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Trojan Horses

Tom Tyler

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, before cartridge-based game consoles such as the Nintendo *Game Boy* became popular, self-contained handheld electronic games were the preferred method of gaming on the go (DeMaria and Wilson 2004, 30–35; Gielens 2000). Most of these devices allowed their owners to play just a single game, or a pair of variations on a game. In *Trojan Horse* (Gakken, 1981), for instance, players are given the task of defending the ancient city of Troy and its citizens. Beneath the outline of Mount Ida, a stream of figures storm off a docked ship, across the plains, toward the city walls. Some are armed Achaeans charging to invade the city, others defenceless civilians seeking its protection. At ground level, players control a drawbridge which they must keep raised so that enemies fall into the moat, letting it down only to allow the safe entry of allies. Meanwhile, the fabled wooden horse appears sporadically on the plain. When the horse lifts its huge head, figures dash over the top toward the exposed battlements. Players control a defending Trojan soldier, hurling spears at the Achaeans whilst carefully avoiding the civilians mixed in amongst them. The alternative version of the game is identical but for the fact that the advancing figures start off moving slightly faster. In both variants, the pace at which soldiers and civilians rush toward Troy gradually increases as the game goes on. The assault continues until, inevitably, Troy falls, either because too many Achaeans have successfully gained entry, or because too many Trojans have been killed.

Fig 1. Achaeans storm Troy in *Trojan Horse* (Gakken, 1981)

Since antiquity there have been many, varied tellings of the tale of the Trojan Horse, but the scenario depicted in the Gakken game seems nonetheless something of an innovation. The Trojan War, according to some authors at least, began as it ended with

Odysseus, king of Ithaca, and a horse. The famously cunning Odysseus advised Tyndareus, king of Sparta, on how to prevent the many suitors to his stepdaughter, the beautiful Helen, from quarreling: every one of them should swear to defend whoever was chosen as her husband from any wrong that might be done him in respect of the marriage (Apollodorus 1921, 3.10.9; Hesiod 2007, 231–33). A horse was sacrificed, and the suitors made solemnly to repeat Odysseus' oath standing on the dismembered pieces (Pausanias 1918, 3.20.9). When Paris, son of King Priam of Troy, prompted by the goddess Aphrodite, subsequently abducted Helen from her husband, Menelaus, the oath was invoked and all the kings were called to arms (Apollodorus 1921, Epitome 3.3–6). The vast Achaean army descended and did battle with the defending forces on the plains outside Troy. The Achaeans mounted assaults on the well-fortified city (Cypria 2003, 79), but the Trojans repeatedly repelled the invaders, at times with the assistance of the god Apollo (Homer 1951, 16.698–711; Aethiopis 2003, 113; Apollodorus 1921, Epitome 3.3–6), and the siege dragged on for a decade. With heavy losses on both sides, Achaeans and Trojans alike grew weary of the war: the Achaeans were “despondent” (Apollodorus 1921, Epitome 5.8), the Trojans wept both for their own losses and for those of their many-tongued allies (Tryphiodorus 1928, 21–24), and even the horses “with heads bowed piteously, bewailed their yoke-mates, [or] mourned to miss their perished charioteers” (Tryphiodorus 1928, 14–16 (translation modified)).

The city finally fell as the result of a ploy hatched by Odysseus (Smyrnaeus 1913, 12.21–45). A huge hollow horse was built from wood and inscribed with the words, “For their return home, the Greeks dedicate this thankoffering to Athena” (Apollodorus 1921, Epitome 5.14–15). A small band of the Achaeans’ bravest warriors hid themselves inside and the rest burnt their camp and sailed away. On discovering the wooden horse at dawn, the Trojans were divided as to what should be done with it. Some argued that it should be broken open, or hurled over the cliff’s edge, or burnt (Sack of Ilion 2003, 145; Homer 1965, 8.505–510; Virgil 1907, 2.35–39; Tryphiodorus 1928, 250–259). The priest Laocoön warned the Trojans not to trust the horse, fearing as he did the Achaeans, even

