THE GOLEM PROJECT
Creation, Animation and the Re-enchantment of the World

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Introduction

The symbolism and message of the Jewish Golem myth, in which a magical creature is fashioned from clay and brought to life, bear resemblance to Genesis and other ancient myths such as the Greek myth of Prometheus, who fashioned man out of clay, stole fire from the Olympian Gods and gave it to mankind. Characteristic for these myths is man’s attempt to master a power that is reserved for divinity. The myth serves as a warning about exploring the limitations of human knowledge and power, in particular, the power of creation and by extension of creating artificial life.

The imagery and symbols in the story recur across many human cultures, so extensively, it could be regarded as a universal myth with many local variations. The stories have appeared unrelated to each other in various civilizations and have been approached through religion, literature, art and popular culture for millennia. The never-fading interest in this theme suggests, that it raises questions at the core of the human experience. In modern times, they typically belong in the science fiction genre, where the theme of creating artificial life, or intelligence, and the ethical ambiguities surrounding it, is characteristic for the style. Maybe, the question that has captured our interest most about artificial life is, what it can teach us about human life and what it means to be human. The “mad scientist,” Dr. Victor Frankenstein, is driven by an ambition to explore the animation of dead matter, as portrayed by Mary Shelley.

One of the phenomena which had peculiarly attracted my attention was the structure of the human frame, and, indeed, any animal endued with life. Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed? It was a bold question, and one which has ever been considered as a mystery; yet with how many things are we upon the brink of becoming acquainted, if cowardice or carelessness did not restrain our inquiries.2

In a technologically advanced and secular society, the most fundamental question at the chore of our existence: “what is it to be a human being?” can be answered, perhaps solely, through the investigation of recreating human life through technology. In a society where the concept of the human soul is no longer scientifically viable, what makes us different from machines? Explaining the human conscience is a task, in front of which, science stands footed. The yearning to answer these questions and to push the border of human knowledge can seem so obsessive, that the potential risks of creating these artificial intelligences are ignored. Many stories on this theme, from Genesis and Sumerian and Greek creation myths, to Golem, Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus

1 [A] golem (ˈgoʊləm/ GOH-lam; Hebrew: גולם) is an animated anthropomorphic being that is magically created entirely from inanimate matter (specifically clay or mud)

Prometheus, to present day sci-fi, provide an ethical discussion and a warning of these consequences. The classic hubris theme, in which man challenges the gods and brings upon him his own downfall, appears deeply embedded in these stories. In the literary classic, Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus by Mary Shelley, Dr. Frankenstein warns his friend about challenging the laws of nature and explains how this lead to his eventual destruction:

After days and nights of incredible labour and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter.

The astonishment which I had at first experienced on this discovery soon gave place to delight and rapture. After so much time spent in painful labour, to arrive at once at the summit of my desires was the most gratifying consummation of my toils. But this discovery was so great and overwhelming that all the steps by which I had been progressively led to it were obliterated, and I beheld only the result. What had been the study and desire of the wisest men since the creation of the world was now within my grasp. [...

I see by your eagerness and the wonder and hope which your eyes express, my friend, that you expect to be informed of the secret with which I am acquainted; that cannot be; listen patiently until the end of my story, and you will easily perceive why I am reserved upon that subject. I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to your destruction and infallible misery. Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.  

Lucifer’s downfall, one of the most famous stories on the hubris theme. Illustration for John Milton’s Paradise Lost by Gustav Doré, 1866.

For my project, consisting of two parts, this essay and a sculptural work, the Golem story will be used as a starting point, though it is not the first, nor the most predominant myth of its kind. I will further analyze some other myths following the same pattern. The main reasons for focusing on the Golem, and not say the gingerbread man, or my favorite book Frankenstein, is primarily the material used to create the form – clay; and secondly the corresponding rituals of animating the form. Both the material and the rituals associated with the Golem will be used for my sculptural project.

A prominent theme in my work, which relates to the study of archetypes, is the unraveling of something hidden – the deciphering of a hidden, perhaps divine, language. This notion, which connects to my own personal faith, has guided me, through my brief background in the fields of theology and anthropology and into the field of fine arts. The same concept is central in my method of choice, the deconstruction of found objects. The series of works Untitled (2014), Logograms (2016) and Papers (2015–2017) deal with this “language” in a quite direct way, approaching written symbols. For Untitled, I dug for imagery, and later text fragments, in the layers of advertisement posters; For Logograms, I interpreted the shapes of Styrofoam packaging of electronic products as signs of a language; and for Papers, I deconstructed the most printed books in history, the Bible and Quotations by Chairman Mao Tse-Tung, by turning them into hand-made paper sheets.

The method of “deciphering a hidden language” further connects to the concept of re-enchantment, which is also elemental to my practice. This concept derives from early 20th century sociologist and economist Max Weber’s notion of disenchantment. The, by Weber formulated, “Entzauberung der Welt” also translates as the “demystification of the world”, and is signified by the evanescence of mystical forces and “magical means” in the process of intellectualization and secularization in Western society. In 1917 Weber gave a lecture on this topic, which later became a literary classic, with the title Science as a Vocation, in which he illustrates this phenomenon through the following example:

Does it mean that we, today, for instance, everyone sitting in this hall, have a greater knowledge of the conditions of life under which we exist than has an American Indian or a Hottentot? Hardly. Unless he is a physicist, one who rides on the streetcar has no idea how the car happened to get into motion. And he does not need to know. He is satisfied that he may ‘count’ on the behavior of the streetcar, and he orients his conduct according to this expectation; but he knows nothing about what it takes to produce such a car so that it can move. The savage knows incomparably more about his tools. When we spend money today I bet that even if there are colleagues of political economy here in the hall, almost every one of them will hold a different
answer in readiness to the question: How does it happen that one can buy something for money – sometimes more and sometimes less? The savage knows what he does in order to get his daily food and which institutions serve him in this pursuit. The increasing intellectualization and rationalization do not, therefore, indicate an increased and general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives.

It means something else, namely, the knowledge or belief that if one but wished one could learn it at any time. Hence, it means that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service. This above all is what intellectualization means.

The process of re-enchanting the world would then mean bringing back – at least the experience of – these mystical forces and “magical means”. This always appealed to, and motivated, me as an artist, which is evident to anyone, who takes a closer look at my practice. I endeavor to create objects, which are mystical and inexplicable, as of their content, yet simple and irreducible in their shape.

I constantly aim for an artwork with enough integrity to not be communicable through words, silencing the viewer.

My artistic process can be reduced into five steps: 1. Scavenging for found material and objects. 2. Determining if the object is already “realized in its fullest form”, or if it is yet to be fulfilled (here the vague idea of some kind of soul of the object enters my perception) and also being sensitive towards, if it is disruptive, to the object to take it out of its environment. 3. If the circumstances are right, bringing it back to the studio and finding the right method for “realizing its full potential”. 4. Choosing method, which is usually either subtracting material that seems superfluous, to purify it, or adding a material which will honor and elevate it. I aim to find the simplest, most direct and honest method for each work, as the process is crucial to me and not just a means to realize a final product. 5. The chosen method is carried out within usually strict outer framework, which creates space for a certain amount of chance in this stage of the process. This final step, where I create, or materialize, somewhat resembles a ritual in that sense.

It has been pointed out to me, that I display motherly feelings towards these objects and works of mine. This notion got me thinking about how we as humans, at least as children, often perceive something reminiscent of a soul in dead objects. As artists, we tend to populate our own private universes, through what appears like the process of bringing dead objects to life – at least in our

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own imagination, and perhaps for someone else if we believe it enough to convince them. The tendency towards an almost shamanistic art practice is a current I have observed in my own work and in the art of colleagues. The occurrence of this phenomenon in the contemporary strikes me, as the result of living in an, according to Weber, disenchanted world, which we attempt to re-enchant. A re-enchanted world can also be seen as an animated and inspired world. I suggest, that the contemporary artist, as a possible manager of the previously divine power of creation, can take on the role of re-enchanting the world, where there in a secularized society appears to be no one else left to do it.

