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## “Legato con amore in un volume”: Can Tolkien’s Ainulindalë Accommodate Divine Knowledge?

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**Cover Page Footnote**

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“Legato con amore in un volume”: Can Tolkien’s *Ainulindalë* Accommodate Divine Knowledge?

John Wm. Houghton

Preface

Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to have been invited to chat with you all tonight. I apologize in advance for daring to invoke Dante with my American mono-lingual-ness, and I thank Miryam for her kind help with translation. I should note, too, as we begin, that my comments today are by way of some reflections on **potential** questions about a **possible** issue in *Ainulindalë* –not at all a finished academic essay!

1. The Volume of Divine Knowledge

In the culminating moments of the *Commedia*, Dante the Pilgrim finally comes to a vision of God in Godself. Dante the Poet offers a series of images, but perhaps the most famous is the image of God as a book:

Text	Singleton translation
85 Nel suo profondo vidi che s’ interna,	In its depth I saw ingathered, bound by love in one
86 legato con amore in un volume,	single volume, that which is dispersed in leaves
87 ciò che per l’universo si squaderna:	throughout the universe:
88 sustanze e accidenti e lor costume	Substances and accidents and their relations, as
89 quasi conflati insieme, per tal modo	though fused together in such a way that what I
90 che ciò ch’i’ dico è un semplice lume.	tell is but a simple light.
91 La forma universal di questo nodo	The universal form of this knot I believe that I
92 credo ch’i’ vidi, perché più di largo,	saw, because in telling this, I feel my joy increase.
93 dicendo questo, mi sento ch’i’ godo.	

As with almost every other line of the *Commedia*, this metaphor has been the subject of countless scholarly commentaries. Dante’s image is partly indebted to the traditional image of the book of Nature, partly to Augustine, who, in *Confessions*, XIII.15.18, pictures God as a book read by the angels.

Laudent nomen tuum, laudent te  
 supercaelestes populi angelorum tuorum,  
 qui non opus habent suspicere  
 firmamentum hoc et legendo cognoscere  
 verbum tuum. Vident enim faciem tuam  
 semper, et ibi legunt sine syllabis  
 temporum, quid velit aeterna voluntas tua.  
 Legunt, eligunt et diligunt; semper legunt  
 et numquam praeterit quod legunt.  
 Eligendo enim et diligendo legunt ipsam  
 incommutabilitatem consilii tui. Non  
 clauditur codex eorum nec plicatur liber

Let them praise Thy Name, let them praise  
 Thee, the supercelestial people, Thine angels,  
 who have no need to gaze up at this firmament,  
 or by reading to know of Thy Word. For they  
 always behold Thy face, and there read without  
 any syllables in time, what willeth Thy eternal  
 will; they read, they choose, they love. They are  
 ever reading; and that never passes away which  
 they read; for by choosing, and by loving, they  
 read the very unchangeableness of Thy counsel.  
 Their book is never closed, nor their scroll  
 folded up; seeing Thou Thyself art this to them,

eorum, quia tu ipse illis hoc es et es in aeternum and art eternally.

But with its reference to substances and accidents and relations, Dante's divine volume is also indebted to ideas of about Divine Knowledge and Creation that Dante would have found in the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas. These Thomistic concepts deal directly with the question of God's knowledge of particulars, and that's the point of intersection with the *Ainulindalë*: but that specific discussion is part of a much larger history of ideas that we can trace all the way back to discussions of the Problem of Evil, Free Will and Foreknowledge, and Time and Eternity. So, with your indulgence, I'd like to do that historical work first as an introduction to the specific ideas in the *Summa*.

## 2. History, part a: Problem of Evil, Free Will and Foreknowledge, and Time and Eternity.

So, then, one convenient starting place for all of this very abstract thought, though by no means the only such place, is the so-called Problem of Evil. The Christian author Lactantius (c. 250-c. 325), an advisor to Constantine, attributed the classic formulation of the "problem of evil" to the Stoic Epictetus (c. 50 –c. 135)—though, modern scholars say, that attribution is probably wrong. In this classic form, the Problem is stated as a set of three apparent contradictions:

1. If there is one sole omnipotent God, is that God unable to prevent evil?
2. If there is one sole omniscient God, is that God unaware of evil?
3. If there is one sole omnibenevolent God, is that God accepting of evil?

