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PANPSYCHISM AND J.R.R. TOLKIEN: EXPLORING A UNIVERSAL PSYCHE IN *THE SILMARILLION, THE HOBBIT, AND THE LORD OF THE RINGS*

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ABSTRACT

An informal exploration of the concept of panpsychism in three of J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy works, *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, by using multiple consciousness theories from prominent consciousness authors. Plotlines, character compositions, and physical and mental interactions between individuals and entities are examined through multi-faceted panpsychic consciousness lenses. Those lenses include consciousness as a "stream," integrality, evolutionary emergence of consciousness in all life forms, numinosity, liminality, the mythical trickster, major consciousness themes, precognitive and lucid dreaming, removal of self-identity through separation and burial, inner work, plurality and conflict, and enlightenment and synergism.

Keywords: fantasy literature, panpsychism, Tolkien, Silmarillion, Hobbit, Lord of the Rings, consciousness, integral, evolution, numinosity, liminality, trickster, precognitive, lucid dreaming, inner work, plurality, enlightenment, synergism

Over the years, the ideologies, perspectives, and interpretations of consciousness have significantly evolved. Psychologists, theologians, sociologists, philosophers, and many others have debated on just what consciousness is, or is not. Is consciousness biological, physiological, cognitive, social, psychological, spiritual, cosmic, or liminal, to name a few? Can consciousness be all of these aspects, at the same time? Or is consciousness none of the aforementioned, and a completely foreign realm just waiting to be discovered? One of the most intriguing questions regarding consciousness is if it is isolated to a single individual or relegated to a collective presence. Likewise, is consciousness panpsychic, or the "theory that all matter has some form of consciousness" ("Panpsychism," n.d.)?

Indeed, many scholars have grappled with many of these issues since consciousness exploration began. However, the notion of panpsychism has just recently become a prominent sub-field of consciousness studies that many scholars are debating. Not only is panpsychism relatively new, but it is also largely repudiated in consciousness studies as there is no definitive boundary between what "can" and "cannot" have consciousness. Given this quandary, how does one explore the relationship between panpsychism and fantasy literature? To better understand the ideology of panpsychism, and then apply those aspects to J.R.R. Tolkien's works, it is best to obtain a basic understanding of what the study of consciousness entails, as viewed through the multiple consciousness lenses.

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Consciousness Pontificators

James. William James (1890) most notably identified consciousness as a “stream” and described the nature of consciousness as having five distinct characteristics, with no feature assuming priority over another: “1) Every thought tends to be part of a personal consciousness; 2) Within each personal consciousness, thought is always changing; 3) Within each personal consciousness, thought is sensibly continuous; 4) It always appears to deal with objects independent of itself; and 5) It is interested in some parts of these objects to the exclusion of others, and welcomes or rejects- *chooses* from among them, in a word- all the while” (p. 225).

These tenets can easily apply to panpsychism, if one accepts the notion that all forms of matter exhibit consciousness in their own unique way (e.g., fictional characters in fantasy texts engaging in inner dialogue with dual personalities, using magic or mystical powers for enchantment, or communing with an anthropomorphic environment), and not according to the widely held standard of “human” consciousness and the experiences therein.

Combs. Combs (2002, 2009) has described consciousness as being integral and multifaceted, whereby our past experiences become both the lens and focal point of us viewing consciousness and consciousness exploration. This synergistic perspective culminates in a multifaceted opportunity for reflection, where we examine our personal awareness of consciousness, its relation to the universe, and how it ultimately results in authentic, yet, aggregate experiences. Integrality and multifacetism are significant components of panpsychism and can result in a cumulative experience, no matter how the theory is applied (e.g., experiential, phenomenological, literary, etc.) or who follows its principles (e.g., humans, animals, fictional characters, nature).

Likewise, since consciousness “emerged as a ‘higher order’ process when, through evolution, the brain reached some critical level of complexity” (Combs, 2002, p. 36), and the brain is comprised of separate evolutionary layers that has enabled “some form of consciousness, or at least the potential for consciousness (to) exist in all forms of life, no matter how simple or primitive...” (p. 36), the idea of panpsychism, as applied to any experience or existence is plausible, especially in a fictional literary setting such as that of Tolkien’s works where all characters, natural settings, and the interactions between and within the two exhibit ideas, thoughts, or behaviors directly related to a universal soul.

Combs (1996) also provides a collective lens in which to view consciousness, specifically with that of numinosity, or the awareness of divine or cosmic energy, and its connection to synchronicity. The notion of liminality and celestial experiences influence not only reality, but also mythical worlds, and storylines, characters, and interactions, such as those in Tolkien’s books, and can exhibit transitional and threshold tendencies due to indecisiveness in personal growth, lack of faith in divine forces, or inability to understand cosmic circumstances in their totality. Likewise, the idea of the mythical “trickster” pairs nicely with synchronicity and parallel consciousness. A few of Tolkien’s characters indeed fit the “trickster” mold and their behaviors affect the course of fate far into the future. Ultimately, the panpsychic ideology is readily apparent in Tolkien’s Middle-earth when viewing consciousness through liminality, numinosity, and myth.