those bearing gifts (Virgil 1907, 2.49). But, ignoring these warnings and the prophecies of his own daughter Cassandra, Priam ordered that Athena's property not be desecrated. He had the city walls breached (Virgil 1907, 2.234-247), and the massive horse was hauled inside "with great joy," dedicated to Athena, and decorated with garlands and roses (Apollodorus 1921, Epitome 5.16; Tryphiodorus 1928, 343-346). The Trojans made sacrifices and fell to celebrating with feasts and revelry (Little Iliad 2003, 123-25). After dark, Helen circled the horse, calling out to the concealed warriors in the voices of their wives, but Odysseus kept them silent and hidden inside (Homer 1965, 4.274-89). Only once all of Troy was sleeping soundly did Odysseus and his men emerge and open up the city gates. The rest of the Achaean force, now returned, entered in, the horsemen coming last lest the horses rouse the people of Troy by their loud neighing (Tryphiodorus 1928, 621-22). A terrible slaughter followed, and the great city was taken at last (Apollodorus 1921, Epitome 5.20-23).

The handheld *Trojan Horse* game, enjoyable as it is, thus misses entirely the element of Achaean wile that is central to the usual telling of the tale. It was surely no coincidence that the supposed offering to Athena should take the form that it did: the Trojans were known for their association with horses. Homer describes them many times as ἵπποδάμων (*hippodamoi*), tamers or breakers of horses, and the epithet is, in fact, the very last word of the *Iliad*, applied to the mightiest of all Trojans, the fallen prince Hector (Homer 1951, 24.804; Brann 2002, 112-13), who had been slain by the Achaean hero Achilles. Later authors had it that the Trojans had adopted the horse as the city's emblem (e.g. Caxton 1913, 94). The great wooden horse, then, at least in the traditional accounts of Homer and his contemporaries, was not some massive siege engine constructed by the Achaeans for scaling the city walls. Rather, it was the vehicle by means of which Odysseus and his men snuck inside Troy before letting in the rest of the invading army (Smyrnaeus 1913, 12.19-20). The game depicts a concerted and determined frontal assault, rather than an ingenious stratagem devised to circumvent otherwise impervious defences.

At Easter 1945, the medievalist, novelist and lay theologian C. S. Lewis delivered an address to the Church of England Carmarthen Conference for Youth Leaders and Junior Clergy entitled ‘Christian Apologetics’ (Lewis 1971). The term *apologetic* derives from the Greek ἀπολογία, referring to a speech made in defence of something. Plato’s *Apology*, for instance, presents Socrates’ arguments, made in court in his own defence, against the charges of corrupting the Athenian youth and failing to believe in the city’s gods (Plato 1892). Christian apologetics, then, have been explicit defences of Christianity against either overt attack or perceived criticism (Edwards, Goodman, and Price 1999). Such defences have been based on the explication of doctrine, on rational argument, on historical or scientific evidence, and various other foundations. In the fifth book of his *Contra Celsum*, written in the mid-3rd century, the ascetic scholar Origen, for example, responded to a vehement attack on the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Celsus charges that it is an exceedingly vile, loathsome and impossible idea given the corruption and dissolution of corpses, which betrays only such hope as “might be cherished by worms” (Origen 1869, 5.14). Origen replies by seeking to clarify what is actually stated in Scripture, especially the letters of Paul, arguing that it is not the case that the dead will rise up unchanged (Origen 1869, 5.18), or that the body that has undergone corruption will resume its original nature, but rather that, just as a stalk arises from a grain of wheat, there is implanted in the body a certain principle or power (*λόγος*), “from which the body is raised up in incorruption” (Origen 1869, 5.23; Chadwick 1948).

The English clergyman William Paley, writing in 1790, likewise turns in his apologetic work to Paul’s epistles. In his *Horae Paulinae*, Paley sets out to combat doubts that might be raised regarding the authenticity of these letters, and of the Acts of the Apostles, by meticulously comparing them with one another and finding “minute, circuitous, or oblique” coincidences which could only have arisen, he suggests, as a result of the texts being genuine and their accounts true (Paley 1816, 8). For instance, in one such

“undesigned coincidence” (Paley 1816, 16), Paley carefully compares Paul’s salutation to his helpers Priscilla and Aquila, included in a long list of greetings (Romans 16:3), with mentions elsewhere which place these same two individuals with Paul at different times at Corinth (Acts 18.2, 18.19–26) and Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16.9), arguing that, with regard to all these names, circumstances, dates and places, their mutual implication ensures that “nothing but truth can preserve consistency” (Paley 1816, 31; McGrew 2014). An apologetic in the philosophical or theological sense, then, is by no means intended to express the author’s regret or remorse, or to provide some form of reparation for an offence or affront they have caused. Plato, Origen and Paley are not *sorry* for their opinions and beliefs. The apologist in this traditional sense seeks, rather, to restate and defend their position, robustly and without contrition.

