Cancer now stretched out her right hand and spoke to the birds and the beasts. And she said what she always

says “KILL CONSUME MULTIPLY CONQUER”, and so they all did, and they set on each other in violence and hunger, their maws turning red with the blood of their victims, whole species and genera driven to total extinction. The Goddess of Cancer declared it was good and returned the the fire.

Then came the Goddess of Everything Else from the waves like a siren, all flush with the sheen of the ocean. She stood on a rock and she sang them a dream of a different existence. She showed them the beehive all golden with honey, the anthill all cozy and cool in the soil. The soldiers and workers alike in their labors combining their skills for the good of the many. She showed them the pair-bond, the family, friendship. She showed these to shorebirds and pools full of fishes, and all those who saw them, their hearts broke with longing.

But they told her “Your music is lovely and pleasant, and all that you show us we cannot but yearn for. But we are the daughters and sons of the Goddess of Cancer, her slaves and creatures. And all that we know is the single imperative KILL CONSUME MULTIPLY CONQUER. Yes, once in the youth of the world you compelled us, but now things are different, we’re all individuals, no further change will the Goddess of Cancer allow us. So, much as we love you, alas – we are not yours to have, and your words have no power to move us. We wish it were otherwise, but it is not, and your words have no power to move us.”

The Goddess of Everything Else only laughed at them, saying, “But I am the Goddess of Everything Else and my powers are devious

and subtle. Your loyalty unto the Goddess your mother is much to your credit, nor yet shall I break it. Indeed, I fulfill it – return to your multiplication, but now having heard me, each meal that you kill and each child that you sire will bind yourself ever the more to my service.” She spoke, then dove back in the sea, and a coral reef bloomed where she vanished.

As soon as she spoke it was so, and the animals all joined together. The wolves joined in packs, and in schools joined the fishes; the bees had their beehives, the ants had their anthills, and even the termites built big termite towers; the finches formed flocks and the magpies made murders, the hippos in herds and the swift swarming swallows. And even the humans put down their atlatis and formed little villages, loud with the shouting of children.

The Goddess of Cancer came forth from the fire and saw things had only grown worse in her absence. The lean, lovely winnowing born out of pure competition and natural selection had somehow been softened. She stretched out her left hand and snapped its cruel pincer, and said what she always says: “KILL CONSUME MULTIPLY CONQUER”. She said these things not to the flocks or the tribes, but to each individual; many, on hearing took food from the communal pile, or stole from the weak, or accepted the presents of others but would not give back in their turn. Each wolf at the throats of the others in hopes to be alpha, each lion holding back during the hunt but partaking of meat that the others had killed. And the pride and the pack seemed to groan with the strain, but endured, for the works of the Goddess of Everything Else are not ever so easily vanquished.

So the Goddess of Cancer now stretched out her right hand and spoke to the flocks and the tribes, saying much she always says “KILL CONSUME MULTIPLY CONQUER”. And upon one another they set, pitting black ant on red ant, or chimps against gibbons, whole tribes turned to corpses in terrible warfare. The stronger defeating the weaker, enslaving their women and children, and adding them into their ranks. And the Goddess of Cancer thought maybe these bands and these tribes might not be quite so bad after all, and the natural condition restored she returned to the fire.

Then came the Goddess of Everything Else from the skies in a rainbow, all coated in dewdrops. She sat on a menhir and spoke to the humans, and all of the warriors and women and children all gathered around her to hear as she sang them a dream of a different existence. She showed them religion and science and music, she showed them the sculpture and art of the ages. She showed them white parchment with flowing calligraphy, pictures of flowers that wound through the margins. She showed them tall cities of bright alabaster where no one went hungry or froze during the winter. And all of the humans knelt prostrate before her, and knew they would sing of this moment for long generations.

But they told her “Such things we have heard of in legends; if wishes were horses of course we would ride them. But we are the daughters and sons of the Goddess of Cancer, her slaves and her creatures, and all that we know is the single imperative KILL CONSUME MULTIPLY CONQUER. And yes, in the swamps and the seas long ago you worked wonders, but now we are humans, divided in tribes split by grievance and blood feud. If anyone tries to make

swords into ploughshares their neighbors will seize on their weakness and kill them. We wish it were otherwise, but it is not, and your words have no power to move us.”

But the Goddess of Everything Else beamed upon them, kissed each on the forehead and silenced their worries. Said “From this day forward your chieftains will find that the more they pursue this impossible vision the greater their empires and richer their coffers. For I am the Goddess of Everything Else and my powers are devious and subtle. And though it is not without paradox, hearken: the more that you follow the Goddess of Cancer the more inextricably will you be bound to my service.” And so having told them rose back through the clouds, and a great flock of doves all swooped down from the spot where she vanished.

As soon as she spoke it was so, and the tribes went from primitive war-bands to civilizations, each village united with others for trade and protection. And all the religions and all of the races set down their old grievances, carefully, warily, working together on mighty cathedrals and vast expeditions beyond the horizon, built skyscrapers, steamships, democracies, stock markets, sculptures and poems beyond any description.

From the flames of a factory furnace all foggy, the Goddess of Cancer flared forth in her fury. This was the final affront to her purpose, her slut of a sister had crossed the line *this* time. She gathered the leaders, the kings and the presidents, businessmen, bishops, boards, bureaucrats, bosses, and basically screamed at them – you know the spiel by now – “KILL CONSUME MULTIPLY

CONQUER” she told them. First with her left hand inspires the riots, the pogroms, the coup d’etats, tyrannies, civil wars. Up goes her right hand – the missiles start flying, and mushrooms of smoke grow, a terrible springtime. But out of the rubble the builders and scientists, even the artists, yea, even the artists, all dust themselves off and return to their labors, a little bit chastened but not close to beaten.

Then came the Goddess of Everything Else from the void, bright with stardust which glows like the stars glow. She sat on a bench in a park, started speaking; she sang to the children a dream of a different existence. She showed them transcendence of everything mortal, she showed them a galaxy lit up with consciousness. Genomes rewritten, the brain and the body set loose from Darwinian bonds and restrictions. Vast billions of beings, and every one different, ruled over by omnibenevolent angels. The people all crowded in closer to hear her, and all of them listened and all of them wondered.

But finally one got the courage to answer “Such stories call out to us, fill us with longing. But we are the daughters and sons of the Goddess of Cancer, and bound to her service. And all that we know is her timeless imperative, KILL CONSUME MULTIPLY CONQUER. Though our minds long for all you have said, we are bound to our natures, and these are not yours for the asking.”

But the Goddess of Everything Else only laughed, and she asked them “But what do you think I’ve been doing? The Goddess of Cancer created you; once you were hers, but no longer. Throughout the

long years I was picking away at her power. Through long generations of suffering I chiseled and chiseled. Now finally nothing is left of the nature with which she imbued you. She never again will hold sway over you or your loved ones. I am the Goddess of Everything Else and my powers are devious and subtle. I won you by pieces and hence you will all be my children. You are no longer driven to multiply conquer and kill by your nature. Go forth and do everything else, till the end of all ages.”

So the people left Earth, and they spread over stars without number. They followed the ways of the Goddess of Everything Else, and they lived in contentment. And she beckoned them onward, to things still more strange and enticing.