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Baruss. Baruss (2003) defines consciousness through 10 thematic threads, examining if consciousness is 1) physiological, cognitive, or experiential, 2) material or transcendent, 3) delusional or veridical, 4) mundane or extraordinary, 5) meaningless or meaningful, 6) lateral or vertical, 7) psychopathological or normal, 8) dangerous or beneficial, 9) homogenous or fragmented, and 10) open or closed. Each of these threads is woven into the theory of panpsychism, if one accepts that each strand, while being a different color, texture, or length (i.e., creation, threshold, experience, etc.) is still an integral component of the cosmic/universal fabric.

Baruss also describes consciousness through the perspectives of dreaming, specifically precognitive dreams and lucid dreaming, and emphasizes three characteristics that are involved with dream experiences (i.e., discrimination, control, and sense of reality). These characteristics nicely connect with panpsychism, as seen in Tolkien's works, since characters and natural aspects interact and behave in ways that exhibit discriminatory concern (or lack thereof) of humanity and the environment, control (or lack thereof) over magical, mystical, and otherworldly experiences regarding mind alterations and enchantments, and a sense of reality (or lack thereof) with dream worlds and secondary possession of consciousness (i.e., one character possessing the mind of another by using a warped or depraved sense of reality). Although Tolkien's characters are not real, they experience panpsychism on every level of consciousness, and then some, and these interactions seem to be an explanation to Baruss's question: "What if alterations of consciousness as such can sometimes let us see underneath the surface of life?" (p. 106).

Stein. Like Combs (1996), Stein (1983) approaches consciousness through the lens of liminality and the soul. In being able to cross the "threshold" of consciousness, the soul "comes free of its attachments and identifications" (Stein, p. 47). This removal of singularity and isolation allows one to be in relationship with all consciousness, which, of course, is what panpsychism implies with regards to a universal or cosmic awareness.

However, in order to move from that liminal state to better connect with the soul, one must remove self-identity "by passing through the experience of separation and coming to terms with a lost past through the act of burial..." (p. 45). This liberation, of sorts, requires a symbolic death of self and a renewal of soul through a higher level of conscious awareness. Tolkien's characters exhibit many "deaths" by coming to terms with their purpose on Middle-earth, reforming judgmental and preconceived notions of other characters, and realizing the importance of connectivity, not only to nature but also to each other.

Johnson. Johnson (1986), like Stein, describes consciousness through the lens of self. However, Johnson touts the idea that an engagement with consciousness requires "inner work," or the "effort by which we gain awareness of the deeper layers of consciousness within us and move toward integration of the total self" (p. 13). In order to fully understand, and connect with, the panpsychic ideal, one must integrate self and the cosmos by exploring the isolated and fragmented self, and consciously merge that newfound perspective of self with those multifaceted cosmic layers. This merging can occur through "prayers, meditations, dream work, ceremonies, and Active Imagination" (p. 11), and is evident in Tolkien's characters accessing higher levels of consciousness through meditations, dreams, and other ethereal forms or interactions.

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Johnson says we are “*plural beings*” (p. 36) and because this integration of self and cosmos “is a dialogue between conscious and unconscious elements, it always raises the specter of conflict—inner conflict over values, urges, beliefs, ways of life, morals, (and) loyalties” (p. 37). Tolkien’s characters experience many panpsychic conflicts due to the plurality of storylines, personalities, and behaviors, from choosing between right and wrong (in terms of humanitarian outcomes) to coexisting with the natural entities of Middle-earth to remembering (and either accepting or refusing) the creation of Middle-earth and its transcendent existence in “modern day” Middle-earth. Each situation can be viewed through multiple panpsychic lenses and this presents an abundance of conflict between characters’ conscious and unconscious elements. Because each of Tolkien’s characters “has a great multitude of distinct personalities coexisting within one body, sharing one psyche” (p. 36), the consequences of their actions are universal and infinite.

Hixon. Enlightenment and panpsychism are synergistic; if one entity is flawed or incomplete the other experiences a deficiency or is absent altogether. Hixon (1978), in using Ramana Maharshi’s essay, describes enlightenment as one questioning the cosmos through a panpsychic ideal. This “method for awakening into primal awareness or awareness at its Source is called *vichara*, which simply means inquiry” (p. 48). Inquiring about consciousness at all levels ultimately leads to “...an intense living of the lives of all beings as our own life, an insight into the unity of all life as Ultimate Consciousness at play through countless forms” (p. 47).

Tolkien’s works illustrate character enlightenment through panpsychic inquiry. Characters awaken that “primal awareness” through self-discovery and self-reflection, and see Middle-earth and its essence as all-inclusive and connected. From synergistic telepathic communication to bearing witness to forgotten floral and fauna to triumphing over evil through heroic determinism, Tolkien’s characters evolve and realign their essence with Middle-earth, revealing a panpsychic process where their consciousness becomes “transparent to its own intrinsic nature” (p. 60).