In his own text, Lewis begins by affirming the necessity of defending orthodox Anglican Christianity, and not departing into watered down “liberal” or “modern” varieties with the supernatural left out, or into Roman doctrines. Those who hold such views may well do so honestly, but they cannot honestly be Anglican Christians, he asserts. Lewis goes on to provide practical advice for his audience, drawn from his own experience: avoid the temptation to employ scientific findings which seem to bolster your apologetic, since science is continually revised and overturned (Lewis here quotes with approval Laocoön’s warning about Greeks bearing gifts); maintain the distinction between theology and politics, which address, respectively, what ends are desirable and what means are effective; learn the language and mental habits of your uneducated and unbelieving countrymen (a helpful glossary is provided for this purpose). Lewis closes with a series of objections that he has encountered and suggestions on how best to meet them. Suspicions, raised by the sheer size of the universe, regarding God’s special interest in Earth, can be addressed in a variety of ways, including for instance by recalling the parable of the lost sheep, in which a shepherd leaves his flock of ninety-nine for the sake of the one who has strayed (Matthew 18:12–14; Luke 15:3–7). Doubts regarding the historicity of the Gospels, meanwhile, might be tackled by pointing out

insignificant details in their narration which mark them out as more than mere legend. An audience concerned that they seem to be faced with an infinite variety of religions should be encouraged to consider the fact that Christianity alone adequately fulfils the condition that a religion be both “thick,” i.e. includes ecstasies and mysteries, and “clear,” i.e. that it be ethical and universalizing.

Lewis, like Origen and Paley before him, is concerned with Christian apologetics, but defences of many other modes of thought and practice have, of course, been offered at different times and places. In the present context, for instance, there has been no shortage of what we might call *vegan apologetics*. Attacks on veganism, like those on Christianity, have been many and varied, but we can confine ourselves here to three particular assaults and the defences they have elicited.

In the mid-1990s, the philosopher Kathryn Paxton George claimed that traditional arguments for ethical vegetarianism, and particularly veganism, assume a “male physiological norm” and “have the facts wrong about nutritional requirements,” resulting in discrimination against “women, infants, children, adolescents, some of the elderly, other races and ethnicities, and those living in other cultures” (George 1994, 407, 421, 406). In a series of responses, apologies for veganism were offered on several different grounds. The literary scholar Josephine Donovan pointed out that George is mistaken, amongst other things, in her claims regarding the nutritional inadequacy of a vegan diet (Donovan 1995). The activist and advocate Carol J. Adams drew attention to feminist writings on veganism, which engage with the issue of animals and ethics in very different ways to the texts criticized by George for male bias (Adams 1995). And in a sustained reply, the literary scholar Greta Gaard and philosopher Lori Gruen reiterated both these points and also drew attention to George’s failure, as a point of methodology, to address the benefits of a vegan diet and the risks of an animal-based diet, which include, they pointed out, “a variety of cancers, hypertension, heart disease, and other illnesses” (Gaard and Gruen 1995, 235).