Does not the creative power of “populating private universes”, or animating dead objects, and making others believe in them, make us co-creators? And is it, perhaps, the possession of this power, that we speak of when we say that we are ‘created in God’s image’ as Genesis 1:27 suggests? Or, is this power something that we have “stolen”? How does the artist relate to the supposed dissolving hierarchies of the previously divine? Can we find artistic ethics for the management of this power? These are some of the questions, which this essay attempts to answer, through the exploration of myths.

Interpreting the archetype behind the Golem and exploring the power of creation, through this project, appears to connect themes, running like a common thread throughout my whole body of work as an artist. The power of creation/creativity is linked to animation and connects to re-enchantment. As the questions raised are of basic metaphysical and ontological nature, they are as well ancient and have been discussed by many great thinkers. There is an impending risk of repetition and banality to this project. I jokingly call myself a “Wikipedia mystic”, and my honest intent is to enlighten myself through this intuitive research – but foremost through the actual art work itself, as I have come to suspect, that the answers to these questions are truly experienced in a creative process and not necessarily possible to mediate in any other way. This is also why, it is relevant for me to investigate these universal and fundamental questions from square one; I believe in the experience of the process above the physical outcome.

The research and writing of this essay will be inseparable from the artistic process of my Master’s exhibition, titled The Golem Experiment, and should be read as such – thoughts and explorations from an artistic process. In the formal work for my exhibition, I will, as mentioned, perform and display the concepts and rituals associated with this myth, which were found through this research. The process will proceed as follows, within the days before unveiling the work. I will: 1. build a pyramid-shaped heap of clay in the proportions of a human being 2. Give the object a mouth. 3.
Smuggle a Eucharist out of the Catholic mass. 5. Perform a sex-magic ritual in the Thelemic tradition 6. Insert the semen and vaginal juices into to the mouth of the object, mimicking the Thelemic Eucharist from the so called “Gnostic mass” 6. Insert the Catholic Eucharist into the mouth 7. Write down a Shem on a piece of paper, according to the Kabbalist tradition of creating a golem 8. Insert the Shem into the mouth 9. Breathe into the mouth. I will further use incense from the Catholic mass in the space, as a traditional symbol of the Holy Spirit, during the whole process and exhibition period.

The experiment of the art work is to fully enter the role of the creator, by animating, or enchanting, a dead object. It will be my most performative work yet, as the process of creation is more relevant for this project than the physical outcome. The clay sculpture, or golem, that will result from this act will naturally deteriorate and be disposed of. This project is quite notably the first time as an artist, that I will create an artwork entirely, not using a found material as a rudiment. In that sense, as I enter the role of the creator, I will leave that of a co-creator. This act has always intimidated me, almost to the extent of the fear that the stories of golems and other animated monsters serve to invoke. Needless to say, that sensation towards creation, reminiscent of vertigo, is part of my fascination for these stories. It is also constantly present in my life at the moment, as I am four months pregnant when conducting this project.

The archetype

An archetype, according to Jung, is an unknowable basic form, personified or made concrete by recurring images, symbols or patterns. It can also be described as a pattern of thought that appears universally in individual psyches. The archetype, in this case, would not be the Golem Myth, or any other myth following the same pattern, but rather the underlying theme behind these myths. From a Jungian perspective, myths are the “culturally elaborated representations of the contents of the deepest recess of the human psyche: the world of the archetypes.” Jung, who was one of the first people to develop the concept of the archetype, states in part one of Man and His Symbols that:

My views about the ‘archaic remnants’, which I call ‘archetypes’ or ‘primordial images,’ have been constantly criticized by people who lack a sufficient knowledge

5 The fluids from sex magic, such as semen, vaginal juices and menstruation blood are consumed as Eucharist within Thelema, sometimes bake into a bread, or so called "Cake of Light.”

6 Shem HaMephorash (Hebrew: שם המפורש, alternatively Shem ha-Mephorash or Schemhamphoras), meaning ‘the explicit name”

of the psychology of dreams and of mythology. The term ‘archetype’ is often misunderstood as meaning certain definite mythological images or motifs, but these are nothing more than conscious representations. Such variable representations cannot be inherited. The archetype is a tendency to form such representations of a motif—representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern.

Since the archetype, according to Jung, is part of the unconscious, an inaccessible part of the mind, the archetype in itself is unrepresentable, but can be visualized through archetypal images and ideas, or what Jung refers to as primordial images, a term he coined. Primordial images, he states, originate from the initial stages of humanity and have been part of the collective unconscious ever since. It is then through primordial images that universal archetypes are experienced, and more importantly, that the unconscious is revealed.

The influential work The Golden Bough by Sir James George Frazer predates Jung’s work on archetypes with about 30 years. Where Jung’s work is immaterial in its focus, as it aims to approach archetypes in the realm of the unconscious, Frazer’s work deals with archetypes in material terms. The Golden Bough is a comparative anthropological work that identifies practices and mythological beliefs shared among so called “primitive” and modern religions and systems of belief. Frazer famously proved, that the death-rebirth myth, with its function of explaining the changing seasons, is present in almost all cultural mythologies. The myth is symbolized by the death (final harvest) and rebirth (spring) of the god of vegetation. He used the Greek myth of Persephone as a starting point, in which she, the daughter of the goddess of harvest, Demeter, is abducted by Hades, marries him and becomes queen of the underworld. Demeter and Hades then find an agreement, where Persephone divide her time between the underworld and the world of the living. She functions as the personification of vegetation and her return to the living represents the rebirth of vegetation in spring. Similar myths appear in the Orient, in the cults of male gods like Attis, Adonis and Osiris, and in Minoan Crete, among other cultures.

The Golden Bough paved the way for many studies examining archetypes, most notably in the field of literature, with great works such as Archetypal Patterns in Poetry by Maud Bodkin from 1934, and Hero with a Thousand Faces by Joseph Campbell from 1949, in which he pioneered the idea of the ‘mono-myth’, a universal pattern for heroic tales across different cultures and genres. According to many scholars of literature, an archetype has a standard and recurring depiction in a particular human culture and/or the whole human race that ultimately lays concrete pillars and can shape the whole structure in a literary work.

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"The Hero’s Journey," a model of the ‘mono-myth’, described in *Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

*The Golden Bough* further influenced *Totem and Taboo* by Sigmund Freud from 1913, received an essay of commentaries by philosopher Ludvig Wittgenstein and opened up the emerging field of anthropology for pioneers such as Bronislaw Malinowski.

No sooner had I read this great work than I became immersed in it and enslaved by it. I realized then that anthropology, as presented by Sir James Frazer, is a great science, worthy of as much devotion as any of her elder and more exact studies and I became bound to the service of Frazerian anthropology.  

*The Golden Bough* was described as “a model of intriguing specificity wed to speculative imagination” by the critic Camille Paglia in 2015. She acknowledged that “many details in Frazer have been contradicted or superseded”, but maintained that the work of Frazer’s Cambridge school of classical anthropology “will remain inspirational for enterprising students seeking escape from today’s sterile academic climate.”

This description speaks to me in my little pursuit of insight through this research, which will be both speculative and outdated.

**The Golem**

During the early Middle Ages, passages from *Sefer Yetzirah*, or *The Book of Creation*, were studied by Jewish mystics as a means to create and animate a golem. The earliest known written account of

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10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.
how to create a golem can be found in *Sodei Razayya* by Eleazar ben Judah of Worms (1165–1230). The accounts of these rituals usually include the forming of a *Shem*, a hidden name of God in *Kabbalah*, through a ritualistic use of Hebrew letters. Once a Shem is formed it is expressed through ecstatic chanting. The only known Shem from the Golem Myth is the four-letter Shem ‘emet’, meaning *truth*. The Shem is commonly entered on the forehead, or written down on a piece of paper and inserted into the mouth or hung around the neck of the golem, thus bringing it to life.