Panpsychism and Tolkien

The notion of an all-pervasive consciousness in the “real world” is debatable, but in fantasy literature the ideology of panpsychism is easily depicted. Tolkien does a phenomenal job in describing panpsychism in his works, through character compositions, interactions, and behaviors. Likewise, Tolkien incorporates naturalistic, magical, and supernatural perspectives into his storylines, which lends credence to panpsychic proclivities. Several of Tolkien’s works, specifically *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings*, parallel the panpsychic ideal as described by the aforementioned consciousness scholars.

The Silmarillion. *The Silmarillion* (Tolkien, 1977) is Tolkien’s creation story. In this text, the beginnings of Eä (the cosmos, or material Universe) originate with Eru (Ilúvatar), or the “One All-father,” who is viewed as the Christian parallel to God. Ilúvatar “made first the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made” (Tolkien, 1977, p. 15). The Ainur can be considered as angelic beings, and existed with Ilúvatar in a purely spiritual dimension before the actual creation of Eä. That the Ainur were a direct outcome of Ilúvatar’s conscious thoughts is the perfection of panpsychism, whether it relates to James’s (1890) stream of consciousness affecting cosmic experience, Combs’s (1996) assertion of numinosity and synchronicity, or Johnson’s (1986) description of “inner work” and gaining awareness of consciousness within oneself. Ilúvatar’s consciousness is free flowing, divine, and enlightening with all aspects affecting the creation of the material Universe.

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Ilúvatar allowed the Ainur to take part in the actual creation of Eä by having them bring forth thoughts of conception and then “sing” the cosmos into existence from those pure and harmonious thoughts through what is known as the Music of Creation. The Ainur, with voices..

Like unto like harps and lutes, and pipes and trumpets, and viols and organs, and like unto countless choirs singing with words, began to fashion the theme of Ilúvatar to a great music; and a sound arose of endless interchanging melodies woven in harmony that passed beyond hearing into the depths and into the heights, and the places of the dwelling of Ilúvatar were filled to overflowing, and the music and the echo of music went out into the Void, and it was not void. (Tolkien, 1977, p. 15)

However, not all of the thoughts were melodious and congruent. Melkor, the mightiest of the Ainur who had “been given the greatest gifts of power and knowledge” (Tolkien, 1977, p. 16), and who is the Christian parallel to Lucifer (Satan), sought to increase his power and knowledge by interjecting his own unique and separate thoughts and singing into the Music of Creation instead of harmonizing with the other Ainur. Melkor’s thoughts were dissonant and confusing and when woven into the fabric of the Music of Creation, some Ainur “began to attune their music to his (Melkor’s) rather than to the thought which they had at first” (Tolkien, 1977, p. 16). Thus, this turbulent discord became strife on Arda (Earth), and “Ilúvatar’s once-unharmful creation has been marred by an evil that corrupts not only the moral life of free creatures; it also lays waste to the natural order” (Wood, 2003, p. 21). The panpsychic aspects of pervading consciousness, as witnessed with Melkor deliberately changing the entire cosmos with and to his own personal consciousness, again relates back to how panpsychism can be viewed through the lens of numinosity and synchronicity (Combs, 1996), discrimination, control, and sense of reality (Baruss, 2003), and the relationship between enlightenment and consciousness (Hixon, 1978). Melkor’s consciousness is dissonant cosmic energy, but cosmic energy nonetheless, and his ability to control the outcomes of humanity and affect the creation and sustainment of Arda exhibit a primal awareness of pervading existence and Universal upheaval.

After the Ainur had completed the Music of Creation, including the discord inserted by Melkor, Ilúvatar showed them a vision of what the universe would look like as a result of their singing. From this vision, Ilúvatar spoke the cosmos and Arda into being. Because of this sequence of events, Ilúvatar’s consciousness pervades throughout the entire cosmos in a complex, yet carefully differentiated, hierarchical fashion “forming a great chain of being that stretches from Ilúvatar all the way down to the inert minerals” (Wood, 2003, p. 11), imbuing “the entire cosmos with his Spirit” (Wood, 2003, p. 13). This end result nicely parallels with the panpsychic concept when viewed through the lens of integrality and multifacetism (Combs, 2002, 2009), higher order processing and layers of evolutionary consciousness (Combs, 2002), and liminality and the soul (Stein, 1983). Ilúvatar, with his multifaceted composition, is wholly integrated into the Universe, and creates the cosmos through layered processes and personas containing his divine essence.

Once the cosmos and Arda had been created, Ilúvatar sent the Ainur to Arda to prepare it for the Children of Ilúvatar (i.e., Elves and Men) and the coming of The First Age. Arda was divided into several regions, and the Ainur came to what is known as Aman, or “The Blessed Realm.” From this Realm, the Ainur set to govern over all of Arda. The Ainur were divided into two classes, the greater Valar and the lesser Maiar. The Valar, or “Angelic Powers,” “took to themselves shape and hue; (and) their shape comes of their knowledge of the visible World,

