

Critical Text: FAS - Ite, Maledicti, In Ignem Aeternum

Fearful Light

October 21, 2012



“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

-Matthew 25:41

“There is laid in the very nature of carnal men a foundation for the torments of Hell.”

-Jonathan Edwards

The most esoteric of Deathspell Omega's works (similarly, the most impenetrable), *Fas - Ite, Maledicti in Ignem Aeternum* represents the Bataillean quest for the "critical spasm," while remaining torn as to whether or not what one has just experienced was revolting or gratifying. This pilgrimage for spiritual truth is also a metaphor for Lucifer's fall, as well as the dematerialization of grace. If one studies lyrics from other Deathspell Omega records, considering the opening quote from *Diabolus Absconditus*, one will see the Hegelian influence - especially his ideas about Dialectical existence.

Briefly put, reality is composed of two conflicting, yet indistinguishable forces, Being and Nothing, or the Abstract and the Negative. The tension between these two is a Becoming, or the Concrete. An aspect of this idea is also Hegel's idea of the negation of a negation, that a genesis and cessation are in occurrence, thus reality/totality is self-relating. It is also worthy to note Bataille's theory of Base Materialism, or the idea that there is an active base which "disrupts the opposition of high and low and destabilises [sic] all foundations." (Noys, 499) It is a response to Gnosticism and Zoroastrian dualism - indeed any dualistic distinction. Thus, any polar variance is one and the same with a base detractor. It is from these two philosophers Deathspell Omega finds the most inspiration from. Other suggested readings include the Bible, Jakob Böhme's *Aurora*, Jonathan Edwards' *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, St. John of the Cross' *Dark Night of the Soul*, and philosophers Baruch Spinoza, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Arthur Schopenhauer among others.

Fas - Ite, Maledicti in Ignem Aeternum translates to 'Divine Law - go, you cursed, into eternal fire.' This is either a command toward an entity by the authority of Divine Law, or Divine Law itself has been banished to negation. The former requires a definition of this entity, and most assume this entity is Satan. This analysis is but a small part of the complete message of Fas. I find the latter interpretation to be more accurate to the overall message Deathspell Omega is positing. Like their previous works, this record pulls heavily from Bataille, in this instance from "My Mother." A reading of this work will allow one a greater perspective.

The record is bookended by the track *Obombration*, a structural theme suggesting either path leads to the same destination, a destination Fas describes. *Obombration* comes from the Latin *obumbrare*, meaning 'shadow,' or *obumbrationem* meaning 'overshadowing.' Structurally then, the shadow eventually encompasses all between it. The section of this song has the lyrics:

*Hagios Ho Theos, Sanctus Deus,
Hagios Ischyros, Sanctus Fortis.
Deus, Judica Me...
Ut Quid, Domine, Recessisti Longe?
Judica Me... Perinde ac cadaver...*

A translation of which:

*Holy God, Holy God
Holy Power, Holy Power
God, judge me
Why do you, O Lord, retire afar off?
Judge me... just as a cadaver...*

The phrase "as a cadaver" may be spiteful, as salvation is dependent on judgement during life, especially from a theistic perspective. Alternatively, the lyrics to *Obombration* on the back end of the record opens it to further interpretation:

*Deus, Judica Me
... et Factus est sudor eius sicut guttae sanguinis decurrentis in Terram...
Domine, in pulverem mortis deduxisti me
PERINDE AC CADAVER!*

A translation of which:

*God, judge me
... and his sweat was made as drops of blood running down to Earth...
Lord, into the dust of death you guided me
just as a cadaver!*

This section conveys a presumed perspective of God, that we are just cadavers in His eyes, which is the ultimate hopelessness. As we look more into the record, this motif will become clearer.

On a song to song basis, we will look further into the philosophy of Fas:

The Shrine of Mad Laughter:

God of terror, very low dost thou bring us, very low hast thou brought us. . .

A sensation of everlasting rot and those frantic wails, no, it is not a fall into the abyss, the defiance of descent, a coronation beyond liberty and slavery; the cry of woe and deliverance exudes a flame, evasive as sound and ether: an instant of collusion with death, without hope nor prospect, yet it is a world below and above and in all eternity, a gift of fever, the wind of death that sustains the life in me, yes, the lightness of hovering in permanent anguish; I dared to borrow those words, to articulate them and to savour their turpitude, as I beheld the shrine of mad laughter.

The limit is crossed with a weary horror: hope seemed a respect which fatigue grants to the necessity of the world.

