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**THE NATURE OF GOOD AND EVIL G-D IN THE SONG OF
LEONARD COHEN**

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Abstract: *This essay focuses on the lyrics of a few selected songs by Leonard Cohen in which he presents his views on the concepts of good and evil as an inherent nature of G-d. Cohen's work reveals that evil is not able to survive without human interaction, perhaps without our voluntary succumbing to its allure. The awareness of goodness, on the other hand, is often a consequence of realizing that evil is an indelible part of our lives and of the striving to make a clear distance from it. The singer often focuses on the evil nature of G-d based on his readings of the Hebrew Bible. According to him, evil manifests itself in obeying G-d's commands as portrayed in the "Song of Isaac" or in killing of the Lamb by "The Butcher," who is revealed to be the Creator Himself. Other songs often refer to our unconscious acceptance of evil, such as the song "The Captain" whose lyrics reveal that the spread of evil is caused by the lack of knowledge of goodness. Succumbing to the power of evil, then, leads to the total destruction of values ingrained in our common cultural heritage. Such a void is well-represented by the song "Closing Time" which anticipates the Apocalypse. However, Leonard Cohen, prophesies the rebirth of our civilisation in the song "Anthem" and ultimately the coming of "Democracy" and goodness after the most destructive events of our age.*

Keywords: *good, evil, song, religion, Cohen*

Note: The reader is invited to listen to, or read the lyrics of individual songs described in the course of this essay to facilitate his understanding. I would also like to make known that this paper focuses on the lyrical self or persona of Leonard Cohen. Therefore, whenever the name "Cohen" appears, it stands for the singer with a guitar, not the man without it.

1. INTRODUCTION

The following article focuses on the powerful demiurge appearing in the work of Leonard Cohen and the discussion between him and the singer presented in a few selected songs. Cohen's description of Creator's malevolent nature reminds us of Manichaeism, a religion born in Iran, which was at one time a rival to Christianity (Jonas, 1992:207).

The Gnostics, in general, believe that there exists the Highest God and the malevolent Creator of the material universe.¹ In the selected songs,

Cohen seems to be addressing the latter and warns against succumbing to his nature through misinterpretation of the Bible. Three important characters appear in the selected songs: a young child, lieutenant and the perpetrator of evil, who are, actually one character developing from innocent infancy to evil maturity. This character, whom I call Isaac-lieutenant-Cohen, is continuously being seduced by another cruel character whose name in the songs is: Abraham; The Butcher; or The Captain.

The innocent character matures into evil in the singer's albums *I'm Your Man* (1988) and *The Future* (1992) when he fully succumbs to the evil nature of the Creator and becomes his voice. However, *The Future* anticipates reawakening and the coming of goodness after the most destructive event of our age.

¹ Such as Valentinians, the Gnostic Christian movement originating in the 2nd century AD in Rome. The Medieval Occitan Cathars called the Creator, Satanael (Quispel, 2008:143), which reminds of Satan. A good review of these ideas may be found in Yuri Stoyanov, (2000). *The Other God: Dualist Religions from*

Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy. New Haven: Yale University Press.

2. THE STORY OF ISAAC

The song “Story of Isaac,” (*Songs from a Room*, 1969) is a story well echoing the chapter 22 in the Book of Genesis, in which Abraham is tempted to prove his devotion by killing his only son Isaac. Isaac is to be sacrificed as a lamb and when they reach the top of the hill, he demands: “but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” (KJV, Genesis 22:7). It is probably at this moment that a young child realizes that he will be sacrificed. As we know, G-d does not let Abraham to kill his only son in the end, and provides “a lamb for a burnt offering” (KJV, Genesis 22:8). The killing of the lamb as a sacrifice appears for the first time in the Old Testament and culminates with the death of Christ who was deemed to be the “Lamb of God.”² Abraham is then blessed for his loyalty by an angel.

However, to kill a person is the most cruel crime imaginable. Why should someone prove his loyalty to G-d by killing his beloved son? What about if there was no angel telling Abraham not to do it? Would Abraham perpetrate such a crime? And would it be the act of disobedience and therefore of evil not to act according to the will of G-d?

Cohen’s song elaborates on a few important features of the original story and presents some biographical facts. The most important one is that Isaac was nine years old when he was led on the Mount Moriah, which was, actually, Cohen’s age when his father Nathan died (Nadel, 2007:8-11).