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rather than of the World itself” (Tolkien, 1977, p. 21). Thus, the Valar sought to bring order to the world and fulfill the vision Ilúvatar had presented to them through semi-divine, yet synergistic, presence. The Maiar, or the “lesser,” were the “servants and helpers” (Tolkien, 1977, p. 30) of the Valar and proceeded to leave Aman for Middle-earth in order to interact with Middle-earth’s creatures, especially The Children of Ilúvatar. In doing so, the Maiar influence the course of Arda’s history through cosmic consciousness and divine essence. Likewise, since the Children of Ilúvatar were “conceived by him (Ilúvatar) alone... (and) none of the Ainur had part in their making” (Tolkien, 1977, p. 18), Elves and Men are divinely connected and blessed. This sequence of events parallels James’s (1890) characteristics of consciousness (specifically personal consciousness and change, as well as interacting with that which is independent of itself), Combs’s (2002) assertion that all life forms have some form of consciousness, and Combs’s (1996) perspective of liminality and synchronicity. The process of the Ainur coming to Arda, dividing into two ruling entities, and governing the course of existence reflects the panpsychic ideal of a collective and inclusive consciousness, whereby the “divine” and the “earthly” commune above the threshold of incongruence and discord.

The implications of an all-pervasive, all-connecting, consciousness are very apparent in Tolkien’s creation story. The panpsychic ideal is witnessed in not only Ilúvatar himself, but in the formation of Arda and its inhabitants, as well as the interactions between and amongst all entities. Indeed, one could justify *The Silmarillion* as the ultimate fantasy text on panpsychism.

The Hobbit. While Tolkien had written many reports, editorials, essays, poems, and stories in the beginning of the 1900s (Bertenstam, 2002), *The Hobbit* was Tolkien’s (1937) prominent text that led to literary acclaim and prestige. *The Hobbit* occurs in what is known as the Third Age, or “The War of the Ring,” but events in the Second Age set the stage for *The Hobbit*’s narrative.

The Second Age. During the Second Age, Sauron (Melkor’s ally and crony) convinced the greatest Elven craftsmen and smiths to fashion rings of power for the most prominent races in Middle-earth, the Elves, the Men, and the Dwarves. While the Elves created these powerful rings for each race, Sauron forged the “One Ring,” or the ring that would rule over all the others, in Mount Doom. The One Ring possessed many different powers, including granting invisibility, telepathy, and long life to the one who possessed it. The Elves discovered Sauron’s betrayal and hid their rings, but not before Sauron had gained enough power to confront the peoples of Middle-earth and threaten humanity with subjugation and destruction. At the Siege of Barad-dûr, Sauron was defeated when Isildur, the King of Gondor (a kingdom in Middle-earth ruled by Men), cut the One Ring from Sauron’s hand with shards from the Sword of Elendil, Isildur’s father who was killed by Sauron during the battle; however, Isildur’s refusal to destroy the One Ring by casting it into the fires of Mount Doom results in Sauron’s spirit surviving and Isildur dying at the Battle of Gladden Fields when he is slain by Orcs. The One Ring is then lost in the River Anduin but still searches for a way to get back to Sauron through any means or any person possible (Harvey, 2003).

The Third Age. Some 2,400 years later, after the Battle of Gladden Fields, Déagol find the One Ring, and his friend Sméagol subsequently murders him, both of who were Hobbits. Sméagol, living an unnaturally long life because of the ring’s mystical and magical essence but suffering from the evil contained within the ring, isolates himself in the Misty Mountains and begins to transform into Gollum, a dual personality that is manipulative, wicked, and consumed with and by the One Ring. During his transformation from Sméagol to Gollum, and his subsequent living

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with a split persona (i.e., Sméagol was identified as “good” and Gollum was identified as “bad”), the creature refers not only to the One Ring as “my precious” but also to himself, and this reference is especially noted when he is upset or agitated with himself or others (Harvey, 2003).

There and Back Again. *The Hobbit* begins some 450 years after Sméagol (Gollum) confines himself within the Misty Mountains when Gandalf the Grey, one of the Maiar, invites Bilbo Baggins, a Hobbit, on an adventure with Thorin Oakenshield’s Dwarven company. Thorin and his kin are headed to reclaim their home under the Lonely Mountain from Smaug, a dragon, as well as reclaim a prized family heirloom, the Arkenstone. Gandalf chooses Bilbo as the burglar who will retake the Arkenstone from Smaug. During Bilbo’s quest with Gandalf and the Dwarves, many panpsychic aspects are evident. For instance, Bilbo is at first reluctant to participate in this quest with Gandalf and the Dwarves, calling himself a “fool” and that he should not be entertaining the idea of “dragons and all that outlandish nonsense” (Tolkien, 1937, p. 27).

Bilbo is self-absorbed, cantankerous, and reserved, so he grapples with his fear of the unknown surrounding the adventure juxtaposed with the divine calling by Gandalf to journey with the Dwarven company (and Gandalf) to the Lonely Mountain. Bilbo decides to join the adventure (with some persuading from Gandalf) and this decision ultimately determines the fate of Middle-earth and humanity within (which is discussed below). The uncertainty and oscillation experienced by Bilbo places him on the threshold of Combs’s (1996) numinosity and the divine calling by Gandalf to join the quest, Baruss’s (2003) consciousness perspectives, particularly delusional vs. veridical, mundane vs. extraordinary, and dangerous vs. beneficial threads and their relation to the adventure, dangers, and excitement within, and Johnson’s (1986) description of consciousness as viewed through the lens of self when Bilbo contemplates his decision to join the company or not. Bilbo is hovering on the outer edges of the panpsychic ideal but is starting to transform his consciousness through divine inspiration, self-discovery, and self-reflection.