A Shem is composed of either 4, 12, 22, 42, or 72 letters. The 72 letter version is a key component to the magical practices in the grimoire on demonology, *The Lesser Key of Salomon*, which lists 72 demons. This particular Shem is said to be derived from Exodus 14:19-21, and read boustrophedonically. Kabbalist and occultist legends state that the 72-fold name was used by Moses to cross the Red Sea, and that it can grant later holymen the power to control demons, heal the sick, prevent natural disasters, and even kill enemies.

In the 17th century tales of golems began to enter the public awareness. Joseph Delmedigo stated in 1625 that “many legends of this sort are current, particularly in Germany.” A Polish Kabbalist, reported in about 1630–1650 the creation of a golem by Rabbi Eliyahu:

> And I have heard, in a certain and explicit way, from several respectable persons that one man [living] close to our time, whose name is R. Eliyahu, the master of the name, who made a creature out of matter [Heb. *Golem*] and form [Heb. *tzurah*] and it performed hard work for him, for a long period, and the name of *emet* was hanging upon his neck, until he finally removed it for a certain reason, the name from his neck and it turned to dust.

In a book by Rabbi Jacob Emden published in 1748 we find the following account of a golem:

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12 Spell book/textbook of magic
14 “[A] kind of bi-directional text, mostly seen in ancient manuscripts and other inscriptions. Every other line of writing is flipped or reversed, with reversed letters. Rather than going left-to-right as in modern European languages, or right-to-left as in Arabic and Hebrew, alternate lines in boustrophodon must be read in opposite directions. Also, the individual characters are reversed, or mirrored. It was a common way of writing in stone in Ancient Greece.” Threatte, Leslie. *The grammar of Attic inscriptions*. W. de Gruyter, 1980. p. 54–55.
As an aside, I’ll mention here what I heard from my father’s holy mouth regarding the Golem created by his ancestor, the Gaon R. Eliyahu Ba’al Shem of blessed memory. When the Gaon saw that the Golem was growing larger and larger, he feared that the Golem would destroy the universe. He then removed the Holy Name that was embedded on his forehead, thus causing him to disintegrate and return to dust. Nonetheless, while he was engaged in extracting the Holy Name from him, the Golem injured him, scarring him on the face.\footnote{שו”ת שאילת יעב”ץ, ח”ב, סי’ פ”ב. Cf. his בירת מגדל עוז, Altona, 1748, p. 259a; אֲלֹטוֹנָה, Altona, 1768, p. 45a; and מִשְׁפָּטָה מְסַפְּרָיו, אֲלֹטוֹנָה, 1768, p. 45a; and מִשְׁפָּטָה מְסַפְּרָיו, קְהָנָה, Warsaw, 1896, p. 4. See also מְשִׁнстֵנִים תֵּבָע, מְשִׁнстֵנִים תֵּבָע, ed. Kahana, Warsaw, 1896, p. 4. See also מְשִׁнстֵנִים תֵּבָע, מְשִׁнстֵנִים תֵּבָע, and the references cited in מְשִׁнстֵנִים תֵּבָע, מְשִׁнстֵנִים תֵּבָע, כֵּפֶר חֳבָדָּה, vol. 1, p. 421 and in the periodical כֵּפֶר חֳבָדָּה, כֵּפֶר חֳבָדָּה, number 351 (1988), p. 51. Cited by Leiman, S.Z., “Did a Disciple of the Maharal Create a Golem?”}

There are several stories about the golem, of which the Chelm and the Prague narratives are the most reproduced. The Prague narrative tells the story of Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, (ca. 1520 – 1609) who created a golem out of clay from the banks of the Vltava River and brought it to life through rituals and Hebrew incantations, to defend the ghetto from anti-Semitic attacks.

A golem is under influence of its master and performs the actions he commands, sometimes understanding them too literally, causing trouble for the master. In all versions of the story, the creator loses control over the Golem who runs amok, with some versions having the golem eventually going on a murderous rampage. This usually occurs on a Sabbath, where the Rabbi

\[\text{The Shem is received from a demon evoked by Rabbi Loew and written down on a piece of paper which is entered into an amulet around the golem’s neck. Film stills from The Golem: How He Came into the World by Paul Wegener 1920.}\]
forgets to put the golem to rest for the day. In one version the Golem falls in love, and when rejected, becomes the violent monster seen in most accounts. The story ends when the Rabbi manages to deactivate the Golem through removing the Shem, or, like in some prominent versions, removing the letter E from the Shem ‘emet’, forming the word ‘met’ meaning ‘death’\(^\text{19}\). In some versions, the Rabbi puts the golem to rest in the attic of the synagogue, whereas in other versions, the golem collapses into pieces in front of the Synagogue, sometimes injuring the Rabbi. In the Chelm narrative, the golem becomes enormous. Upon deactivation, he crumbles over his creator, crushing him to death.\(^\text{20}\)

During the first part of the 19th century, the myth of the Golem was further popularized by several Jewish writers in Germany\(^\text{21}\). In modern times the myth has been interpreted by Gustav Meyrink, H. Lievick, Nicolae Bretan and Isaac Bashevis Singer among others, and in several movies of which the 1920 still movie *The Golem: How He Came into the World* by Paul Wegener is the most famous.

The oldest stories of golems date back to early Judaism. In the Talmud, Adam is referred to as a golem at the first stage of his creation, where dust is “kneaded into a shapeless husk”\(^\text{22}\). A later Sanhedrin describes Rava creating a man. He sends the man to Rav Zeira who speaks to the man who does not answer (the inability to speak is a defining characteristic of the golem) and Rav Zeira says to the man “you were created by the sages; return to your dust”\(^\text{23}\). These words are reminiscent of how many Golem myths end, where the Golem collapses into a pile of dust – a popularized image in movies, as well as in literature, where man-made monsters not seldom meet their ends this way, as a pile of dust spreading in the wind. This image also brings to mind a Christian funeral service, where we are reminded of the origin of man: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”\(^\text{24}\) This segment of the Bible was later adapted for service in *The Book of Common Prayers* as: “Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust”\(^\text{25}\)

\(^{\text{22}}\) Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 38b
\(^{\text{23}}\) Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 65b
\(^{\text{24}}\) *Genesis* 3:19 (King James Version)
The Creation

A story of creation where man is molded from clay or dust is told in many religions, besides the Abrahamic. In Sumerian mythology the god Enki creates man, as a servant of the gods, out of clay and blood. In another story, he creates humans from the clay of the freshwater of the underground, *Abzu*, which was given a religious fertilizing quality in Sumerian mythology. Enki and the goddess Ninmah then take turns in creating and decreeing the fate of the humans. The Greek version of the story of creation has Prometheus molding man from clay and Demeter breathing life into its form (I will go deeper into this specific myth later on). In Chinese mythology the goddess Nüwa molded figures from yellow earth, giving them life and the ability to bear children, and in Egyptian mythology the god Khnum creates human children from clay before placing them in their mother’s womb. According to Inca mythology, the creator god Viracocha formed humans from clay, and in many other indigenous American belief systems, the earth-maker formed the figures of many men and women, dried them in the sun and breathed life into them.

The act of forming man from inanimate matter appears to require a following act of animation, or bringing the object to life, where the creator prevalently breathes life into the body.

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.26

The words ‘spirit’ and ‘inspiration’ should be seen in relation to this life-giving ability. ‘Spiritus’ is the Latin word for ‘breath’ or ‘wind’ and ‘inspirare’ literally means to ‘blow into’ or ‘breathe upon’27. The meaning of this word evolves from “breathe into” to “infuse animation influence,” thus “affect, rouse, guide or control,” especially by divine influence28.

This connection, which is established between creation and inspiration in *Genesis* 2:7, states that a creation is a lifeless form if it is not inspired. The relationship between inspiration and creativity can be described as creation being the act where form is created, and inspiration being the act where this form is given *spirit or life*. But the human experience suggests that in order for us to create, we require inspiration. In our common understanding of the words ‘creativity’ and ‘inspiration’, they

26 *Genesis* 2:7 (*King James Version*)
28 Ibid.
are almost inseparable. This relationship suggests that creation can only be performed through inspiration, i.e. through a connection with the original Creator, through which the power of creation can flow. More directly, God acts through you when you are creating. In ca. 1300 the word ‘inspiration’ translated as “immediate influence of God or a god.”