Nevertheless, Abraham, the father of the song, does not die but acts according to the Biblical story. With his blue eyes, as described, he typifies the proper Israelite.³ He even possesses an axe, made out of the most precious metal-gold-perhaps supplanted by G-d himself. On their way up the mountain, they drink wine, which is a sacred drink to the Jews.⁴ Isaac says that he is not sure whether he saw an eagle or a vulture hovering above them, which is an important statement as far as the ancient symbolism is concerned.

Eagle is a bird that represents divinity in many native religions. It also represents Zeus in the Greek mythology as a bird into which he

transformed himself in order to kidnap a young boy Ganymede.

We commonly take eagle as a symbol of goodness and vulture as a symbol of evil since vulture has a grim appearance and it feeds on carcasses. However, it seems that it was other way round in the Biblical times. For instance, the translators of the Old Testament in *King James Bible* frequently mistranslated the word *neshar* as an eagle.⁵ Exodus 19:4 in the King James Version says that G-d brought the Egyptians to himself on the wings of an eagle but the animal in question is, actually, the vulture⁶! Cohen’s child is confused about which bird it was—perhaps the same confusion that the translators created after mistranslating the Biblical symbols?— and then he cannot properly interpret the signs.

The singer seems to be suggesting that we have been perpetrating crimes that have nothing in common with the original meaning of the Hebrew texts. In the second stanza, the singer gives his personal opinion and presents criticism of those who decide to construct the world upon these texts. Isaac is singing through the mouth of Cohen that none of the perpetrators of the contemporary world crimes were there when his father was about to kill him. Then he sings that they call him “brother” now, a member of the community of killers, but he himself feels that he is not a member of such a community since he makes a clear distance from evil.

Isaac / Cohen, insinuates that he would obey the command but only the command from the Lord, not from His interpreters.

The song could be also seen as a parable to the Vietnam War in which killings perpetrated were according to someone’s “scheme.” The last three verses could be interpreted as supporting this claim: “And mercy on our uniform, / man of peace or man of war, / the peacock spreads his fan.” Peacock shows his fan only in the period of mating or when he wants to attract the hen. When Robin

² The description of Christ as the Lamb of G-d was used in John 1:29.

³ There have been several articles published on the physiognomy of the ancient Israelites. See, for instance: Christopher, Alex, (October, 1993). “Who Are the Real Israelites?” *Biblioteca Pleyades*. [online] Available: http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/sociopolitica/esp_soc_iopol_zion34.htm. [21st April, 2016].

⁴ It is always recommended to drink it moderately in order not to end up like Noah lying in his tent without clothes (Genesis 9:21). The Greeks often diluted it with water, which often appears in the New Testament.

⁵ For an interesting analysis of the word *neshar* in the Old Testament, see: Slifkin, Nosson. (2004). “The Identity of the Neshar.” *Zoo Torah: Judaism and the Animal Kingdom*. [online] Available: <http://zootorah.com/essays/the-identity-of-the-neshar>. [21st April, 2016].

⁶ See one of the many heated discussions on the word *neshar* which has been often mistranslated as an eagle but stands for a vulture. Gilad, Elon. (May 2014). “Word of the Day / Neshar: The Great Hebrew Battle of the Birds” *Haaretz.com*. [online] Available: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/features/word-of-the-day/premium-1.589507>. [21st April, 2016]. The word *nesr* stands for griffon vulture in Arabic, which helps to identify the bird in the Biblical text.

Pike asked Cohen about the song in an interview in 1974, Cohen replied:

I did feel that one of the reasons that we have wars was so the older men can kill off the younger ones, so that there's no competition for the women. Or for their position. I do think that this is true. One of the reasons we do have wars periodically is so the older men can have the women (rpt. in Burger, 2014:69).

In this song, the sexuality, aggression are seen as in indelible part of the biblical stories. In the following song, "The Butcher," Cohen sings of the evil nature of the Demiurge.

3. THE BUTCHER

The song "The Butcher" portrays evil as personified by "a butcher" who is slaughtering a lamb, which is the animal commonly representing Christ and therefore goodness. It is interesting to notice the article "a" before the word "butcher" which describes the character as any other killer in the world.