There are a number of possible responses to this, in both ancient and modern thought—so many, indeed, that introductory articles typically divide them into various large categories. One common one, made by some Christians (and Jews and Muslims) is a so-called "free will theodicy": this argument says that God is aware of evil and able to prevent it, but chooses to accept it as the necessary consequence of creatures having free will.

The idea that God accepts evil as the price of free will, however, drags in a different problem. As philosophers have often noted, the idea of omniscience (regardless of who it is who has such knowledge, whether it be God or the Fates or whatever) would seem to conflict with free will: if someone knows *with true knowledge* (and not merely opinion) what I will do before I do it, then that "foreknowledge" would seem to mean that I am not free to choose otherwise.

In *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius (477-524) argues that this apparent conflict between omniscience and free will grows out of the mistaken idea of foreknowledge. God's life, Boethius says, is not temporal, but eternal. In a famous definition, Lady Philosophy teaches the imprisoned Boethius character that "Eternity, then, is the complete, simultaneous and perfect possession of everlasting life" (*aeternitas est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*, Book 5, prose 6). This simultaneous character of Divine life means that God's knowledge is not *prior to*, but *contemporaneous with*, events as they are spread out in time—*squaderna per l'universo*, as Dante would say. And the key point is that contemporaneous knowledge *does not impose* the particular sort of necessity that limits free choice of the will. For instance, if I have true contemporaneous knowledge of the fact that you are sitting—as when I reliably see you sitting—then the truth of my knowledge means that you are, necessarily, sitting. But my knowing it contemporaneously with your doing it is not a limit on your prior free choice to do it. On the contrary, what I know *now* necessarily is precisely the *result* of your free choice at some point in the past. And so also, Boethius argues, with God's knowledge, which is always contemporaneous, and never prior.

## 3. History, Part B: The Knowledge of Particulars, Avicenna through Aquinas

While Boethius has characterized God’s knowledge as eternal and therefore contemporaneous, he has not made any distinction among various objects of God’s knowledge. Possibly, Boethius thinks this question is irrelevant to his purposes, but as a translator and commentator on Aristotle, he would have known that The Philosopher does make such a distinction. Specifically, Aristotle argues in the *Posterior Analytics* that observations about particular perishable things don’t constitute knowledge at all:

*Posterior Analytics* 1.8, trans. G. R. G. Mure, 1925

It is also clear that if the premisses from which the syllogism proceeds are commensurately universal, the conclusion of such i.e. in the unqualified sense—must also be eternal.

Therefore no attribute can be demonstrated nor known by strictly scientific knowledge to inhere in perishable things. The proof can only be accidental, because the attribute's connexion with its perishable subject is not commensurately universal but temporary and special.

If such a demonstration is made, one premiss must be perishable and not commensurately universal (perishable because only if it is perishable will the conclusion be perishable; not commensurately universal, because the predicate will be predicable of some instances of the subject and not of others); so that the conclusion can only be that a fact is true at the moment—not commensurately and universally.

The point is that true *knowledge*, what the translator Mure calls “strictly scientific knowledge,” depends upon deduction from universal principles. Such knowledge is eternal, whereas demonstrations about particular things are only true at some given place and time.

Aristotle is making this argument about knowledge in general, without regard to the knower, but theologians in the Aristotelian tradition find the prioritizing of eternal knowledge especially relevant in consideration of *God* as a knower. Given that particulars are always subject to change, if God knew particulars, God’s knowledge would be subject to change. But if God is perfect, God must be unchanging: for a change would either be a gain, in which case God would not have been perfect in the first place, or a loss, in which case God must have fallen from perfection. The perfect and unchanging God must therefore have eternal knowledge, the knowledge of universals: there is no knowledge of particulars in God. Indeed, God, as the First Cause and the most universal of all universals, has only self-knowledge.

This Aristotelian idea that God was necessarily ignorant of particulars presented significant difficulties for Islamic (and other monotheistic) heirs of the Peripatetic tradition. Notably, Ibn-Sina / Avicenna (980-1037) answers Aristotle by arguing that having only self-knowledge does *not* leave God ignorant of particulars, because God knows Godself as the First Cause, and thus knows all events that

*Posterior Analytics* 1.8, trans. Jonathan Barnes, 1993, cited from Adamson, p. 259

It is clear too that if the propositions from which a deduction proceeds are universal, then it is necessary for the conclusion of such a demonstration, i.e. of a demonstration *simpliciter*, to be eternal.