Perhaps this access to the power of creation/creativity through inspiration is the actual meaning of man being created in God’s own image. It can even be suggested that the concept of God is inseparable or interchangeable with this creative/inspiring power. God is first described in Genesis 1:2: “[...] [T]he spirit of God was hovering over the waters,” translating also as: ”the ‘wind’/‘breath’ of God was hovering over the waters”. This is the part of Genesis where the world is described before Creation. It displays a poetic image of how the inspiration of God was waiting to manifest itself in a form.

Illustration of the world before Creation, with the inscription “et sic in infinitum” on all sides, from *Utriusque Cosmi maioris salicet et minoris metaphysica...* by Robert Fludd

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29 Ibid.
The Fall

Already in *Genesis* 3, where The Fall is described, we find the message or moral of the archetype behind the Golem Myth. The Fall warns us about the consequences of expanding human consciousness and knowledge, which is offered to man through the fruits of the *Tree of Wisdom*. It addresses mankind’s inherent wish to become godlike and how, in this attempt, they invoke God’s fury. The serpent tells Eve: “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”\(^{30}\) This suggests that not only does Eve want to taste the fruit out of curiosity or longing for knowledge, but also to become like God himself.

God’s warning against eating the fruit, even lying to the first men that they would instantly die should they taste it\(^{31}\), can be regarded either as an act of trying to protect them, or, as the following passage indicates, at least at first glance, that he is worried they would become godlike and perhaps even threaten his almighty power.

> And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.\(^{32}\)

If Adam is the first golem, then God, like all the other golem creators, appears to lose control over his creation. Adam and Eve start acting as autonomous individuals, exercising their free will, thus awakening from their slumber. After they discover knowledge, and the consequences but also the power that comes with knowledge, God must punish and expel them, to prevent them from eating from the Tree of Life. Not only does send them away, but he appears to do everything in his power to prevent this from happening, placing the cherubim and the flaming sword to protect the fruit of Tree of Life from the humans. The reason being, perhaps, that he is worried that they pursue the same power that he possesses, through becoming immortal, now that they already possess knowledge. Perhaps he feels threatened, or worried of how they might *abuse* this power. One can speculate in if the Tree of Life not only represents the power of immortality, but also the power of creation, the ability to create life from dead matter, and perhaps even the power of destruction and

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\(^{30}\) *Genesis* 3:5 (*English Standard Version*)

\(^{31}\) *Genesis* 3:4

\(^{32}\) *Genesis* 3:22 (*New International Version*)
to extinguish life.

Dr. Frankenstein is not just driven by the ambition to animate dead matter but also subsequently by the creation of eternal life:

Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. Pursuing these reflections, I thought that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time (although I now found it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption.33

The relation between the power of creation and the power of destruction, between life and death, is a relation, that we as humans experience perhaps both internally and in our surroundings. As it is suggested, that we altered the geology and ecosystems of the earth to such an extent, that we have entered a new geological era, called the Anthropocene, it is quite evident how human creativity is connected with a destructive force. Our entrance into this new era succeeding the Holocene was suggested by Nobel-prize winner and atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen in 2000, and by Italian geologist Antonio Stoppani already in 1873. The paradox of the life-giving but also devastating mortal force, that is human creativity, exemplified by the relation between the discovery of quantum mechanics and the atomic bomb, is one that we seem to be aware of as prevalent in the human race, but often also denying within ourselves on an individual level, minimizing the acts, of which we are capable, or contributing to. In an interview, Robert Oppenheimer illustrates his experience of the sight of the great fireball Trinity Test:

We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried, most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita; Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty and, to impress him, takes on his multi-armed form and says, “Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.” I suppose we all thought that, one way or another.36

The reaction of Dr. Frankenstein at the first glimpse of the creature, that he later calls monster, illustrates the experience of his instant awakening from his frantic haze:

It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, collected the instruments of life

34 Anthro- from anthrops (Ancient Greek: ἅνθρωπος) meaning “human” and -cene from kainos (Ancient Greek: καινός) meaning “new” or “recent.”
36 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8H7Jlbx-c0 28/11 2017
around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! – Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.

Perhaps, if we place man at the intersection of animalistic and divine power, where man has the fierce drives and survival instincts of an animal, but the ability to visualize and create wonders, it gives some insight into this paradox in our nature. It provides an answer to why we appear to be the only animal on this planet that creates evil – if evil can be seen as unnecessary destructive actions for the sole sake of one’s own pleasure. It further gives an explanation to why God would not let man eat from the Tree of Life after obtaining the knowledge that altered their conscience from a previously more animal-like state.

Our technological advancements follow the pattern of the life/death paradox as they enable new ways of life and new lifeforms but also the power to bring an end to our existence. Parallels can be drawn to other myths of the same archetype in the sci-fi genre, especially stories of robots where there is often an underlying or direct threat of them becoming human, replacing the human race in their sovereign position or even wiping out the human race entirely. This would be direct consequence of man’s creative yet destructive, even self-destructive, power. In these types of stories, Terminator for instance, the notion of eternal life is often a strong theme, being one of the things in Artificial Intelligence that possibly constitute a threat to the prevalence of the human race. Such an Intelligence might be as foreign and indifferent towards the prevalence of the human race as any other organism that does not rely on us in its ecosystem. It might also be hostile if we threaten its existence. It could even have a utilitarian motif where it decides that the planet as a

whole is better off without the invasive human species. Or the opposite, it could be for instance a military device programmed to ensure mankind’s, or a certain nation’s, survival which could lead to all sorts of destruction.

A self-reproducing Artificial Intelligence that we cannot stop or control is a real concern to many – today much more real than in the early days of the modern sci-fi genre. The question of whether this shift or point of no-return has actually already occurred is debated. This point could be called the fall or downfall of mankind according to the hubris theme and perhaps it is this fall, which does not just happen to one man but to our entire race, that we have foreseen through these myths. Perhaps these myths were designed to warn us about making the same mistakes as our technology advances – the same old mistakes that we seem programmed to repeat from the first men to the end of our existence.

**Greek mythology**

In polytheistic religions the first gods or creatures who created the world are often overthrown by a new generation of gods who are more man-like in their properties. Prometheus was a titan and the first generation of gods, the children and grandchildren of Uranus, the sky, and Gaia, the earth. Prometheus fashioned humans from clay while the goddess Demeter breathed life into them. His brother, Epimetheus, was responsible for assigning positive qualities to each animal after the creation of life. When it came to man’s turn Epimetheus had nothing left to give and Prometheus, who was very fond of mankind, being their father, thought of how to compensate them. Prometheus decided to steal the fire from the smith god Hephaestus and the artistry or craftsmanship from Athena and give these abilities to mankind. For this act he was punished by Zeus being bound to a rock with an eagle hacking on his liver for eternity.

The fire and the artistry can be seen as symbols of civilization. The ability of creating fire makes for a paradigm shift in the history of the human race, through which man not only could find warmth, but also cook food and preserve it, radically changing the conditions of life as hunters and nomads. The power of artistry and craftsmanship, or the power of creation, is the key to all human invention, and as previously suggested what separates humans from animals. Perhaps the very purpose of this myth is to explain this separation. The animals were given their abilities freely from the gods, but these abilities were stolen from the gods and given to mankind, thus placing mankind between the animals and the gods in their inherent power and abilities. Man becomes god-like through obtaining
these divine abilities which causes the fury and punishment of the highest god, similar to The Fall in *Genesis*.