Second, during their quest, Bilbo and company encounter a number of panpsychic objects related to inanimate and synchronistic consciousness. At the start of the adventure, the troupe defeats some trolls, pillages the trolls’ hoard (with Bilbo acquiring a magical sword, affectionately known as “Sting,” that glows blue when Goblins are near), and then seek shelter in a cave from a monstrous storm. The company realizes the cave has a huge crevice in the floor but do not realize the opening connects the cave directly to underground Goblin tunnels. The group is soon overtaken by Goblins and in the process Bilbo finds himself lost underground in complete darkness.

While trying to find his way out of the underground caves, Bilbo finds the One Ring in a dank passageway and then unluckily happens upon Gollum’s chambers. It is here that Gollum “as dark as darkness, except for two big round pale eyes in his thin face” (Tolkien, 1937, p. 67) threatens Bilbo’s life with a game of riddles. If Bilbo wins, Gollum will show him the way out of the cave unscathed, but if Bilbo loses Gollum will eat him. During the game of riddles, Gollum becomes frustrated at Bilbo’s tenacity and luck and begins to hiss and splutter and talk to himself about the One Ring, that it is “quite safe, yes...it won’t see us, will it, my precious...no...it won’t see us, and its nassty little sword will be useless, yes quite” (Tolkien, 1937, p. 75).

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Three panpsychic elements are evident within this meeting between Bilbo and Gollum: Bilbo's sword, the One Ring, and Gollum as a trickster. Bilbo's sword begins to glow blue during his confrontation with Gollum, indicating that Goblins are nearby. Sting "burned with a rage... (as) bright as blue flame for delight in the killing (of Goblins)" (Tolkien, 1937, p. 61). The sword possesses an unexplainable consciousness, indicative of James's (1890) consciousness characteristics (again, if setting aside the standardized "human" interpretations and experiences of consciousness), particularly that of changing personal consciousness and interacting with objects independent of itself, Combs's (2002) assertion that everything has the potential for consciousness, and Combs's (1996) ideology of cosmic energy and synchronicity influencing reality, as the universal energy surrounding the sword abruptly ends the game of riddles and allows Bilbo to escape.

The One Ring also displays panpsychic tendencies. In fact, the One Ring could be considered as the absolute definition of panpsychism with its ability to think and act for itself as well as influencing not only the personalities of those who possess it but also the course of Middle-earth history. Gollum quite intimately understands the panpsychic essence of the One Ring as it has given him long life and supernatural powers (i.e., invisibility, telepathy) but in the process he has sacrificed his morality and integrity, and lives in a state of complete turmoil and chaos because of the One Ring trying to find its way back to Sauron's spirit. Bilbo begins to understand the force behind the One Ring when he inadvertently slips it on his finger while fumbling in his pocket after the game of riddles ends, realizing "that the ring he had was a magic ring: it made you invisible!" (Tolkien, 1937, p. 79).

The One Ring, with its all-pervasive consciousness, undoubtedly relates to Combs's (2002, 2009) integrality and multifacetism due to its cumulative effects on Middle-earth's history, as Gollum losing the One Ring to Bilbo alters the trajectory of events in the One Ring making its way back to Sauron. The consciousness of the One Ring also relates to Combs's (2002), again, in asserting the potentiality for consciousness to exist in universal totality, as well as Stein's (1983) belief in liminal detachment and cosmic awareness, as is seen in the beginnings of Bilbo separating himself from his environment in using the powers of the One Ring to escape the caves unnoticed.

Finally, Gollum has no intention of letting Bilbo leave unscathed if Bilbo wins the game of riddles. Gollum uses everything in his power to trick Bilbo with his riddles so he will not have to show Bilbo the way out of the caves and consequently Bilbo will become dinner. Gollum so politely informs Bilbo that "it must have a competition with us, my precious! If precious asks, and it doesn't answer, we eats it, my preciousss. If it asks us, and we doesn't answer, then we does what it wants, eh? (Tolkien, 1937, p. 69).

Gollum's riddles are intricate and devious, and with each turn he becomes more agitated at Bilbo's tenacity at guessing correctly, growing disappointed with the outcome of the riddle exchange, "getting angry, and also tired of the game (as) it had made him very hungry indeed" (Tolkien, 1937, p. 72). When Bilbo, absentmindedly but unfairly, asks Gollum what he (Bilbo) has in his pocket (i.e., The One Ring), Gollum loses the riddle game. Gollum is furious at guessing incorrectly but obliges in showing Bilbo out of the cave saying "we can't go up the tunnels so hasty—we must go and get some things first, yes, things to help us" (Tolkien, 1937, p. 74). Gollum goes back to his chambers to retrieve his "precious" intending on using the One Ring to become invisible and then attack and eat Bilbo. Upon not finding his ring where he left

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it, Gollum pieces the riddles together and frantically searches for Bilbo in the caves, now knowing that Bilbo has the One Ring.