The science and technology scholar Donna Haraway, meanwhile, has taken periodic potshots at veganism during the course of her discussions of the complicated nature of human-animal relations. She worries that animal rights folk cannot handle the “contradictoriness” involved and are too ready to find a “comfortable resolution” to issues around the killing of animals, and that her vegan friends “think that the answer is pretty clear” (Haraway 2009). Preferring to deal in “moral absolutes,” vegans “would consign most domestic animals to the status of curated heritage collections or to just plain extermination as kinds and as individuals” (Haraway 2008, 106, 80, see also 2017, 8). The media scholar Eva Giraud has argued in veganism’s defence that, far from being a totalising moral imperative as Haraway suggests, it is “epistemologically disruptive,” challenging traditional humanist hierarchies and unsettling the ways that certain groups are designated as legitimately exploitable (Giraud 2013, 52–55). The sociologist Richard Twine argues further that veganism is not conceived by its practitioners as a manifesto for purity, nor as an ethical endpoint, but as an ongoing, everyday ethics which attempts to commit the least harm within complex contemporary systems of production and consumption; and he explores, in fact, alternatives to the stark vegan futures imagined by Haraway (Twine 2013, 139). Moreover, the film scholar Anat Pick suggests that, in her caricature of vegans as dogmatic and otherworldly, Haraway misses the point that veganism is “in its very incompleteness and imperfection” a conscious participation in the world. Pick argues that veganism is a “labour of love and justice, no less worldly than Haraway’s multispecies earthly entanglements,” but it is one which works hard to see clearly not only the webs of interspecies relations as they are but also as they could be: the work of justice, Pick suggests, necessarily entails some untying of knots (Pick 2012).

Finally, in a curious and, one suspects, not entirely serious manifesto entitled *Eat This Book*, the philosopher Dominique Lestel provides a sustained critique of ethical vegetarians. Lestel argues that the principle of reciprocity is one of the most important

for preserving harmony on earth, and that predation constitutes one of the principles of this harmony (Lestel 2016, 59, 66). In refusing to eat animal flesh, vegetarians, amongst whom vegans constitute “the most extreme militants” (Lestel 2016, 5), would deny the animal dimension of human nature, and situate themselves above the animality of which they are, in truth, a part (Lestel 2016, 73–74, 68). The vegetarian position thus entails a kind of apartheid between human beings and other animals, amounting to a form of human exceptionalism, and reveals itself ultimately to be profoundly hostile to animal life (Lestel 2016, 26, 36–38, 48). Humans ought to affirm their fundamental animality, their “metabolic connection” with the animal (Lestel 2011, 73), and they should recognize and commemorate their “infinite debt” to other animals (Lestel 2011, 59). These things they should do, Lestel asserts, by eating animals (Lestel 2011, 72–73). The researcher and campaigner Pierre Sigler suggests that Lestel relies for his critique on a rhetorical bogeyman (*épouvantail*), a strawman (*l’homme de paille*) (Sigler 2011). So, without mentioning or citing particular authors, Lestel attributes to “le végétarien” a series of peculiar positions, including a quest for a world devoid of all suffering (Lestel 2016, 44–46), and a refusal to become “intoxicated” by the animal or “metabolically transformed” by a living being of another species (Lestel 2016, 36–38). The philosopher Gary Steiner points out that Lestel fails to explain how the killing, mastication and ingestion of animals will confer on those who consume them a sense of reverence for these creatures, or restore a sense of immersion in and obligation toward nature (Steiner 2010, 223–24). Indeed, following the logic of Lestel’s argument, one might conclude that we are morally obligated to eat not just other animals but other humans (Steiner 2010, 226). It is Lestel’s “ethical carnivore,” it turns out, who instantiates exceptionalism.

Attacks on veganism, then, not unlike the Achaean assault on Troy, have been vigorous and prolonged, and apologies for it, not unlike the Trojan defence, equally forceful and sustained. The distinction between attack and defence, however, is not always clear. During the course of the ten year siege, the Achaeans and Trojans met in battle many times on the plains outside the city, and many times the Trojans forced their way into

the Achaeans' own camp, destroying fortifications and setting fire to the ships (Dares 1966, §19-36). Similarly, though Lewis calls his lecture 'Christian Apologetics,' it includes not just suggested defences against common suspicions and attacks, but also extensive practical advice on how to pursue a programme of active proselytizing. Responses to George provided not only correctives to her critique of ethical vegetarianism, but also pointed out deficiencies in her argument, methodology and evidence base, as well as the risks of an animal-based diet. Defences against Haraway's claim that veganism is absolute and otherworldly turned the tables and suggested that, more to the point, Haraway herself is in danger of a too-comfortable quietism. And, conversely, in considering the "virulent" vegetarian posture, Lestel complained that carnivores have provided a shamefully unconvincing and ineffective defence in response to the aggression of the vegetarian with whom they find themselves in conflict (Lestel 2016, xviii, 59). He titled his own book, in fact, in the original French, *Apologie du Carnivore*. My point here is not, as the well-worn adage would have it, that the best defence is a good offence, but rather that, especially when considering a protracted dispute, maintaining a distinction between the two is not always possible. This is true, I think, whether our concern is Bronze Age warfare or arguments over Christian or vegan ethics.