There is therefore no demonstration of perishable things, nor any understanding of them *simpliciter* but only incidentally, because nothing holds of them universally but only at some time and in some way.

When there is such a demonstration, one of the propositions must be non-universal and perishable—perishable because when it is the case the conclusion too will be the case, and non-universal because its subjects will sometimes exist and sometimes not exist.

proceed from God. Knowing all the rules that govern the universe, God knows all their intersections, and in that way *knows* all events without needing to *perceive* them. God knows the particulars *through* knowledge of the universals. In a 2009 essay, “God’s knowledge of particulars: Avicenna, Maimonides and Gersonides,” Dr. Kevjn Lim summarizes:

While human persons acquire knowledge in a discursive and posterior manner, that is, through observation of *effects* by means of the senses or imagination, <fn. 12: Marmura, p. 301> God’s knowledge is “ontologically and causally prior to the existents.” <fn. 13: Marmura, p. 302> In other words, creation comes about as a *consequence* of God’s self-knowledge. (p. 4)

The Aristotelians did not go unopposed within the Islamic world, however. Al-Ghazali / Al-gazel (1058-1111), author of *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, has a number of objections to Avicenna’s solution, including that knowledge of particulars deduced from self-knowledge would lead to a static universe in which God would have no free will and in which God could not interfere, for example, to perform a miracle—something which the Qur’an clearly depicts God as doing.

Moses Maimonides (1138-1204) continues the Aristotelian legacy in the Jewish tradition, but rejects any analogy between human knowledge and divine knowledge. Developing the idea already present in Ibn-sina, Maimonides emphasizes that God’s knowledge is *prior to, and not dependent upon*, God’s creation of things: but he adds to Ibn-Sina’s theory the analogy of a craftsman who knows *how* to make a clock even without making it. This is a contrast to knowledge in the more common sense, knowledge which *derives from* things. Building (so to speak) on this analogy, Maimonides argues that God *can* know particulars as particulars, since God’s craftsmanlike-mode of knowing them is just as timeless as God’s knowledge of the effects of Godself as the First Cause.

So, then, in the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas synthesizes and expands Avicenna and Maimonides, making three key points. Before I get to those, though, I should define the technical term, “exemplar.” In Prima Pars, Question 15, Article 3, *respondeo*, Thomas cites Plato for the statement that “ideas are principles of the knowledge of things and of their generation.” Applying this two-fold analysis to ideas in the mind of God, Thomas says that any given idea, when considered as the “principle of the knowledge of [a] thing” is called a “type,” but, when considered as the principle of the generation of that thing, that same idea is called an “exemplar.” Considered as “types,” ideas are “speculative knowledge,” concerned with everything that God might possibly do; considered as “exemplars,” however, ideas are “practical knowledge,” concerned solely with what God actually chooses to create.

With that sense of exemplar in mind, no pun intended, we can look at those three key points I just mentioned:

1. *First, God in Godself is the first exemplar of all things.* Ia, Q. 44, a. 3  
therefore we must say that in the divine wisdom are the types of all things, which types we have called ideas—i.e. exemplar forms existing in the divine mind (I:15:1). And these ideas, though multiplied by their relations to things, in reality are not apart from the divine essence, according as the likeness to that essence can be shared diversely by different things. In this manner therefore God Himself is the first exemplar of all things.
2. *Second, God’s knowledge is that of a craftsman.* Ia, Q. 15, a. 2, resp.  
The form of the house in the mind of the builder, is something understood by him, to the likeness of which he forms the house in matter.
3. *Third, God creates the creatures he knows to be able to participate in likeness to God’s essence.* Ia, Q. 15, a. 2, resp.  
Inasmuch as He knows His own essence perfectly, He knows it according to every mode in which it can be known. Now it can be known not only as it is in itself, but as it can be participated in by creatures according to some degree of likeness. But every creature has its own proper species, according to which it participates in some degree in

likeness to the divine essence. So far, therefore, as God knows His essence as capable of such imitation by any creature, He knows it as the particular type and idea of that creature.