The dialogue is held between the butcher and an inquisitive child. The butcher reveals his identity when he says: "I am what I am," which reminds of the verse from Exodus 3:14 in which G-d says to Moses: "I am who I am." The subsequent lyrics identify the child as the only son of the butcher who, logically speaking is his follower and therefore a future killer of the lamb. "I came upon a butcher, / he was slaughtering a lamb, / I accused him there / with his tortured lamb. / He said, "Listen to me, child, / I am what I am / and you, you are my only son."

In the following stanza, there appears a reference to drug taking "Well, I found a silver needle, / I put it into my arm." The purpose of drug-taking, as suggested, is to forget the killing perpetrated. It may even serve as an escape from the guilt that has been placed on humanity for the killing of the lamb.

The killing of the lamb as a sacrifice to G-d is also suggested in Genesis 4:3-7, in which Abel brings "the firstborn of his flock" (KJV) as an offering to G-d. Lamb is also the most important part of the celebration of the Passover, the commemoration of the time when the Israelites escaped from the Egyptian slavery.⁷

The Book of Leviticus 17:11 specifies that it is the blood of the lamb that provides redemption: "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul"

⁷ See Exodus 12:1-11. Moreover, in his instructions laid to the Israelites in Egypt, G-d will protect every household whose lintel will be smeared by the blood of a lamb. See: Exodus 12:13.

(KJV). Furthermore, according to the book of "Leviticus" the lamb for the sacrifice "it shall be perfect to be accepted" (KJV, Leviticus 22:21).

As it is suggested through the course of the Old Testament, the sacrifice of the lamb will culminate in the death of Christ who is the purest Lamb of G-d. The New Testament contains direct references which identify the lamb of the Old Testament with Jesus Christ.⁸

Cohen describes flowers growing out of the blood of the innocent Lamb that had taken upon himself the sins of the world. According to Isaiah, chapters 52 – 53, the Lamb is the servant of the Lord who finally lets others to kill it for the sins of Israel. It is G-d who "hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (KJV, Isaiah: 53:6). Its killing is therefore the will of G-d.

The life of the Lamb is seen as a constant struggle, it cannot speak, it is afflicted and it is brought to the slaughter in the end.⁹ The Lord is even pleased to do him this harm: "it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief" (KJV, Isaiah: 53:10).

The Butcher of the song makes the child aware that he is his son who will continue perpetrating the same crimes in future generations and killing the Lamb as a sacrifice. In the last stanza of the song, he begs his "child" not to leave him because he is "broken down from a recent fall." He says that there is "blood upon [his] body and ice upon [his] soul" and he encourages the son to go on and continue his responsibilities in the world.

This fall resembles "The Fall of Satan from Heaven," which is mentioned in Isaiah 14:12-15 and described in detail in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667).

4. THE CAPTAIN

The song "The Captain" speaks about the death of the "butcher" who is handing down his responsibilities to his lieutenant (formerly the child). They are the only two left from their battle unit. The lieutenant complains that there is no one to command since all the soldiers are either "dead or in retreat or with the enemy." The lieutenant has some idea of goodness, he is perhaps believing in Christ, and he even reprimands the Captain who feels that they lost during the Crucifixion and the

⁸ See, for instance, John 1:29: "John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (KJV).

⁹ Isaiah: 53:7: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (KJV).

Holocaust, which suggests that neither the Crucifixion nor Holocaust brought expected results to them: the everlasting rule of evil.

The lieutenant is, however, more dangerous than the Captain because he has no idea of good and evil. He feels that he does not want to be fighting any longer, on any side, although, he does not know what he should do then. He asks the Captain where to go: “But tell me, Captain, if you know / Of a decent place to stand.” The Captain advises him to find a woman. “There is no decent place to stand / In a massacre, / but if a woman take your hand, / then go and stand with her.”

However, the lieutenant is used to wandering and living without commitment. “I left a wife in Tennessee / and a baby in Saigon — / I risked my life, but not to hear /some country-western song.”

The captain then thinks that the lieutenant “cannot raise his love to a very high degree.” Perhaps to the selfless / altruistic love for the other person. Therefore, he is suitable to propagate evil. “But if you cannot raise your love / to a very high degree, /then you're just the man I've been thinking of — / so come and stand with me.”