Thus, the term *apologetics* can refer not just to straightforwardly defensive works, but also to tracts and treatises which pursue, at least in part, an offensive agenda. Outright demonstrations of force, whether we characterize them as attack or defence, are by no means the only way of prosecuting a campaign, however. In a brief digression early in his lecture, Lewis suggested to his audience that there is, in fact, an approach that would do much more good than any directly apologetic work. The problem for the missionary in Britain, he argues, is that although someone might attend to a Christian point of view for half an hour or so, immediately afterward they are plunged back into a world where the very opposite is taken for granted. "Every newspaper, film, novel and text book," Lewis laments, "undermines our work" (Lewis 1971, 67). What we want, he proposes, is

not more books about Christianity, but more books by Christians on other subjects, in which the Christianity is latent. It is not the books written in defence of materialism that make people materialists, he contends, but rather the materialistic assumptions in all the other books. By the same token, it is not books on Christianity that will really trouble the materialist. If, however, whenever a reader wanted a popular introduction to some science--geology, botany, politics, or astronomy--they found that the implications of the best work on the market were always Christian, that would shake them. Lewis recalls the popular and very successful *Thinkers' Library* series, published by the Rationalist Press Association, which consisted of classic and contemporary works by humanists on a variety of topics from history and science to philosophy and literature. He imagines, as an alternative, a series produced by Christians which would beat the rationalists on their own ground. Its Christianity, he says, "would have to be latent, not explicit" (Lewis 1971, 68). Apologetics, Lewis effectively argues, is but one strategy in the project of instructing and converting British infidels, and it is not even the most effective.

Apologetics, as we saw, are not apologetic in the sense that they are intended to express contrition or remorse. But, no matter how robust their rebuttals, apologetics always implicitly concede the need to defend a position. As such, they start always on the back foot, the agenda effectively set by the antagonist to whom they are responding.

Apologetic texts are in danger of being defensive in both senses of the word. It is for this reason, I suspect, that Lewis could not resist positing an alternative to apologetic work, indeed a superior alternative, even as he addressed the youth leaders and junior clergy at Carmarthen on the topic of Christian apologetics. And we can imagine, on the model of Lewis' proposed book series, texts designed to further the vegan project which similarly eschew not just explicit arguments and justifications (see Adams 2009, 115–22; Adams and Calarco 2017, 45–47), but all attempts to evangelize or mount frontal assaults, or bid to besiege the heavily-defended. Such texts would deal with subjects other than vegan practice or ethics, but vegan values would be taken for granted; latent, not explicit. Readers, embarking on a book or essay on one topic would find, to their

surprise, that its implications and assumptions were other than they might have expected. At a certain point, they would realise that they had got more than they bargained for, much as the Trojans did a little while after wheeling in the wooden horse. Texts of this kind would, I think, as Lewis discerned, stand a good chance of really shaking and troubling their readers.

To counter the conventionally materialistic values of newspapers, films, novels and text books, Lewis proposes that his implicitly Christian series provide popular introductions to science. The latently vegan texts we might imagine need not confine themselves to science, though there is plenty of scope there, but could address any number of topics, from child care to chiropody, and from film studies to finance. We could envisage, for instance, a collection of essays on videogames, each of which engages with some aspect of game design or mechanics, or with some particular videogame or franchise, but which, during the course of its exposition, reveals itself as aligning with a vegan sensibility. An essay might examine, for instance, the wit of *Cow Clicker*, a working videogame parody of the social network game *Farmville*, before exploring how *Cow Clicker's* satire highlights not just the inanity of *Farmville's* gameplay, but the paucity of its depiction of dairy cows' punishing daily existence (Tyler 2015). Perhaps another might address the endless runner genre and its inversion of expectations around the winning of videogames, before discussing how one zombie-themed example, *Into the Dead*, counters traditional notions of human supremacy and emphasizes instead a commonality with other prey animals (Tyler 2017). We can even conceive of an essay which considers both the famous incident of the Trojan Horse and an early videogame that misrepresents it, but which also draws attention, in passing, to the unenviable lot of the many other horses who come into contact with the Trojans and Achaeans: the piteous war horses on both sides, bewailing the loss of their fellows; the vast herds of horses who are "broken" by the Trojans; and, of course, the individual at the very beginning of the tale who was sacrificed and dismembered for the purposes of Odysseus' oath. In each of these essays, and indeed in the many others that we might