#### 4. Thomistic Issues with the *Ainulindalë*

So, then, after all that background, I come to the issue—is the account of Eru in the *Ainulindalë* compatible with Thomas’s developed account of Divine Knowledge? I want to be careful not to suggest that Tolkien *meant* for the *Ainulindalë* to meet Thomas’s standards, nor that there was some reason why he *should* have done so; I’m simply considering whether Tolkien’s fictional account *can* be fitted within the theological framework provided by the Angelic Doctor.

Let me illustrate the problem by working with two quotations from Jonathan McIntosh’s excellent book, *The Flame Imperishable*. (And I should say, before going on, that McIntosh and I have been in touch on this subject, and he’s given me several suggestions for further reading in modern thought about exemplarism: so, as I noted at the beginning, my work with all of this is certainly not complete.)

In his chapter “The Metaphysics of the Ainur,” McIntosh has consecutive sections on “St. Thomas and the Divine Ideas” (pp. 74-84) and “Tolkien and the Divine Ideas” (pp. 84-93). In the latter of those, he writes:

. . . in knowing themselves, the Ainur are able to know, to the extent that their own natures allow, something of the mind of Ilúvatar after which they have been made. [¶] Yet, through their music-making, the Ainur come into increasing contact and communion with each other—creatures like and different from each other, who have also been modeled after the Creator—and so come into an increasing knowledge of the mind of Ilúvatar, in which each of them had a unique share. (pp. 85-85)

That is all, I think, quite correct, and not problematic: it is, in a sense, the Thomistic and Tolkienian version of the old Book of Nature idea, that in knowing the things of God’s creation, we come to know the Creator. But then McIntosh goes on to write, a bit later:

. . . angelic and incarnate rational beings are created after a pattern in the Creator’s mind, with the result that they both are able to reveal, in their very being, something of that mind. As for the rest of the creation, the *Ainulindalë* of course departs significantly from the exemplarism of both the classical Platonic and Christian traditions as being fashioned by the Ainur—not after some unchanging archetype in the divine mind or in the “eternal model,” but after the sub-created pattern of the Ainur’s own Music. Yet even here [ . . . ] Tolkien’s narrative never ceases to take for granted the fact that the sub-creative possibilities or potentialities discovered by the Ainur are not independent of, but find their ultimate meaning in, Eru’s own creative possibility. (pp. 86)

The first sentence here restates the earlier paragraph, with which, as I said, I agree; and I *certainly* agree with the spirit of McIntosh’s conclusion, that the “sub-creative possibilities or potentialities” of the Ainur “find their ultimate meaning in Eru’s own creative possibility.” What I am concerned about is a technical issue that shows up *in between* those two points in the argument. Specifically, my principal question, again quoting McIntosh’s words, is whether “the sub-created pattern of the Ainur’s own Music” can actually be contrasted with “some unchanging archetype in the divine mind.” Avicenna might have agreed, but (if I understand him correctly) I don’t think Aquinas would.

We can consider this issue easily enough by asking about our own acts of subcreation. I can ask, for instance, whether the plot of my last novel is one of the particulars that God timelessly knows about me, or whether God only timelessly knows my archetype as an amateur author? The *Summa* seems to teach that God does know my plot. Saint Thomas writes

every creature has its own proper species, according to which it participates in some degree in likeness to the divine essence.

By Tolkien's own principles subcreation is the pre-eminent way in which I "participate in some degree in likeness to the divine essence." So novel-writing in general is included in God's knowledge of me. But Thomas goes on:

So far, therefore, as God knows His essence as capable of such imitation by any creature, He knows it as the particular type and idea of that creature

When Thomas says, "particular type and idea of that creature," does he mean simply that God timelessly knows the principle, the fact about me, that I will create? Does he unchangingly know only that generality? Avicenna, as I said a moment ago, might have meant that; but Aquinas is heir to the idea of God *knowing particulars*. I think that St. Thomas means that God timelessly knows not only the *concept* of my existence as a subcreator, but the *actual acts* of my subcreation, down to the keystroke.