After receiving the fire, mankind stopped worshipping the gods, which can be seen in relation to their new-found status. To bring mankind back into the fold, Zeus schemed to send man a great misfortune and assigned Hephaestus to create the first woman. Hephaestus fashioned her from clay and the gods gave her life, great abilities and various gifts. Hesiod expands upon her origin in *Works and Days*, verse 60–105: Athena taught her needlework and weaving (63–4); Aphrodite “shed grace upon her head and cruel longing and cares that weary the limbs” (65–6); Hermes gave her “a shameful mind and deceitful nature” (67–8); Hermes also gave her the power of speech, putting in her “lies and crafty words” (77–80); Athena then clothed her (72); next Persuasion and the Charites adorned her with necklaces and other finery (72–4); the Horae adorned her with a garland crown (75); and finally, Hermes gave this woman a name: Pandora – “All-gifted” – “because all the Olympians gave her a gift” (81).

Zeus gifted her a jar38 filled with all the gods’ blessings, which would befall all mankind as long as she did not open it. She was brought to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus, to seduce him. Despite Prometheus’ warning, Epimetheus fell in love with Pandora and wedded her – Epimetheus was naïve in his nature, his name meaning ‘he who thinks after’, in contrast to his brother Prometheus, ‘he who thinks before’. They lived happily for a while until Pandora ultimately fell for her curiosity and opened the jar, releasing all the blessings which instantly turned into curses, various evils, misfortunes, plagues and diseases, thus fulfilling her by Zeus assigned destiny. Pandora realized her mistake and quickly closes the jar, saving only one blessing on the bottom: hope.

This second part of the story of Prometheus, where a new transgression is made and a punishment is inflicted, this time on mankind, should also be compared to The Fall. These two myths address the *theodicy*, the question of why there is evil in the world. The myth of Pandora bears striking resemblance to that of Eve. They both play the central character in a story of transition from an original state of plenty and ease to one of suffering and death through the transgression of a divine law. Similar to Eve, the first woman in Greek mythology deceived man through her trickery and her curiosity. This ‘female’ curiosity, hunger for knowledge, or possibly divine power, is stated to be the reason behind all tragedies that have befallen mankind. Pandora’s character traits can be seen in relation to Eve and the traits historically and culturally assigned to women. Hesiod describes

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38 *pithos*, often mistranslated as *box*, a mistake attributed to Erasmus of Rotterdam
From her is the race of women and female kind:
of her is the deadly race and tribe of women who
live amongst mortal men to their great trouble,
no helpmates in hateful poverty, but
only in wealth. 39

In Greek mythology, there are several other examples of dead matter being brought to life by both man and divinity. The myth of Pygmalion tells the story of a sculptor who falls in love with one of his sculptures, which Aphrodite, moved by his love, brought to life. The famous craftsman Daedalus according to legend used quicksilver to install a voice in his statues. There are also some robot-like creatures in Greek mythology, including Talos, an artificial man of bronze, the Apega of Nabis story, where a mechanical simulacrum of a tyrant’s wife crushes victims in her embrace, and the automata that Hephaestus created for his workshop. The story of Pygmalion, which is a beloved motif in art, echoes in Pinocchio and other modern stories. The link between the Golem Myth and these stories is evident, but these stories have a different moral. The creatures are portrayed closer to blessing for their creators, whereas the golem becomes a curse.

Pygmalion et Galatée by Étienne Maurice Falconet, 1763

39 Hesiod. Works and Days. verse 590–93
Science and religion

In the myth, the mad scientist is an archetype of a person who defies God. Historically, Christian moralism has been difficult for scientists to relate to. Natural philosophers before the Enlightenment traditionally had a profound intent to honor God’s work through revealing its principles, but their findings, were often condemned as heretical, or even, as witchcraft. For this part, I attempt to illustrate the historical connection between science, religion and magic, before I evolve further into the field of magic.

By illustrating science, or natural philosophy, before the “disenchantment of the world” I want to point towards where my work finds its inspiration and what re-enchantment could look like. Inspired by Max Weber’s search for ethics in the field of science and humanities, I will use his previously referenced work *Science as a Vocation*, both for his excellent accounts of the history of science and the modern state, but also to try to find a code of ethics for art and for managing the power of creation, which again connects to the archetypal myth.

Hermetic tradition, such as alchemy, is what I consider the source of my method, in which the idea of the purification, but also the elevation, of a material, is essential. Many great thinkers that we consider pioneers of modern science, such as Isaac Newton (1642 – 1727), had hypotheses that originated in mystic beliefs, and carried out experiments according to practices such as alchemy. Newton, for instance, studied gravity as an occult and mystic force – which, in a way, it remains today. Natural philosophy before modern times had strong connections to secret esoteric societies, like Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism, where hermeticism is studied until this day.

Scientists and philosophers like Giordano Bruno (1548 – 1600), Baruch Spinoza (1632 – 1677), Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646 – 1716) and Friedrich Hegel (1770 – 1831) were dedicated pantheists, or monists, viewing nature as a materialization of God himself. Nature, to Spinoza and others, was a metaphysical substance, not physical matter. Pantheism also was considered heresy by the Roman Church as it challenges the notion of the Holy Trinity. Bruno and Leibniz are two examples of deeply religious scientists who have designed theories of atoms and so called *monads* respectively, interconnected with their theology. Many theories on matter are, in fact, a direct result of a Christian obsession with matter, due to theological issues of the materialization of the Holy Spirit, such as understanding the Eucharist and how we can consume Jesus Christ through bread and wine. This illustrates, to me, how belief is interconnected with creativity.

*Spinoza was Jewish, but he was excommunicated, as his synagogue issued a *herem* against him, and his books were included in the Catholic Church’s *Index of Forbidden Books*. 

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The shamanistic practice of some contemporary artists, including myself, connects not only to animism, in which you perceive a soul in every object, but also to pantheism, where God’s spirit is present, or rather materialized, in every thing. In pantheism, or monism, there is no distinction between God and his creation. Spinoza, for instance, did not separate God from Nature, using the words interchangeably. In the third chapter of *Tractus Theologico-Politicus*, Spinoza stated that the word “God” means the same as the word “Nature”: “Whether we say [...] that all things happen according to the laws of nature, or are ordered by the decree and direction of God, we say the same thing.” In his posthumously published book *Ethics*, he equated God with nature by writing “God or Nature” four times.

When one is worshipping objects, which are perceived as animated, like in nature religions, their deity is quite immanent, or close. Such is also the case for polytheistic religions, seen as though, there is, I would argue, a power-relation, in which, the more power a god has, the more distant we perceive them. If one compares a monotheistic religion, where the god is omnipotent, to the myths of Greece or Egypt for instance, the gods are more material, less transcendent, and often seen amongst humans or in nature in a the polytheistic religion. I imagine a circular motion, in which, the more distant we perceive God, the more we tend to “populate our private universes,” as I like to describe it. The circle, according to my theory, closes where the almighty god becomes so distant that new, quite ordinary, human-like, or materialistic, gods start to pop up in our everyday life. This phenomena, which I previously described as a trend in the contemporary art world, can also be seen in relation to consumerism, which, can be argued, constitutes a replacement of religion of today, where, the material is worshipped. This relates to re-enchantment, which, I conjecture, is the automatic response to perceiving the world as disenchanted. It also connects to animation and our inherited capability of projecting souls onto objects, which is the experiment of this project.

The natural philosopher Galileo Galilei followed in Nikolaj Kopernik’s footsteps, by challenging Christian geocentrism and was therefore charged with heresy by the Roman Inquisition in 1615. After his trial he was forced to recant and spent the rest of his life in house arrest. Before his investigation, as rumors started to spread, he wrote a letter to the Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany to defend his commitment to sacred scripture. In this letter he suggests that God has granted us two books, the *Book of Nature* and the *Book of Scripture*, which do not, because they cannot, contradict, as they are both infallible. Galileo stated: “We conclude that God is known first through Nature, and then again, more particularly, by doctrine; by Nature in His works, and by

41 Latin form: Nicolaus Copernicus
doctrine in His revealed word." Meaning that nature should be viewed and studied as a primary source of God’s revelation to mankind.