imagine, a vegan perspective is introduced not by means of a frontal assault, but, rather, is snuck in under cover, before emerging, impenitent and assured, to shake and trouble.

Such texts introduce a perspective that is unapologetically vegan. Or perhaps we might say *vejan*, on the model of the famous wooden horse. The authors of vejan texts align, of course, not with the Trojans, the doughty defenders of that seemingly impregnable citadel, but with the Achaeans, the architects of the so-called Trojan Horse. I am not proposing vejan writings such as these as an alternative to the work of the advocate or apologist, but as a complement. Only after many years of outright warfare did the ruse of the Trojan Horse deliver victory, after all, and its success ultimately depended on the full deployment of determined Achaean forces. But frontal assault was never going to be enough whilst those forces were opposed by the long-established and heavily defended city of Troy. Similarly, outright vegan evangelism and apologetics cannot be adequate when confronted by carnism, the long-established and largely normalized ideology and practice of everyday meat eating (Joy 2010; Gibert and Desaulniers 2014). To concentrate all energies, at least within the realm of written engagements, on explicit argumentation would be to misunderstand the nature of this struggle, just as *Trojan Horse*, the videogame, misrepresents the siege of Troy and its resolution. What is needed, in fact, is not a single strategy, or variations thereon, like the one-off games of the handheld devices of old, but a range of different approaches, more akin to the interchangeable cartridges and downloads of contemporary gaming consoles.

Two last horses who took part in the Trojan War are worthy of mention. Late in the hostilities, Achilles' beloved henchman Patroclus goes into battle wearing Achilles' armour and riding his chariot, which is drawn by the immortal horses Xanthos and Balios (Homer 1951, 16.130-154). Leading the formidable Myrmidons, Patroclus fights well and routs the Trojans, but is ultimately slain by Hector (Homer 1951, 16.816-854). Xanthos and Balios stand motionless on the battlefield, weeping for the loss of him (17.426-440). Pitying the mourning horses, Zeus himself bemoans that they were ever

given over to the use of mortals, "Since among all creatures that breathe on earth and crawl on it there is not anywhere a thing more dismal than man is" (17.441-447). Grief-stricken Achilles, on the other hand, later rebukes the horses for failing to bring back Patroclus, whereupon the goddess Hera grants Xanthos the power of speech, that he might reply. It was not because they were too slow, or careless, that Patroclus was killed, Xanthos points out, but because of the intervention of the god Apollo, who aided Hector. Xanthos is thus able, momentarily, to defend himself against unwarranted attack, in a way that is never possible for those other horses who suffer, over the course of the epic tale, at the hands of that most dismal of creatures. But Xanthos takes the opportunity not only to speak in his own defence, to provide, in fact, a forceful apology, but also, surprisingly, to shake and trouble Achilles by reminding him that he too is fated soon to die: "the day of your death is near, but it is not we who are to blame, but a great god and powerful Destiny" (Homer 1951, 19.400-417).

Destiny, the inevitability of events, is central to the tale of the Trojan War, and many prophecies are recounted and fulfilled as the story unfolds. It is foretold early on, indeed, that after many years the Achaeans are destined finally to take Troy (Homer 1951, 2.299-330; Apollodorus 1921, Epitome 3.15; Smyrnaeus 1913, 8.474-477). And in this, at least, *Trojan Horse*, the videogame, is accurate. Players, charged with the defence of Troy, must last as long as they can, controlling the drawbridge and casting spears. But, no matter their skill with these defensive measures, the game ends always with their defeat. Troy is destined to fall, offering a positive vision of the future for those, at least, who side with the Achaeans.

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