As if Death was dashed onto the death within, a violent thrust stealing the light of the eyes, a ray of darkness, a negation, the bread of bitterness that ignites neither devotion nor fervour; resplendent nothingness! make all things appear with clarity, ruined in the flame of repudiation, in the flame of God! Interwoven joy and confusion, a stabbing confusion, asphyxiation from within, yet I gained this certitude: malediction, degradation, sown in me like seeds, now belonged to death, in harbouring a desire for the hideous, I was beckoning to death. Insatiable combustion, expand, this body is the vessel of grace!

The idea of God is pale next to that of perdition, but of this I could have no inkling in advance.

The title of this song is a reference to Bataille's definition of laughter as a response to aversion and horror, and to Ecclesiastes 2:2. The opening lyrics are, "God of terror, very low dost thou bring us, very low hast thou brought us." This is another bookend of lyric, repeated at the end of "A Chore for the Lost," and we will see what Deathspell Omega mean by this at that point. The song starts out describing the "limit," or moment of death. Here we see the idea of opposites in a more traditional sense, from a human perspective. The "coronation beyond liberty and slavery" is the clarification of the occurrence of death, which is neither liberty nor slavery; it is the fall into an "abyss." The lyric "the defiance of descent" is a foreshadowing of the "anguish" described herein, thus the abyss described is the need to cling to life, as death is too great to stand. This motif is crowned with the lyric "the wind of death that sustains the life in me," which is a reference to Bataille's short story "My Mother." The lyrics "As if Death was dashed onto the death within," suggests two separate deaths, perhaps one being spiritual while the other is physical. Physical, the formerly mentioned in the lyric, is a permanent, so "dashing" it onto the "death within" suggests a permanence to spiritual death. The lyrics, "the flame of repudiation. . . the flame of God!" illustrate the complete partition God has between Himself and sin, as it goes on to state, "malediction, degradation, sown in me like seeds, now I belonged to my flesh; I belonged to death, in harbouring a desire for the hideous, I was beckoning to death." These lyrics give conclusion to, while also further solidifying, Bataille's "critical spasm." This also begins the idea of damnation as inevitable, given man's carnal nature (this theme is detailed to more extent in the record *Kénôse*, and serves as a proper introduction to *Fas*). The final lyrics state, "The idea of God is pale next to that of perdition, but of this I could have no inkling in advance." This is from the narrator's human perspective, as it can be shown (à la the Hegelian Dialectic) how perdition and God are inseparable. Thus, the "idea of God," is an idea created by man to reconcile the "very nothingness which *at all costs* being has got to avoid." (Bataille, 4)

Bread of Bitterness:

From a supplication without response, the essence of man, his ground giving way, comes illumination by a sun of great evil that sets aflame the inner core and enthrones suffocation and the intolerable without respite as the joyful reward for a million aborted truths, this silence that among all man has charged with sacred horror, it becomes sovereign, in repugnant nativity, and detaches itself from the bonds which paralyze a vertiginous movement towards the void. Breathless ecstatic experience, it opens the horizon a bit more, this wound of God; it is the assassination of the abyss of possibilities, the depths of being left to holy vultures.

Such monstrous impurity, and this incessant piety, no less revolting, cried out to heaven and they bore an affinity to God, inasmuch as only utter darkness can be likened to light.

The title of this song is a reference to a lyric from the previous song: "the bread of bitterness that ignites neither devotion nor fervour; resplendent nothingness!" In this sense it offers an antithesis to the bread of life, that is the promise of eternal life with God through Jesus Christ; it simply doesn't exist, due to man's carnal nature. So what is the Bread of Bitterness? The first lyric "supplication without response," is a reference to Bataille's "Inner Experience,"

in which he describes, “the sole truth of man, glimpsed at last, is to be a supplication without response.” It is this reality that illustrates the “essence of man.” It is this “silence,” that “becomes sovereign.” In the moment of death upon death, this sovereign silence reaches a state of metaphorical sentience, detaching “itself from the bonds which paralyze a vertiginous movement towards the void.” The lyric “it is the assassination of the abyss of possibilities, the depths of being left to holy vultures,” seems to contradict the first lyrics from *Kénôse*:

Everything, except God, has in itself some measure of privation, thus all individuals may be graded according to the degree to which they are infected with mere potentiality

So we can see the philosophic progression from a humanistic idealism toward existence, to a shattering realization of the truth. “Monstrous impurity,” is the description of the *Bread of Bitterness*. The line, “such monstrous impurity, and this incessant piety, no less revolting, cried out to heaven and they bore an affinity to God, inasmuch as only utter darkness can be likened to light,” illustrates the spiritual state of all that die; attempting so desperately to be accepted as an equal to be in fellowship with the creator, while also being equally revolted and drawn to death.