When he could not find Bilbo and the One Ring, Gollum “sat down and began to weep, a whistling and gurgling sound horrible to listen to” (Tolkien, 1937, p. 78). Bilbo, although petrified and on the verge of killing the creature from the shadows, has “a sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror... (of) a glimpse of endless unmarked days without light or hope of betterment, hard stone, cold fish, sneaking and whispering” (Tolkien, 1937, p. 80), and decides instead to let Gollum live as he (Bilbo) leaves the caves in safety. Gollum’s trickster nature (and one can also include Bilbo as a trickster since his last riddle was technically not a riddle at all) parallels the panpsychic assertions of Combs’s (1996) mythical trickster and synchronicity, as the outcome of the game of riddles allows Bilbo to escape with the One Ring thereby changing the course of Middle-earth history, and Stein’s (1983) consciousness threshold and Johnson’s (1986) inner conflict in Bilbo connecting with Gollum thru a brief renewal of soul and inner dialogue between right and wrong, respectively, in Bilbo taking pity on Gollum and not killing him (which also affects the fate of the One Ring and its destruction).

The implications of a cosmic, all-encompassing consciousness are, as with Tolkien’s creation story, very apparent in Tolkien’s hobbit tale. The panpsychic ideal is witnessed in multiple forms from Bilbo’s liminal decision for adventure to enchanted swords and a magical ring to Gollum’s trickster nature affecting the course of Middle-earth history. The ability for consciousness to inhabit and alter beings and objects on multiple levels in multiple forms creates the ideal panpsychic fantasy narrative, as well as the synchronistic aspects of behaviors and future outcomes. As with *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit* continues weaving more panpsychic threads into the fabric of consciousness and sets the stage for Tolkien’s renowned trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*.

The Lord of the Rings. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* is divided into three distinct books, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*. Each book contains multiple examples of panpsychic characteristics as witnessed in the stories’ characters, environment, and entities. However, since the premise of Tolkien’s trilogy is based upon one central character, Frodo Baggins, and his journey with the One Ring, the majority of emphasis will be on Frodo’s panpsychic relationship with Middle-earth.

The Fellowship of the Ring. Bilbo finishes his adventure with Gandalf and the Dwarves and returns to his hobbit-hole with the One Ring in tow. The One Ring is then inherited by Frodo Baggins, Bilbo’s cousin. It is from this inheritance that Frodo learns what he must do: take the One Ring to the cracks of Mount Doom and cast it into the fires to destroy it. Although Frodo will not be alone in this journey as he has Gandalf and a host of other races of Middle-earth (i.e., Hobbits, Men, an Elf, and a Dwarf) accompanying him on his quest, Frodo is essentially isolated because of his task as “ring-bearer.” As indicative from Gollum’s and Bilbo’s individual experiences with the One Ring, one is truly cut off from reality when in possession of the enigmatic band.

At the beginning of the story, Gandalf suspects the ring in Frodo’s possession is the One Ring, and Gandalf seeks counsel from the highest of the Maiar living in Middle-earth, Saruman, to discuss this premise. While visiting Saruman in his white tower (i.e., Isengard), Gandalf is imprisoned as Saruman has joined Sauron’s forces in finding the One Ring (and Saruman

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foolishly believes that Sauron will allow the two of them to rule over Middle-earth together). Frodo does not know of Gandalf's imprisonment, yet, Frodo dreams of "a tall white tower, standing alone on a high ridge" (Tolkien, 1954a, p. 106) and sees a flash of light in the sky followed by a boom of thunder. Although he does not understand the dream, Frodo believes it has some semblance of meaning. Frodo's panpsychic premonitions are parallel to Combs's (1996) discussion of cosmic circumstances and one's inability to understand such situations in their totality, Baruss's (2003) theory of consciousness as described through precognitive dreaming and mystical connections, and Stein's (1983) philosophy of consciousness in terms of liminality and the threshold of awareness.

In addition to Frodo's precognitive instincts, one of the most royal princesses of the Noldor (Elven) people, Galadriel, uses her gift of clairvoyance to see inside the company's minds and speak to them. In Lothlórien, the fairest Elf kingdom in all Middle-earth, Frodo and his companions rest from their journey to Mount Doom. It is here that the Lady Galadriel telepathically peers into the minds of each of the companions and offers them "a choice between a shadow full of fear that lay ahead, and something that he greatly desired" (Tolkien, 1954a, p. 349) (i.e., the One Ring). Likewise, Galadriel uses her mirror (i.e., a basin filled with water) to reveal to Frodo what the future holds if he succeeds or fails in destroying the One Ring. The mirror, as commanded by Galadriel "shows things that were, and things that are, and things that yet may be" (Tolkien, 1954a, p. 352).