Certainly, that God should know my actual acts is demanded by the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alike. As al-Ghazali had pointed out in his critique of Ibn-sina, any less capacious form of divine knowledge is irreconcilable with God's self-revelation to the Children of Abraham. Or, to recur to our key passage from the *Paradiso*, Divine love gathers into one volume *all* "Substances, accidents, and their relations":

88 sustanze e accidenti e lor costume  
89 quasi conflati insieme, per tal modo  
90 che ciò ch'i' dico è un semplice lume.

We could find countless examples from devotional history that make the same point. Consider, for instance, the Anglican Collect for Purity (Thomas Cranmer's translation from a Latin original that first appears in the tenth century *Sacramentarium Fuldense*, p. 203):

<i>Deus cui omne cor patet et omnis voluntas loquitur: et quem nullum latet secretum: purifica per infusionem sancti spiritus cogitationes cordis nostri: ut te perfecte diligere et digne laudare mereamur, per dominum nostrum Iesum Christum. Amen.</i>	<i>Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name: through Christ our Lord. Amen.</i>
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A God "to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid" surely knows, timelessly, in God's own self-knowledge, such particulars as the plots of our novels or the designs of our paintings. And so, similarly, it would seem, if Eru conforms to Thomistic expectations, Eru must timelessly know, ontologically prior to giving them being, not simply *the fact that* the Ainur are archetypally capable of song, but indeed the whole of their minstrelsy, down to its least note. As we read in Luke's gospel, "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. But even the hairs of your head are all counted" (12:6-7).

So a Thomistic Eru, simply by knowing himself, must also, timelessly and antecedently, know the song of the Ainur. It may seem that I am quibbling here over McIntosh's words "fashioned by the Ainur—not after some unchanging archetype in the divine mind or in the 'eternal model,' but after the sub-created pattern." It is true, certainly, that the Song, rather than Eru's timeless knowledge of the Song, is the direct model for Eä: but there is nothing in the Song which escapes Eru's timeless knowledge—the sub-created pattern *is identical with* the "unchanging archetype in the divine mind."

So, it seems to me that there is a difficulty here. But McIntosh (as I hope I have indicated!) is a very careful reader of Tolkien, and even a much-less-subtle guide than he would be forced to agree that

Eru in the *Ainulindalë* certainly does *seem* to *acquire knowledge* of the ongoing music. For instance, we read:

And since I have kindled you with the Flame Imperishable, ye shall show forth your powers in adorning this theme, each with his own thoughts and devices, if he will. But I will sit and hearken, and be glad that through you great beauty has been wakened into song. (p. 3)

Or, a bit later, we find:

But now Ilúvatar sat and hearkened, and for a great while it seemed good to him, for in the music there were no flaws. But as the theme progressed, it came into the heart of Melkor to interweave matters of his own imagining that were not in accord with the theme of Ilúvatar; for he sought therein to increase the power and glory of the part assigned to himself. (p. 4)

The fundamental issue with these passages, and of the *Ainulindalë* in general, I think, is that they picture Eru acting in time, and thus they almost inevitably conflict with the more fundamental theological understanding of God’s eternity—“the complete, simultaneous and perfect possession of everlasting life,” in the Boethian phrase. Of course, there are any number of passages in Scripture which raise the same problem, e.g., Jeremiah 26:13, “Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will *change his mind* about the disaster that he has pronounced against you” [emphasis added].

So, in addition to my fundamental question about Eru’s knowledge of particulars, we could consider the *legendarium*’s versions of several questions that have also been posed about the biblical narratives. I will close with three brief examples.