Galileo means that the Bible puts its message into the language of the common people and was written in a prescientific, preliterate culture, using the language and concepts of the time. So if one has a well-established scientific explanation of the physical world, such as heliocentrism, that contradicts a passage of Scripture, one has good reason to reconsider one’s interpretation of Scripture, because the surface meaning may not be its true meaning. Galileo illustrates this scientific approach in the following quote:

"Philosophy [nature] is written in that great book which ever is before our eyes – I mean the universe – but we cannot understand it if we do not first learn the language and grasp the symbols in which it is written. The book is written in mathematical language, and the symbols are triangles, circles and other geometrical figures, without whose help it is impossible to comprehend a single word of it; without which one wanders in vain through a dark labyrinth."

The view of nature as a book to be read for knowledge and understanding was common among natural philosophers in the Latin Middle Ages and connects to the ideas of some previously mentioned thinkers. When read alongside sacred scripture, “the book” of nature would lead to a knowledge of God himself. This posture towards science is exemplified by statement by the 17th century Dutch naturalist, Jan Swammerdam: “Here I bring you the proof of God’s providence in the

\[42\text{Adversus Marcionem, I, 18}\]
The idea of studying nature to find God resonates in my work as an artist, where I study and deconstruct found objects from a similar point of view, and where the notion of a hidden language is a reoccurring theme. The “The Book of Nature” or a hidden divine language illustrates the enchanted world, as it is implied, that God’s creation, or existence, can only be approached but never be grasped – it will always remain a mystery.

The idea of revealing scientific formulas as ways to approach God is close to the magic world view, where one recognizes the idea of a formula, often called a spell. The Shem used in Kabbalistic practice and in the animation of the golem makes a perfect example. A formula can be seen as finding the true words or numbers, revealing a concept and thus unlocking the power of affecting it.

The question arises if there is a defined distinction between scientific invention and magic? Would the science, findings and inventions of today not be rendered magic in the time of Galileo? Was the Law of Gravitation in fact a magic formula to Isaac Newton?

Perhaps the difference between science and magic could be understood as where the scientist only humbly reads “the book” and marvels at nature’s wonders, the magician further attempts to change the “text” and create new wonders. The same role applies to the artist. The scientist, like Dr. Frankenstein, risks being corrupted by the power and thus use his/her findings for his/her own purpose, instead of dedicating it to science and letting someone else profit from the innovation. But the artist’s role is that of the creator and that claim is different. In Science as a Vocation, Weber differentiates the positions of the scientist and the artist.

But we now find them confronted with a destiny that opens up a vast gulf between science and artistic endeavors. Scientific work is harnessed to the course of progress. In the realm of art, however, there is, no such thing as progress in that sense. It is untrue that a work of art that is created in an age which has developed new techniques, such as the laws of perspective, is somehow superior in purely artistic terms to a work of art that is innocent of all such techniques and laws. […] A work of art that truly achieves “fulfillment” will never be surpassed; it will never grow old. The individual can assess its significance for himself personally in different ways. But no one will ever be able to say that a work that achieves genuine “fulfillment” in an artistic sense has been “superseded” by another work that likewise achieves fulfillment.

Contrast that with the realm of science, where we all know that what we have achieved will be obsolete in ten, twenty, or fifty years. That is the fate, indeed, that is the very meaning of scientific work. It is subject to and dedicated to this meaning in quite a specific sense, in contrast to every other element of culture of which the same might be said in general. Every scientific fulfillment gives birth to new “questions”

and **cries out** to be surpassed and rendered obsolete. Everyone who wishes to serve science has to resign himself to this. The products of science can undoubtedly remain important for a long time, as “objects of pleasure” because of their artistic qualities, or as a means of training others in scientific work. But we must repeat: to be superseded scientifically is not simply our fate but our goal.44

This link of passing knowledge onwards in a never-ending chain of collective achievement stands in strong contrast with the artist’s quite individual practice. The point of view of the scientist towards creation still reflects the meekness that Galileo spoke of, which we can also conclude is the Christian position. The scientist should consider himself a servant – if not a servant of God, then a servant of his/her vocation. Which contemporary artist takes the approach of a servant in his/her role as a creator? And how does this relate to the established connection between creativity and a divine source of inspiration?

Science in the days of Protestantism and Puritanism still viewed itself as the way to God, though the outlook had changed. Weber describe these shifts from the Renaissance until modernism:

> The fact that God could no longer be found where the Middle Ages had looked for him was known to the entire theology of Pietism of the day, Spener above all. God is hidden, his ways are not our ways, his thoughts are not our thoughts. In the exact natural sciences, however, where his works could be experienced physically, people cherished the hope that they would be able to find clues to his intentions for the world. And today? Apart from the overgrown children who can still be found in natural sciences, who imagines nowadays that a knowledge of astronomy or biology or physics or chemistry could teach us anything about the meaning of the world? How might we even begin to track down to such a “meaning,” if indeed it exists? If anything at all, the natural sciences are more likely to ensure that the belief that the world has a “meaning” will wither at the root!

> […] what is the meaning of science as a vocation now that all these earlier illusions – “the path to true existence,” “the path to true art,” “the path to true nature,” “the path to the true God,” “the path to true happiness” – have been shattered? The simplest reply was given by Tolstoy with his statement, “Science is meaningless because it has no answer to the only questions that matter to us: ‘what should we do? How shall we live?’” The fact that science cannot give us this answer is absolutely indisputable.

It is evident that we can find answers to these eternal, by Tolstoy formulated, questions in religion. But science has replaced religion in the process of disenchantment and secularization and left a void in terms of meaning and direction. Man’s urge to create meaning of his existence has lead him to create religions, temples, sciences, and space stations, and this urge will not disappear because science has played out its role as a provider of meaning. The subsequent question evidently is, can **art** give us these answers?

Theologians speak of a post-secular condition in the Western world, where religious fundamentalism is also on the rise, and there is the popular notion of 're-enchantment'. In the contemporary art scene I have witnessed a rise over the last 10 years, in both art, which deals with the spiritual and metaphysical, and art for the common good – parallel to the often nihilist attitude of artists of my generation. This nihilist expression however, can be seen as a reflection of this void and a longing for something new. I have noted, through conversations with such artists, that they often attempt to capture this emptiness, which becomes a manifestation of something, which is missing. Where Max Weber and Leo Tolstoy, like the children of my generation, found that science is meaningless because it no longer provides answers to the only questions that matter to us: “‘What should we do? How shall we live?’” I see that art is definitely attempting to.

**Magic**

The animation of dead objects and the power of creation inevitably brings up the concept of magic. The definition of magic in this text will be quite broad and not the kind that you might be familiar with from books and screens. It should further not be confused with the contemporary idea of the magician as a performer or entertainer, which is usually differentiated as ‘illusionism’ by the industry itself.

Our cultural view on magic is not only colored by the entertainment industry and the fantasy genre, but also by the church, which used the concept of magic to isolate practices that are not “true religion”, or incompatible with the Christian faith. These persecutions are inseparable from the persecutions of scientists previously mentioned, as they were often charged with witchcraft. By any accepted definition of magic it is present in all religions – the Eucharist for one is a perfect example. The church persecuted magic practitioners outside of its own four walls for centuries which means that they claimed an institutional “monopoly on magic”. One of the reasons for this, of course, is power for the sake of it, but there are also ideas in Christianity which warn about magic for other reasons, many of which have been touched upon in this text, like the idea that power, especially the power of creation, corrupts, and that man loses control over his creations.