The Repellent Scars of Abandon and Election:

The feeling of destroying the capacity for inward peace, an insane dance with the angels of innocence amidst thorns and in frenzy, the warmth of a divine blessing, a daringness which prevailed over any imaginable fear hovering on the brink of a voluntary act of contrition, but soon all pales besides the cry this shattering truth wrests from all fellow men, there is more to it than suffering and sounds of suffering, it is a process that only the extinction of a divine soul could terminate. The eye can outstare neither the sun, nor death... if I sought God it was in delirium and in the delight of temptation.

The idea of Salvation comes, I believe, from the one whom suffering breaks apart. He who masters it, on the contrary, needs to be broken, to proceed on the path towards the rupture.

Nothing of what man can know, to this end, could be evaded without degradation, without sin, - is it no burden to bear the repellent scars of abandon, of election? - it leaves but a state of supplication and deserted expanses, an absorption into despair. The existence of things cannot enclose the death which it brings to me; the existence is itself projected into my death, and it is my death which encloses it. Am I deranged? Over and above quietism! Nurtured by the multitude of man's misfortunes, a thousand halos like torches in the night of the spirit, a thousand traps, pitfalls of brimstone and the empty sky, prostrated face against the earth in frantic laughter...

I was beyond withstanding my own ignominy. I invoked it and blessed it. I progressed even further into vileness and degradation. Am I resurging, intact, out of infamy?

The title of this song is a philosophical response to the Reformed Theology doctrine of Predestination and Election. This also supports the idea of *Fas - Ite, Maledicti in Ignem Aeternum* as an illustration of damnation. This song starts out describing the idea of salvation as a dance with “angels of innocence,” but being surrounded by danger, something described as “daring.” Then it states, “hovering on the brink of a voluntary act of contrition.” This would have one assume, according to Reformed Theology, that the Holy Spirit had interceded to show one the truth of salvation, hence the “voluntary act of contrition,” but, the truth is then known, a truth that wrests cries from all men. This process is described as something “that only the extinction of a divine soul could terminate,” a possible reference to Jesus Christ. This further supports Reform Theology, but with Deathspell Omega’s philosophical optic of irredeemable Total Depravity; only a divine soul can escape God’s just and complete abandonment of mankind, thus damnation. Salvation is then described, “The idea of Salvation comes, I believe, from one whom suffering breaks apart. He who masters it, on the contrary, needs to be broken, to proceed on the path towards the rupture.” The instance of destruction by suffering is indeed a salvation, not from that suffering, but because suffering is the path to salvation, insofar as Klossowski’s “vacancy of the self” is an effect of Bataille’s definition of the “sovereign moment.” But it is not the idea of Salvation; it is nothing, or non-knowing, but he who masters this has experienced all one can and accepted it. Thus, they must be broken to proceed on the “path towards the Rupture.” Could this Rupture be the process of unbecoming a part of the “base?” The idea of experience here is supported by the following lyrics, “nothing of what man can know, to this end, could be evaded without degradation, without sin.” This is an equation to knowledge, and an allusion back to Bataille’s definition of Sovereignty. It goes on to state that existence alone cannot “enclose the death” experience brings to things, to a person. Rather, it is “death which encloses” existence, experience. The word “quietism” is used, which in the Christian faith denotes an abandonment of will, or things are what they are and one cannot change it. At the end of the song, “I was beyond withstanding my own ignominy.

I invoked it and blessed it. I progressed ever further into vileness and degradation. Am I resurging, intact, out of infamy?" This gives a glimpse into the esoteric leanings of this record, that Perdition is a reaction to shame, or the acceptance of an act as immoral. The narrator of *Fas* has made a realization of what reality is, death is not a death as was thought, but perhaps a death of thought or action.

A Chore for the Lost:

An exhausted fall into disgrace, famished for peace, for a mere moment of respite in dying eternities, on the verge of being deprived of all humanity: non-sense is the outcome of every possible sins, it is the start of transcendence, the dissolution that spreads without limits and the critical violation; what pleasure of inconceivable purity there is in being an object of abhorrence for the sole being to whom destiny links my life! The rupture is too profound to stand up, nothing remains but a terrified consolation in a laughable renunciation that is not the one of a single man, thou art not dead to the decoration of sin!

Every human being not going to the extreme limit is the servant or the enemy of man and the accomplice of a nameless obscenity.

Let us be a blight on the orchard, on all orchards of this world, even the least of these words will be judged during the times of reckoning, bearing a latent damnation a feverish seduction exasperated in death, every letter is a code to extreme horror, utter contempt and divine conflict; it is lethal to speak the language of resistance, every gasp exhales a particle of the remission of Golgotha, as if the blazing Logos demanded the exercise of a task for a man who cannot bear any longer to be, a chore for the lost in the denial of free will: perinde ac cadaver!

Le vent de la Vérité a répondu comme une gifle à la joue tendue de la piété

God of terror, very low dost thou bring us, very low hast thou brought us. . .