On account of being indecisive and not knowing the difference between good nor evil, he is without his will pushed into the conflict against good. The song suggests that knowing good is the highest goal of our knowledge because it can lead us to make clear choices in our life. The lieutenant is revealed not to know what he is even fighting for: “I don't even know what side / We fought on, or what for.”

The identity of the Captain is finally revealed. He is always fighting against heaven. On the side of “snake-eyes” tossed in dice, which means two pips thrown. He is always against the sacred number seven. “I'm on the side that's always lost / against the side of heaven; / I'm on the side of snake-eyes tossed / against the side of seven.”

The Captain / evil Demiurge says that he read the Bill of Human rights and found that some of its points were true, then he hands over the burden of evil permeating the world and the responsibility to uphold it to the lieutenant.

Dying Captain may symbolise dying Demiurge who is departing from the world in which people willingly follow his will. He is dying without being hurt and the lieutenant takes over his responsibilities.

5. FIRST WE TAKE MANHATTAN

“First We Take Manhattan” is a song appearing in the album *I'm Your Man*, (1988). It is sung from the position of Isaac-child-lieutenant who is in the world to spread evil. After being

imprisoned for “twenty years of boredom” (which is actually the twenty years after recording Cohen's first album released in 1967), the speaker of the song wants to rule over the world, he ominously repeats: “First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin.”

Why Manhattan and Berlin? Manhattan in New York is the economic and administrative centre of the US and perhaps of the whole world, known for Wall Street and United Nations Headquarters. Berlin, on the other hand, was the capital city of Hitler's Germany. After the WWII, the city was divided by the Allied forces and it is probably, the idea of Berlin as a place of division between good and evil, democratic and communist countries, or left and right in the political thinking, that makes it suitable for the song. The takeover of these two cities could signify ruling over the most powerful places of the Western world

The singer claims that he is “guided by a signal in the heavens,” which reminds us of the song “Story of Isaac” and the character of Abraham who was obeying G-d's orders. He then speaks about the birthmark “on his skin¹⁰” that makes him chosen and about the fact that he is also “guided by the beauty of our weapons,” which suggest that he has inherited the Butcher and Captain's trade.

Cohen decided to start a new type of music and get away with his older life and music production in this album. Unlike the lieutenant, he confesses that he would love to stay with the woman and love her but he cannot because he feels the need to move. When he refers to “the line moving through the station” he may mean the men who are to be drafted to the army and abandoning their beloved ones. “But you see that line there moving through the station? / I told you, I told you, told you, I was one of those.”

Before, he had some morals but he was thought of as a loser, now he abandons them. He says that the female character of the song knows how to pacify him but she lacks “the discipline.”

Cohen revealed another biographical information when he commented on himself and his “fashion business.” His family owned a profitable tailoring business in Canada when Cohen was young. He also mentions drugs that kept him thin as in the song “The Butcher.”

¹⁰ Symbolically, birthmark marks the identity and faith. Birthmark is mentioned in other songs such as “Love Calls You By Your Name,” *Songs of Love and Hate*, (1971) when love appears “between the birthmark and the stain / between the ocean and your open vein.” In the collection *Flowers for Hitler* (1964), there appears a poem “Promise” which speaks about woman's kiss that appears as a birthmark on the skin of the singer: “Your mouthprint / is the birthmark / on my power” (67).

Perhaps these were the antidepressants whose list he revealed during the London concert on July 17th in 2008.¹¹

In the song, he receives “the monkey and the plywood violin” as a gift. Perhaps, this is the reference to the music industry, which makes him a clown. Now he wants to dissociate himself from this world.

6. EVERYBODY KNOWS

The song “Everybody Knows” from the same album *I'm Your Man* (1988), speaks about the spread of evil in the world in which good has been suppressed. People feel broken because they have lost compassion. They have the same feelings for other people like for animals: “Everybody got this broken feeling / Like their father or their dog just died.” The singer sings that everyone is interested about money. People have romantic ideals about life symbolized by “a box of chocolates and a long stem rose” but none of these can be made true.

There is no respect for the human body. It is no longer sacred. The bodies of two naked people are just shining “artefact[s] of the past.”

In his despair, Cohen seems to be addressing Christ who had experienced the Calvary as well as spent some time “on the beach of Malibu.” The Sacred Heart of Christ, as a symbol of his sacrifice for humanity is going to blow. Cohen prophesises that here will not be any love among people.