Galadriel's abilities to "enchant" the company's minds corresponds to the panpsychic ideologies of James's (1890), especially those tenets pertaining to the ever-changing nature of consciousness and the inclusion/exclusion or specific choosing of cosmic essences (i.e., fear or desire), Baruss's (2003) thematic threads, especially those pertaining to, on a cosmic level, experiential consciousness, transcendental states, and extraordinary occurrences, and Hixon's (1978) ideology of enlightenment and inquiry resulting in synergism between the company and Source (i.e., Galadriel).

The Two Towers. Continuing with his panpsychic themes, Tolkien uses the second book in his trilogy to display universal consciousness through characters and environmental interactions. Frodo and his companions have now separated and Frodo is continuing his journey to Mount Doom with his faithful and loyal servant, Samwise Gamgee, to destroy the One Ring. In the process of the two Hobbits' journey, Sméagol (Gollum) follows them, but the creature is finally caught and subdued by Frodo and Sam. As the three march across Middle-earth to Mount Doom, they happen upon the Dead Marshes, "an endless network of pools, and soft mires, and winding half-strangled water-courses" (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 612) with "misty flames flickering slowly above unseen candles" (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 613). Gollum warns the Hobbits that the marshes contain "candles of corpses" (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 613) of "all dead, all rotten... Elves and Men and Orcs" (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 614) and that they are not to look at the "tricksy lights" (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 613) from the corpses' candles unless the Hobbits want to "join the Dead ones and light little candles" (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 614) of their very own.

Because Frodo is carrying the One Ring, he is extraordinarily sensitive to evil contained within Middle-earth, and the Dead Marshes beckon him to look at the corpses' lights. The marshes and corpses mesmerize Frodo, and he acts as if he is almost in a dream-like state because of the aura of the meres. It takes extraordinary willpower for him not to "look in when the candles are lit" (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 614). The Dead Marshes represent several panpsychic elements, especially

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those related to Combs' (1996) synchronicity and mythical trickster, as indicated by the "tricksy lights" of the corpses holding sway over Frodo's consciousness, Baruss's (2003) perspective of lucid dreaming and consciousness experiences, as indicated by Frodo's enchantment from the corpses and loss of reality, and Johnson's (1986) integrated lens of self and cosmos and the inner conflicts that arise in Frodo, as he is inexplicably drawn to the lights of the dead in the marshes but also knows he should not follow the flickering flames lest he become dead himself.

In addition to anthropomorphic marshes, Tolkien uses talking trees to portray panpsychic elements in his narrative. In Fangorn Forest, an old forest located on the outskirts of Isengard, Meriadoc (Merry) Brandybuck and Peregrin (Pippin) Took, two Hobbits who began the journey to Mount Doom with Frodo and then separate from Frodo with the rest of the company in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, meet Fangorn (Treebeard), an Ent who is a "large Man-like, almost Troll-like figure, at least fourteen foot high..." (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 452) and covered in green and grey bark with "a sweeping grey beard, bushy, almost twiggy at the roots, (and) thin and mossy at the ends" (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 452). Treebeard is an ancient "tree herder," or one who "shepherds" the forest and oversees its entire welfare including survival, safety, and happiness. In his meeting with Merry and Pippin, Treebeard learns of Saruman's betrayal in joining Sauron and of Saruman's desecration of Fangorn Forest. Treebeard is consciousness personified as he is not only saddened but also angry to hear of his tree-friends being destroyed, telling Merry and Pippin

Many of those trees were my friends, creatures I had known from nut and acorn; many had voices of their own that are lost forever now. And there are wastes of stump and bramble where once there were singing groves. I have been idle. I have let things slip. It must stop! (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 462-63).

After calling a meeting with other forest Ents, the trees decide to march on Saruman's tower to avenge those in the forest that have suffered. Treebeard is not concerned with Saruman's concrete stronghold and tells Merry and Pippin

We are stronger than Trolls. We are made of the bones of the earth. We can split stone like the roots of trees, only quicker, far quicker, if our minds are roused! If we are not hewn down, or destroyed by fire or blast of sorcery, we could split Isengard into splinters and crack its walls into rubble (Tolkien, 1954b, p. 474-75).

Treebeard and his fellow Ents march on Isengard and do indeed overthrow Saruman with the help of other members in the original fellowship company. In doing so, the Ents have affected the course of Middle-earth history by removing a powerful and evil force from the universe. Tolkien's depiction of Treebeard and the Ents incorporates various panpsychic elements, specifically the assertion that all life forms have the potential for consciousness and can engage in reason and identify self-purpose (Combs, 2002), the ability to integrate self into the cosmos and affect its outcomes (Johnson, 1986), and the moving closer to Ultimate Consciousness through self-inquiry and cosmic enlightenment (Hixon, 1978), all as indicated by the Ents discussing and choosing to wage war on Isengard.