The early 20th century occultist and magician Aleister Crowley, father of the belief system *Thelema*, famously spelled it ‘Magick’, in the old Anglo-Saxon fashion, to differentiate it from these common perceptions. He told his disciple Karl Germer that “Magick is getting into communication with
individuals who exist on a higher plane than ours. Mysticism is the raising of oneself to their
level.”45 Crowley saw Magick as a third way between religion and science, giving his book *The
Equinox* the subtitle of “The Method of Science; the Aim of Religion”. He further expressed
positive sentiments toward science and the scientific method and urged magicians to keep detailed
records of their magical experiments. His understanding of magic was also influenced by the work
of James Frazer, (who was previously credited for the invention of the archetype in this text) in
particular the view that magic was a precursor to science in a cultural evolutionary framework.
Unlike Frazer however, Crowley did not see magic as a survival from the past that required
eradication, but rather he believed that magic had to be adapted to suit the new age of science.46

His definition of ‘Magick’ in *Magick in Theory and Practice* is widely referenced and quite on
point, and will illustrate the type of magic that this project deals with: “Magick is the Science and
Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will.” Now, Crowley has his own concept of
will which is key to fully understand this definition and which I will go deeper into. To examine this
very broad definition of magic it is in fact hard to distinguish which actions lie outside magic. As an
experiment one can replace ‘Magick’ with other words in Crowley’s definition, such as ‘religion’,
‘politics’, ‘innovation’, ‘protest’, ‘Public Relations’ or ‘body building’. The more I study the ideas
of magic the more I find it interchangeable with the power of creation or creativity – the theme of
this essay, and I recognize the role of the artist, the scientist, the Rabbi and all the golem makers in
the magician.

Aleister Crowley’s belief system *Thelema* roughly means *will* in Greek. There is but one moral or
ethical code within *Thelema* and it is formulated as: “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the
law” in Crowley’s work *Liber AL vel Legis* or *The Book of the Law*, one of Crowley’s “inspired”
books. Announcing the start of the Æon of Horus, a new era in which humans would take
increasing control of their destiny, the book declares that its followers should “Do what thou wilt”
and seek to align themselves with their “True Will” through the practice of Magick.

“Do what thou wilt” is often misunderstood as “do what you want,” but it is not an excuse to do
whatever you feel like. The historian of religion Marco Pasi noted that this expression was not
anarchistic or libertarian in structure, as Crowley saw individuals as part of a wider societal
organism.47 Instead it means that you should pursue your own will and your own path in alignment

46 Asprem, Egil. “Magic Naturalized? Negotiating Science and Occult Experience in Aleister Crowley’s Scientific
with your higher self and the Cosmic Will that pervades the universe – this is the real meaning of True Will.

The phrase “True Will” does not appear in *The Book of the Law* but Aleister Crowley’s various commentaries on the book routinely postulate that each individual has a unique and incommensurable True Will that determines his or her proper course in life. Crowley’s invention appears to be an attempt to explain how some actions may be wrong (or “false”) when “There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt”. Actions that conform to True Will are thus considered to be correct, while willed actions that deviate from True Will may nevertheless be wrong. Crowley’s ideas on the subject partly originated with the teachings of Eliphas Levi, whose magical books emphasize the magician finding their magical identity – his or her ‘true self’, which Levi referred to as the “True Will”.

Crowley referred to the process of search and discovery of one’s True Will to be “the Great Work” and the ultimate goal of a Thelemite would be to understand and perform their True Will. In order to do so they would have to eliminate or bypass their false desires, conflicts, and habits, and accessed their connection with the divine. Theoretically, at this point, the Thelemite acts in alignment with Nature, just as a stream flows downhill, with neither resistance nor “lust of result”. In *De Lege Libellum*, Crowley defines True Will as the will which “does not rest content with things partial and transitory, but...proceed[s] firmly to the End", and in the same passage he identifies that “end” as the destruction of oneself in love. Crowley’s favored method of aligning himself with his True Will was through the performance of the *Abramelin operation*, a ceremonial magic ritual obtained from a 17th-century grimoire.48

Aleister Crowley had no specific belief in a godlike entity. Following the trends of the ‘new age’ era of the early 20th century, he mixed the imagery of his religious practice from Gnosticism, Egyptian Mythology and Kabbalah, to mention some.

“To [Crowley] the greatest aim of the magician was to merge with a higher power connected to the wellsprings of the universe, but he did not trouble himself too much to define that power consistently; sometimes it was God, sometimes the One, sometimes a goddess, and sometimes one’s own Holy Guardian Angel or higher self. In the last analysis he was content for the nature of divinity to remain a mystery. As a result he wrote at times like an atheist, at times like a monotheist, and at others like a polytheist.”49

Both during his life and after it, Crowley has been widely viewed as a Satanist. Crowley did not consider himself a Satanist, nor did he worship Satan, as he did not accept the Christian worldview in which Satan was believed to exist. He nevertheless widely used satanic imagery in his practice. He also expressed many anti-Christian sentiments, stating that he hated Christianity “as Socialists hate soap.”

Illustration by John Coulthart for a non-realized anthology of stories related to Aleister Crowley by magician and graphic novelist Alan Moore. Each of the seven sections of the book was to examine Crowley through the experience of a different “Scarlet Woman”, which he called his wives and mistresses. This illustration relates to his wife Rose Kelly’s assault by Crowley in Cairo, 1904, and the subsequent moment where he forced her to look at the rotting corpse of their daughter.

The word ‘magic’ is used six times in the *Holy Bible New International Version*, three times in the Old Testament and three times in the New Testament. However, the word ‘magician(s)’ is used 15 times. There are also examples of sorcerers, mediums, spiritists, diviners, etc. Furthermore, the word ‘witchcraft’ is often used, which could signify different translations of the same Hebrew word for magic. Especially in *Exodus* where the story is set in Egypt, a civilization where magic was a fundamental pillar of society, there is a high presence of magicians. The book of *Exodus* speaks of magicians practicing “secret arts,” as they brought up frogs and thereby replicated God’s plague on the land of Egypt. Magic in this case was used in an attempt to mock God by mimicking the

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50 Ibid. p. 175
51 Ibid.
52 *Exodus* 8:7
miracles God performed through Moses. In Genesis the Egyptian magicians were powerless to interpret the pharaoh’s dream, prompting pharaoh to send for Joseph, who interpreted it correctly because he spoke the words God gave him. However, it shall be noted that in the Bible, magic is not disregarded as tricks or illusionism – on the contrary there are many examples of magic practices which are not performed through God. Warnings regarding the fate of anyone engaging in these practices are plenty, especially in Revelations and Deuteronomy. The following lines send a clear message of the Christian view on magic: “Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord [...]” and “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

In the teachings of the original sin, in the tradition of St. Augustine, it appears that Christianity deems man not fit to carry the responsibility of the power of creation as he tends to use it as a means of destruction, which was discussed earlier in the text. In that sense, this “monopoly on magic” that I refer to can yet be understood as an institution that serves to protect God’s creation from man’s destruction and also to protect man from his own corruption. Who has the right to avail the power of creation? In the Christian church the answer, I would argue, is quite clear: only the servants of God, such as the priesthood, can do this in accordance with God’s will. God possesses the power of creation and man manages it but is not allowed to use it for personal gain. This connects to how I previously described the notion of divine inspiration, but also the ethics around scientific work according to Weber. The power of creation shall not be used for any purpose other than sanctifying the world.

The idea of black and white magic is often used to differentiate a magic that is performed for one’s own selfish purpose from one that has a higher purpose. In Voodoo you find the same division, though many Voodoo practitioners use both. In Western culture Satanism often symbolizes black magic as it is outspoken profoundly egoistic in its nature. Black magic is often performed to harm someone or to bring oneself something which one is not the rightful owner of, but perhaps thinks one deserves, like the love of another person. Anton LaVey, founder of Church of Satan, nuanced this image in the following quote:

53Genesis 41:8
54Deuteronomy 18:10-12 (New International Version)
55Revelations 21:8 (New International Version)
White magic is supposedly utilized only for good or unselfish purposes, and black magic, we are told, is used only for selfish or “evil” reasons. Satanism draws no such dividing line. Magic is magic, be it used to help or hinder. The Satanist, being the magician, should have the ability to decide what is just, and then apply the powers of magic to attain his goals.  