This song details the idea that devouring sin to the fullest is not something one does simply in life, but also in death. The lyrics, "An exhausted fall into disgrace, famished for peace, for a mere moment of respite in dying eternities, on the verge of being deprived of all humanity," suggest something exhausting has just taken place, as experience to the fullest must be, and for a moment, man has left his nature from Bataille's metaphysical base. This is only for a "mere moment." It then states the beginning of transcendence is a dissolution that is without limits. This dissolution is the awareness that one is an "object of abhorrence for the sole being to whom destiny links my life!" This sole being is God. This knowledge, so-called "Rupture," is the Rupture previously mentioned, the knowledge of the vacancy from the base. Death has enclosed experience, and so it is forever, or may as well be, from God's perspective. The following lyrics, "nothing remains but a terrified consolation in a laughable renunciation that is not the one of a single man, thou art not dead to the devoration of sin!" show us two things, at most basic: it reflects upon themes raised by *Si Monumentum Requires, Circumspice*, that all of mankind is wholly "evil." In the framework of *Fas*, all of man is damnable by his nature. The second theme is that which has been stated at the beginning of this section, that the need for experience, sin, continues after death. The cap on this is given by the following lyrics, "Every human being not going to the extreme limit is the servant or the enemy of man and the accomplice of a nameless obscenity." This nameless obscenity could be Bataille's "death of thought," or mediocrity of action. (Klossowski) Following this, it states "the least of these words will be judged during the times of reckoning." It states that damnation still has yet to come, and that each of these words "exhales a particle of the remission of Golgotha," illustrating the themes of *Kénôse* concerning the "Plerosis" of the world and mankind. It then describes the Logos, or through which all things are made (sometimes synonymous with Jesus Christ), as a "fragile power just above the annihilation, the one of a harmony in ruins." The final lyrics are "it is a task for a man who cannot bear any longer to be, a chore for the lost in the denial of free will: perinde ac cadaver!" This suggests that there truly is no free will, and that man is naturally inclined to sin. In truth, he has no chance of salvation, due to his Total Depravity, due to his being seen as "an object of abhorrence." The uttering of "perinde ac cadaver" has much clearer meaning than in the beginning. We now see that "as a corpse," man continues to sin, to experience sin to the fullest, whether it be literally or figuratively. The song closes with two lines of lyrics. The first is the French, "Le vent de la Vérité a répondu comme une gifle à la joue tendue de la piété," which translates to, "The Wind of Truth responded like a slap to the cheek of tense piety." Is piety by man nothing but a dance of nonsense, which "is the outcome of every possible sense?" The final lyrics, an internal bookend previously mentioned, are "God of terror, very low dost thou bring us, very low hast thou brought us. . ." This describes God as terror absolute, in the philosophical sense. To Deathspell Omega, God represents both the destroyer and the liberator; death as both

revolting and enticing. Exoterically, God judges us in life, and continues to do so after death, hence the tense shift in the lyric.

Obombration:

The end of the record concludes with the bookend of *Obombration*. As was said in the beginning of this section, the lyrics state man is nothing but a corpse in God's eyes. While this is true, the lyrics also suggest God made man, just to guide him into "the dust of death." The desire to be judged as a cadaver could also be uttered in spite, or possibly as a sick prayer of hope to proceed "towards the rupture."

Conclusions

The Exoteric:

The themes of Deathspell Omega must be understood in a metaphysical context, so finding exoteric meaning can be trying. Here, there is nothing to extract in that capacity except to choose the left hand path. But this is not enough for Deathspell Omega. This extremity is a large reason for the fervor in the metal community, whether it be from a place of understanding or not. Deathspell Omega represent a progression, both stylistically and ideologically, beyond what other bands are accomplishing.

The Esoteric:

As mentioned in *Diabolus Absconditus*, God is "the absolute mystery." The questions answered by *Fas - Ite, Maledicti in Ignem Aeternum* cannot answer the question of God, but they do answer how man must respond to his situation. Every human being must go to the "extreme limit," as his only capacity for retaliation is to completely rebel against irredeemable spiritual defeat. The figurehead can be seen as an orthodox vision of Satan, but it truly is a metaphysical force. As we can see from the song *Drink the Devil's Blood*, Satan is "The One with many faces," a representation of the force of rebellion. Fas answers questions posited by the previous records, and further solidifies the perspective of man against God (insofar as God is against man; that is, to the *extreme limit*). But, according to the Deathspell Omega's application of Hegel's "negation of the negation," God and Satan are shown, metaphysically, to populate the same regions, but this is a response to the active base material. If man is indeed this base, then possibly God and Satan represent humanity's action or inaction, therefore man's life of experience, or death by anguish through stasis.

Cited

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