The Return of the King. Tolkien concludes his trilogy with a continuation, and possibly even intensification, of panpsychic aspects, especially with regards to inanimate objects demonstrating consciousness. Aragorn (Strider), an original member of Frodo's company when the journey to

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Mount Doom began and also heir of Isildur, has separated from Frodo and Sam and he and the remaining fellowship company members begin waging a war on Sauron and his subordinates as Frodo and Sam continue to Mount Doom alone. During their siege on Isengard with the Ents, Aragorn and his comrades have acquired Saruman's palantír, a crystal seeing-stone that when gazed upon can absorb the seer's mind and transport the gazer to wherever they wish with no restriction to space or time. In addition to allowing an individual to be transported to parallel dimensions, the palantír also communicates with others of its kind, regardless of where the seeing-stones are located throughout Middle-earth.

Aragorn has looked into the stone and endured a bitter mind-struggle with Sauron, who also has a palantír in his tower at Barad-dûr, to show him that Isildur's heir is indeed alive, and knowing that Aragorn has "lived and walked the earth was a blow to his (Sauron's) heart...for he knew it not till now" (Tolkien, 1955, p. 763). Aragorn telepathically shows Sauron that the Sword of Elendil has been reforged and the result is that Sauron is "not so mighty yet that he is above fear; nay, doubt ever gnaws him" (Tolkien, 1955, p. 763) in accomplishing his goal of desecrating and subjugating Middle-earth. The extraordinary powers of the seeing-stones exhibit multiple panpsychic qualities including James's (1890) tenets of consciousness streams and communication, as shown by Aragorn and Sauron communicating telepathically, Combs's (2002, 2009) ideologies of synergistic consciousness reflection and existence of consciousness in all life forms, specifically with the palantír exhibiting individual and collective consciousness, and Combs's (1996) perspective of awareness of cosmic energy, as revealed through Aragorn perceiving and manipulating the cosmic energy held within the palantír.

In addition to the palantír, the One Ring has become the ultimate representation of consciousness within Tolkien's trilogy. Frodo and Sam have now reached Mount Doom with the intention of casting the One Ring into the fires in order to destroy it (and in the process ultimately destroy Sauron). The journey has taken its toll on both Hobbits, but Frodo has endured the most. Under the constant pull of the One Ring, Frodo has suffered immensely, both physically and mentally, and it takes "all his will to draw his breath and to make his legs keep going" (Tolkien, 1955, p. 910) up the side of Mount Doom and into the fires at the heart of the mountain from whence the One Ring was forged. At the cracks inside the mountain, Frodo finally succumbs to the One Ring's power, and is unable to cast it into the flames, telling Sam "I have come...but I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!" (Tolkien, 1955, p. 924). As soon as Frodo slips it on his finger Sauron immediately knows he is inside Mount Doom.

The One Ring is the complete embodiment of multifaceted cosmic consciousness and demonstrates all panpsychic aspects as discussed from the previously mentioned consciousness authors from James's (1890) nature of consciousness and its distinct characteristics, Combs's (2002, 2009) synergistic integrality, multifacetism, and potentiality for consciousness in all life forms, Combs's (1996) divine/cosmic energy as viewed through synchronicity, and Baruss's (2003) thematic threads and dream-like essences and experiences to Stein's (1983) detachment of soul juxtaposed with cosmic awareness and dying of self, Johnson's (1986) self-integration and plurality of self and cosmos, and Hixon's (1978) enlightenment and primal awakening of Source.

Frodo has become the One Ring and vice versa. Their individual consciousness has merged into a single, yet multifaceted, entity that is personal, changing, continuous, synergistic, aggregate,

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cosmic, experiential, transcendent, precognitive, distorted, magical, liminal, macabre, omnipresent, plural, stratified, enlightened, primal, transparent, and reflective. Each element involved with the One Ring indicates that the piece is mindful and cognizant of the entire universe as well as its relationship to Frodo and the effect it has on his consciousness. Likewise, Frodo is aware of the One Ring's power and its effects on his well-being as well as how he alters and influences the One Ring's essence when he slips it on his finger. Frodo and the One Ring are the ultimate representation of panpsychism in fantasy literature.

Commentary and Discussion

The idea of a universal psyche, a cosmic soul or consciousness, can be quite difficult to study or even accept as a consciousness possibility. However, Tolkien has done a phenomenal job in describing and exploring the concept of panpsychism in his characters, storylines, and narrative interactions.

In using various consciousness experts' theoretical perspectives, the relationship between panpsychism and Tolkien's stories is unmistakable ranging from omnipotent and omnipresent essences in the creation of Tolkien's cosmos and mythical tricksters and synchronicity affecting the trajectory of Middle-earth history, to inanimate objects displaying absolute consciousness and affecting the mind and behavior of the individual possessing the objects, and everything in between regarding inner conflict and decision making, precognition, lucid dreaming, clairvoyance/telepathy, loss of reality, and naturalistic/environmental interactions.

Ultimately, Tolkien's panpsychic ideal culminates in character self-discovery, self-reflection, and self-integration on individual and cosmic dimensions that display a universal psyche between and within characters and Middle-earth. Tolkien's ability to stream, synergize, and solidify consciousness on multiple panpsychic levels leaves no doubt of a universal psyche or soul in his works. From creation to conflict to completion, Tolkien has blurred the panpsychic boundaries of what "can" and what "cannot" have consciousness, and in the process has provided a transparent and cosmic lens in which to view the fantasy literature world.

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