1. Is Ilúvatar actually not omniscient, or not unchanging? If we were forced to conclude that either or both of these premises were true, Ilúvatar would certainly not fit within Thomas’s theology, but it’s at least worth noting that each of these positions has defenders among modern Christian philosophical theologians.
2. Are the Ainur themselves unaware of Eru’s timeless exemplary knowledge? Tolkien explicitly states that the *extent* of what Eru intends exceeds the knowledge of the Ainur, but I don’t think we have textual evidence one way or the other as to how well the Ainur understand the *nature* of Eru’s knowledge. We do, though, have allusions in *Silmarillion* to “the Timeless Halls” (p.10), the “Beginning of Time” (p. 10), the “Timeless Void (p. 306),” and “the Deeps of Time” (pp. 7, 8, 10, 12, 44), while the *Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth* has numerous references to such things as “everlasting life” “beyond Time” (p. 318). Beyond such references within the *legendarium*, it would seem very odd to picture heavenly creatures who did not understand their creator’s eternity: as we have seen Augustine say of the angels, “They are ever reading; and that never passes away which they read; for by choosing, and by loving, they read the very unchangeableness of Thy counsel. Their book is never closed, nor their scroll folded up; seeing Thou Thyself art this to them, and art eternally.”
3. Is the account in *Ainulindalë* adapted to the capacities of its Elvish (or human) audience, as Augustine says of Genesis? Or, similarly, is it largely metaphorical, as Maimonides frequently teaches? This seems to me the response with the best “fit.” Consider, for instance, that the whole account of the Music is *fundamentally* metaphorical; at the time in which it takes place, all that exists are Eru and the Ainur, and all of these are creatures of pure spirit. Iluvatar can neither sit, stand, nor raise his non-existent hands, and, similarly, music, if literal, assumes the presence of a medium in which vibrations can take place, but nothing of the sort has yet been created.

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The text above represents the talk as I prepared it (for delivery, I made various cuts in order to

avoid going over time). Since then, however, I have had the opportunity to read Carl Hostetter's edition of *The Nature of Middle-earth*, and it seems to me that my at least two of my three closing questions are addressed there.

In working out his thoughts of fate and free will (*Nature*, Chapter XI), Tolkien says that Eldarin philosophers analogize Eru's knowledge of Eä to an author's experience of writing a story, in which the initial concepts of setting and character develop in ways that can seem to be beyond the author's control or knowledge, though the author will have complete knowledge of the story once it is finished. In a brief later paragraph, Tolkien applies this analogy specifically to the *Ainulindalë*: "Let the music of the Ainur [be an] ancient legend from Valinórean days [. . .] Eru had not [?complete] foreknowledge, but [? after it His] foreknowledge was complete to the smallest detail" (p. 231).

This obviously bears directly on my first question, speculating that Iluvatar might not be omniscient or unchanging. Indeed, Hostetter observes in a footnote that the idea that Eru does not foresee the Music is "in apparent contradiction of the absolute omniscience ascribed to God in both Catholic and classical theistic thought." Tolkien himself may not, however, have been committed to the idea of a non-omniscient Eru—as Hostetter goes on to say, the contradiction "may help explain [the note's] apparently hesitant nature" (p. 231).

As to my third question, the answer seems to have been available for fifteen years or more. Hostetter observes that Chapter XII, "The Knowledge of the Valar," originally appeared in *Parma Eldalamberon* 17 [2007], pp. 177-9, as part of the text published in Chapter XIV. In "Knowledge," Tolkien comments, with respect to "legends" of the Valar addressing Eru through Manwë: "No doubt these legends are somatomorphic"—the Valar, he says, would in fact have communicated with Eru in thought alone (p. 232). So these legends are, indeed, as Augustine or Maimonides would have it, not literal descriptions, but accounts tailored to the understanding of incarnate audiences.<sup>1</sup>

To be sure, Tolkien only refers, in the "somatomorphic" passage, to legends about events taking place *after* the creation of Eä. However, he goes on to say in a footnote on the next page, discussing the intrusion of evil into the Song of the Ainur, that the "Design of Eru [was] communicated to them only in pure direct 'thought.' This was represented as taking the form of *music*" (p. 233, italics in the original). "Represented as" here indicates that the *Ainulindalë*, too, is adapted to its audience, and that no actual music was involved.

Augustine argues, in *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, that the seven days in the first chapter of Genesis are merely a metaphor for the complex structure of God's single act of creation;<sup>2</sup> acknowledgment of metaphorical character of the *Ainulindalë* might hypothetically open the possibility of some similar move to compress all its events into the Boethian single eternal moment, and thereby alleviate the need for Eru's knowledge to change; but it's not clear to me how all the details of such a scheme would work out, and (on the other hand) there's no evidence that Tolkien considered this solution to the problem of Eru's non-omniscience.

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1            Moreover, in Chapter XV, "Elvish Reincarnation," Tolkien notes that "nearly all the matter of the *Silmarillion* is contained in myths and legends that have passed through men's hands and minds" and have been influenced by human ideas (p. 263).

2            I have discussed this doctrine at more length in "Augustine in the Cottage of Lost Play."

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