Crowley’s definition of magic would rule out black magic as a non-magic or fake magic, as true magic “is performed according to Will” and his concept of will does not comprise egoism. However, I find it utterly confusing that Crowley argued that his sex magic could be used to focus the magician’s will onto a specific goal such as financial gain or personal creative success. This to me sounds like selfish goals, but perhaps it is my Christian moralism speaking.

Reflections on Art

Man has through his imagination and creativity altered the face of the earth so that it is covered in cities which through electric lights are seen from space. To cause these changes or create these wonders one must possess two things except the skill to carry it out: imagination and belief – the ability to imagine the result and the belief that the result is achievable. The combination of imagination, belief and skill have been reserved for mankind. Together they make up this ability we call creativity, and can truly be seen as a magical tool, a means “of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will” true to Crowley’s definition.

In Christianity, as concluded, magic that is performed outside of the Church and the priesthood, is strictly forbidden. However, the Christian and Platonic Western idea of inspiration as a state where man becomes the vessel of God’s power of creation resonates with Crowley’s definition of magic. The artist has access and can act through the connection with this power if s/he wishes. But what happens if the artist is driven by selfish motifs in his/her use of the power of creation? Then there would also be such a thing as “black art”. Connecting this to my previous writings, according to the Church, this would quite strictly be art that is made for personal gain and art that is made for any other purpose than sanctifying the world. According to Crowley, though he would disagree with the term “black and white magic”, this would be art that is not performed in alignment with True Will and the Cosmic Will – a concept that connects to the idea of divine inspiration.


Max Weber’s opinions on the ethics of science, where there should be no greed or ambition for personal gain are similar to Christian morality and the law of the Thelema, and could also be applied to art (all though through comparison in this text and by Weber himself, they have been found to be somewhat different in their nature). The scientist’s greed, or even tendency towards “black magic”, is illustrated perfectly through the character of Dr. Frankenstein. In this following excerpt he gives an indication of how inspired creativity might be different from his use of the power of creation, driven by greed and the thirst for knowledge.

A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquillity. I do not think that the pursuit of knowledge is an exception to this rule. If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind. If this rule were always observed; if no man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with the tranquillity of his domestic affections, Greece had not been enslaved, Caesar would have spared his country, America would have been discovered more gradually, and the empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed.\footnote{Shelley, Mary. \textit{Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus}. Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1831. chapter 4.}

This passage by Mary Shelley provides a certain moral that could be applied to art, being, as established, like science, one of the vocations where man manages the power of creation. I do not personally want to make this statement as I find it quite harsh; to me, the mania described in \textit{Frankenstein} appears to be a natural element of any artistic process. But I do think this illustration is thought-worthy and possibly healthy.

Socrates gives an account of what he calls ‘erotic’ mania in Plato’s work \textit{Phaidros}. He means that mania, as the opposite of sober reason, not necessarily is submitted to reason. Mania does not only entail madness and rage but also enthusiasm and ecstasy, which are godly graces according to Socrates. The entranced state of the oracle or the priestess is an example of such a godly mania which enables the transmission of a hidden knowledge. Another expression of mania, according to Socrates, is inspiration, which gifted poets utilize in their extraordinary achievements. The enthusiasm, that this godly gift brings, is sovereign to human reason. Socrates means that this is evident in the fact, that a poet, who only possesses technical skill, never can create anything of importance; all great poets are inspired by the gods.\footnote{Further reading: Platon, \textit{Phaidros} 244a–245c. Vgl. Ernst Heitsch: \textit{Platon: Phaidros. Übersetzung und Kommentar}, 2., erweiterte Auflage, Göttingen 1997, S. 91 f.; Stefan Büttner: \textit{Die Literaturtheorie bei Platon}, Tübingen 2000, S. 353–355; David Levy: \textit{Eros and Socratic Political Philosophy}, New York 2013, S. 83–87.} This outlook on mania, provided by Socrates, is, I would say, quite widespread in Western culture. If you combine the image of the entranced oracle as a source of hidden knowledge with that of the mad scientist, you get a more nuanced view
of how mania can be seen as a source of inspired creativity and not just a source of destruction. This notion, together with the idea of “black and white art” and the ethics of Max Weber, Aleister Crowley and the Church, gives a direction, as I am trying to formulate an artistic approach, or ethic, on how to manage the power of creation.

To summarize and conclude this research, the use of the power of creation as a means of creating new life forms, is clearly, according to all stories and themes studied through this essay, a form of “black magic”, as it defies God’s sole right on creating life, equal to that of taking lives. As I have hypothesized, the artist is interchangeable with the magician in the role of the creator. The “shamanism” of artists, which involves practice which resembles the animation of dead objects, is, as I have suggested, a pure reflex to the condition of disenchantment, where the artist attempts to reenchant the world. When being in this dubious state of creativity and animation, the induced inspiration becomes fundamental to whether the work is “black magic” or “white magic”. True creativity requires inspiration, and any work that is not inspired in that sense would not be a divine creation, for the purpose of sanctifying the world, but a creation for personal gain – the equivalent of “black magic”. What divine inspiration actually is, and feels like, can prove arbitrary in reality, as artistic inspiration is closely connected to mania. Socrates description of ‘mania’, used beside Mary Shelley’s, illustrates different states and gives a hint of in which mental state one would ideally be in, in the inspirational state of an artistic process.

The search of this project became one of finding ethics, and in that sense attempting to answer the by Tolstoy posed question of what to do and how to live. Through the process of this research I have become even more convinced in my position as an artist, as a suggested “co-creating artist who does not steal/use the power of creation for her own individual purpose”. I am possibly more certain than ever, that the study and deconstruction of found material is the right method for me. The fact, that I mostly study nature/the creation, being quite cautious of encroaching on it, and thus only change it to a certain degree, puts me perhaps in closer connection to the position of the scientist than that of the magician, or creator.

The physical experiment of The Golem Project which I am about to perform in the actual artwork ultimately defies Christian ethics and ignores the message of the archetype. Contrary to Dr. Frankenstein, this scares me.

In my education my father had taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with no supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect
upon my fancy, and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life.\footnote{Shelley, Mary. \textit{Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus}. Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1831. chapter 4.}

For me, this is untrue; I would not call myself superstitious, but I have a strong faith and I am quite respectful of these things. The idea of even bringing the Eucharist out of the church, as is part of my plan, makes me blush with shame – not to mention the sex magic. Although, I am, unlike Dr. Frankenstein, not obsessed with the result of this experiment, I simply am determined to fulfill the task, although hesitantly.

The experiment’s final step will ultimately be in observing the viewer. How does the viewer perceive this supposedly animated object? Does s/he appear to catch a glimpse of a “god-spark” or soul within the sculpture? It is my belief, as always, that my sincerity as an artist throughout this process will reflect in their reaction. At this point, the viewer as a co-creator becomes a relevant notion. In the Descartian universe anyone who observes is also a creator.

I would like to conclude this essay with an image from the religions of ancient Egypt and Sumer where the animation of gods was practiced. In these cultures, a statue was created to symbolize a certain god and then animated through advanced rituals. The god thus inhabited the statue and could be worshipped, talked to and negotiated with. This initiated a self-reinforcing process of the god, as long as the cult of the sculpture lived on. Hence, the more attention the god in the sculpture got, or, the more people believed in and worshipped it, the more powerful its ability to create effects in the outer world became. This relationship was the foundation of stability and harmony in Egyptian society.

Imagination and belief, as I concluded earlier, are what constitute creativity, and these are the abilities that connect us with divine inspiration and lets the power of creation flow through us. These abilities, as previously established, is what separates us from animals and makes us godlike co-creators, even when we just observe the world. Because such is the nature of the human brain, that it cannot see without associating and shaping what it sees through its filter of subjectivity. The part of his surroundings, to which man directs his attention, starts to change, according to the imagination of man, and becomes part of such a reciprocal, mutual reinforcing, relationship as that of the statue and the worshipper. The outer world mirrors our imaginary world and we become co-creators just by observing. What we truly believe in gains the divine power. This act is equivalent of a basic magical operation, \emph{causing change to occur according to will}. 