7. THE FUTURE

Cohen-Isaac-lieutenant rage continues on the album *The Future*, (1992). The first song of the album “The Future” portrays a man who has lost his “secret life,” his suffering and perhaps *the boredom* he spoke about in the song “First We Take Manhattan.” He is no longer the perpetrator of evil, however, his support of goodness is unbearable and he begs for the return of evil as if it was easier to live with it.

In order that he could escape from the void created by the culture which does not differentiate between good and evil and creates false definitions of what is good and what is not, he begs for the return of duality and therefore of the possibility to choose between good and evil. He begs for crack and anal sex and for the return of the Berlin Wall,

Stalin and St. Paul, in order people could make clear choices in their lives.

The future is murder according to Cohen, but not murder in a sense of physical death but the vacuum created by the absence of opposing forces. This vacuum cannot be filled with any religion, law or principles. It stands as “the hole in [our] culture.”

The order of the world will be dramatically changed and even “the order of the soul” will be overturned, according to Cohen. The world is going to “slide in all directions / there won't be nothing / nothing you can measure anymore.”

The singer claims that he is “a little Jew who wrote the Bible.” He, therefore, claims that he is one of the orchestrators of evil. Moreover, he prophesies that we will feel “devil's riding crop” driving us. The whole society will be upside down. The laws and values respected for millennia will be suddenly overturned. “There'll be the breaking of the ancient/western code.” We may only speculate about the signification of the “ancient western code” but it probably speaks for the foundations regarding family, religion and the state according to the Bible. “There'll be phantoms / there will be fires on the road / and white man [finally] dancing.” Nakedness will become a travesty. No one will be able to appreciate female beauty: “her features [will be] covered by her fallen gown” because men will not be able to see with their eyes. Love will stand only for sex and poets will try to sound rough “like Charlie Manson.”

Cohen repeats his pledges for Berlin Wall, Stalin and St. Paul in the last stanza and adds: “give me Christ or give me Hiroshima” to demarcate good and evil. Then he speaks about killing of foetus because the society does not “like children anyhow.”

8. CLOSING TIME

The song “Closing Time” from the same album *The Future*, (1992) celebrates a drinking reverie and presents an apocalyptic vision of the world. People in the song are drinking and dancing. They do not keep any control and seem to have lost their morals. The feminine character of the song, “the Angel of Compassion” is offering “her thigh” to everyone. It seems to be the Virgin Mary, or the compassionate aspect of the Mother Goddess. Women are taking their blouses off and men dance on them, which says that there is no fidelity between partners, everyone makes love with anyone else as foretold in the song “The Future.” No one notices the effects of their behaviour but the singer ominously foretells “the Closing Time.”

¹¹ “I've taken a lot of Prozac, Paxil, Wellbutrin, Effexor, Ritalin, Focalin...” The monologue can be seen at the DVD, *Leonard Cohen: Live in London*. (2009). Dir. Edward Sanders. Perf. Leonard Cohen. Columbia.

Once again, Cohen speaks about loneliness coming from the romantic ideas with which people have entered this reverie. Nothing is pure in such a world and even “cider’s laced with acid,” according to the singer. Among all this, the Holy Spirit is crying the 1984-slogan from a TV commercial on Wendy’s hamburgers. “Where’s the beef?” The commercial portrays three elderly woman who are inspecting a big fluffy bread with a tiny portion of meat in the middle. Cohen, thus, asks, “where is the essence of this all?” We are fed on nothing, there is no love, no commitment, no faith, no loyalty. We are not giving and nothing is given.

The refrain speaks of lust “a sigh, a cry, a hungry kiss” which opens the “Gates of Love” only an inch. Sexual love became the synonym for Love.

Cohen again voices the need to appreciate the sacredness of body. He speaks about the beauty of a woman and her body; about the time when their love was “blessed,” which does not say anything about the sexual act. He confesses that he loves her even now when this blessedness has disappeared and when they feel only “sorrow and sense of overtime.” Then he presents a comment regarding the society and the state it is in: “It looks like freedom but it feels like death / it’s something between I guess,” which, again speaks of the loss of duality in the world.

Then, he continues to say that the world is a dead place ruled by greed. His sweet companion, “The Angel of Compassion” makes him “fumbling” and “laughing.” She is “hundred” but still “wearing something tight.” In the final verses of the song, he describes good and evil as being unequally balanced. “it’s once for the devil and once for Christ.” Then he says that “The Boss” does not like these reveries so Cohen foretells that he will be caught in “blinding lights” and experience the revelation / Apocalypse.

9. ANTHEM

The song “Anthem” comes from the same album *The Future* (1992).. It gives encouragement to our everyday encounters with evil. It says that we will never get rid of evil. “The wars they will be fought again / The holy dove she will be caught again / bought and sold / and bought again / the dove is never free.” Cohen encourages us that we should forget about perfection since light will get in only through cracks, which is an indirect saying that goodness may reveal itself only through evil: “Ring the bells that still can ring / Forget your perfect offering / There is a crack in everything / That’s how the light gets in.”

Cohen then sings about signs and prophecies as they were shown in the songs “Story of Isaac” and

“The Butcher” and their misinterpretation. “We asked for signs / the signs were sent: / the birth betrayed / the marriage spent.”

Cohen-Isaac-lieutenant, finally lays down his weapons and refuses, once again, to be a part of “that lawless crowd.” He is going to fight against evil. “I can’t run no more / with that lawless crowd / while the killers in high places / say their prayers out loud. / But they’ve summoned, / they’ve summoned up a thundercloud / and they’re going to hear from me.”

Every heart will come to love like a refugee, which is a consequence of living in evil. The song suggest that good could not be revealed without evil.

10. DEMOCRACY

Democracy is coming after a long times of despair such as Tiananmen Square Protests (1989), mentioned in the song, during which there were shot hundreds of protesters refusing to accept martial law in the Chines capital of Beijing.

Democracy is coming “through a crack in the wall; / on a visionary flood of alcohol,” through the inebriation with evil which will finally allow its coming. Cohen further mentions “Sermon on the Mount” which summarizes Christ’s teachings (Matthew 5,6,7) which “he doesn’t understand at all” since it presents only a one-sided structure of the world living in goodness. The state of the country without “democracy” is described as a “battered heart of Chevrolet.” The wrecked heart of the car, perhaps its dead engine, which so much represents the culture of the U.S., is thirsty for love and goodness. “Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.”

Democracy is coming from violence, homicide, quarrels between partners according to Cohen. The US is represented as a ship that must sail through “The Shores of Need,” past “the Reefs of Greed” and “Squalls of Hate” in order Democracy could finally exist. It must come to the US first because this is the country that, according to the above description, has no democracy at all. It has everything from the materialistic point of view, on the other hand, people suffer from “the spiritual thirst.” It is there where the “family’s broken” and heart of the people “has got to open” as Cohen sings.

Cohen sees the coming of democracy also in the relationships between men and women when they love sincerely. “We’ll be going down so deep / the river’s going to weep, / and the mountain’s going to shout Amen!”

Cohen cannot stand the current arrangement of the world. The hatred and wars. Like the lieutenant earlier, he claims that he is “neither left or right.” It means that he has not been siding with good or

evil. Like the innocent Isaac he is questioning the world and its biblical laws. However, now he prefers to be passive, staying at home and watch “that hopeless little screen.” He is tired of the world but still he keeps high hopes. “I’m junk but I’m still holding up / this little wild bouquet: Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.”

11. CONCLUSION

In these selected songs, we have seen the transformation of an innocent child (Isaac) questioning the Divine Law to the evil character of the singer trying to rule over the world. Cohen has suggested that the development of the community, or better to say of the culture, based on the ancient texts and their misinterpretation is ultimately doomed to be evil.

Evil permeating the society was described in the song “Everybody Knows” and “Closing Time,” however, Cohen has offered a soothing vision of the future: the murder of evil and the overturn “of the ancient western code,” which offers the utopic vision of the world in which evil loses its upper hand.

According to the Gnostics, the fight against evil requires a monastic life and asceticism, which is, as Hans Jonas claims, “perhaps modeled on Buddhist monasticism” (Jonas, 1992:232). Leonard Cohen, has been a practicing Zen Buddhist since 1970 with several long periods in the monastery at Mt. Baldy California. His stays there may be seen as a period of fight against evil nature of his being

represented by the character of the song “First We Take Manhattan.”

The essay portrayed Cohen’s syncretic views of the Demiurge and perhaps revealed some of his efforts to become the *pneumaticos*, a complete being that is beyond good and evil.

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