

# Benefits and Moral Development in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

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The world of the *Metamorphoses* 1–10 is not a pretty one, being full of treachery, robbery, exploitation, and cruelty. Evil or unpleasant characters and situations outnumber the positive ones. Nevertheless, people do show kindness, generosity, loyalty, and self-sacrifice on occasion. They bestow favours and benefits on each other, sometimes even to an ass. They are able to adopt the perspective of others and respond to their needs and concerns. The question is, what motivates these actions? Is it the mutual back-scratching that facilitates the task of survival in a difficult world and/or conformity to communal and group values that need to be observed in order to preserve or enhance one's standing therein? Or is there beneficial action based on belief on some wider principle such as upholding the law for the protection and welfare of all, some commitment to the greater good of the society or humanity in general for its own sake? In a work shaped by an author steeped in philosophy, one might expect awareness of higher moral principles to seep in somewhere, somehow, especially in the last book, where Apuleius moves further away from the picaresque tale of lechery and sadism that he inherited from the *Onos*.<sup>1</sup> When Lucius becomes a devotee of Isis, he apparently gains access not only to some valuable secret knowledge, reassurance about what happens to him on death, a greater sense of life's meaning, a feeling of being protected against the workings of blind Fortune. He can feel confident that his career as a lawyer will lead to fame and fortune. It has been made clear to him that delving into magical arts is not a good way of empowering himself against whatever society or Fortune may hurl at him, or

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<sup>1</sup> For Platonic concepts and motifs, including the need to turn away from external appearances, which permeate Books 1–10, see, e.g., Schlam 1970. Cf. Heller 1983.

a suitable area for pursuing idle curiosity (11,15). But do changes go beyond that? Do his values undergo any fundamental change? Is there an honouring and integration of perspectives that go beyond what it is like to be a pauper, slave or ass, and to be subject to constant maltreatment and abuse? Is he committed to the welfare of anyone beyond his relatives, friends, clients, and fellow devotees of Isis? Scholars in recent years have argued that Lucius in Book 11 remains the same gullible dupe he has always been, that he changes little. But even if we assume good faith on the part of the priests of Isis and Osiris who extract considerable sums of money from him, just what kind of salvation does he secure? Apart from whatever benefit accrues to Roman society from having a more contented, more disciplined, and less anxious Lucius in its midst, will he make his mark for good in any other way? Law, Lucius' profession, is about negotiating and defining rights and responsibilities, about lubricating social relations in a way that should benefit the wider society. But in the pursuit of their own or their clients' interests, lawyers may ignore or subvert rather than uphold and apply the ideals and higher principles inherent in a body of law.

There are several spheres of interaction in the story: between humans (including episodes where the asinine Lucius feels and acts like a human being, as when he is outraged at the infidelity of the baker's wife and brings about the betrayal of her latest escapade, 9,27); between gods; between gods and humans (Cupid and Psyche, Isis and Lucius); between humans and animals, and animals with each other; and even between features of the landscape and humans, as when a reed and a tower speak to Psyche and help her. There are also the vague, inscrutable workings of Providence and Fortune upon the lives of humans. If we focus on how humans and anthropomorphic deities behave when they are *apparently* behaving well and doing things that enhance or show concern for others in some way, we can get an idea of what heights are reached by the prevailing morality and see whether Lucius' adherence to Isis and Osiris takes him beyond that level or, essentially, leaves him there.

In doing this, we will apply the work of Lawrence Kohlberg on the moral stages humans develop through and operate at to a novel whose prologue (1,1) and coda (11,28–30) signal the author's numerous and elusive perspectives. (See Kahane and Laird 2001) The application is therefore in the nature of an experiment to see what transpires. Kohlberg's theory of moral devel-

opment, while controversial (inevitably), is probably the best available and has a considerable degree of cross-cultural validity.<sup>2</sup>

Kohlberg's cognitive maturation approach argues that humans operate at preconventional, conventional and postconventional levels. Each level contains two stages, hence 6 in all. At stage 1, the primary motivation for 'being good' or doing right is to avoid punishment and to survive, to ensure preservation and protection. What is right is what is allowed or ordered by a superior authority. People operating at this level, as many young children do, believe that if someone is unpopular they must be bad and hence deserve punishment (punish the victim). At stage 2 there is recognition that others have needs and interests too, which leads to the conclusion, notoriously advanced by some Greek sophists, that rights and moral values are entirely relative. Rules are followed and benefits conferred insofar as they serve one's interests and needs. Other people are assumed to operate in the same way. Right is also what is fair, an equal exchange, a deal, a 'good price'. Something is permissible if a reason can be found for doing it but if a provocation is responded to, the retaliation must be proportionate to the original injury. At the conventional level, stage 3 is primarily about living up to what is expected by friends and relatives. To 'be good' is important and means showing unselfishness and concern about others, maintaining mutual relationships through trust, loyalty, respect and gratitude. One cares for and gives to others because one wants to be cared for and given to in turn. *Do ut des*. There is therefore a capacity to adopt the perspective of others provided one knows and cares about their views. But a 'generalised system perspective', that is, the capacity to take a wider view of what is good for society or humanity, is lacking and there is a tendency to maintain rules and authority that supports stereotypical good behaviour and interpersonal conformity. Stage 4 is marked by respect for and duty to the social system as a whole, a generalised other, and not just to the group or community where one is

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<sup>2</sup> Kohlberg 1981, 1984; Reimer 1983; Mogdil and Mogdil 1986; Kurtines and Gewirtz 1991. There is a convenient tabular summary of Kohlberg's moral development scheme at Mogdil and Mogdil, 488–489. For an illuminating discussion of how the moral stages can be applied to works of literature, see Kohlberg 1973. Here Kohlberg discusses Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Antigone*, Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky and the musings of Aristotle on tragedy. Kohlberg's work coheres well with other developmental schemes that trace the evolution of societies or of individuals' sense of identity, needs and world-views. Cf. Wilber 1998, 306–311, referring to the work of Gebser, Gilligan, Nucci, Maslow and Loewinger. The work of Fowler (Snarey 1991) is also validatory.

known. Laws are to be upheld except where they conflict with other social needs, such as the need to retain possessions, and right is contributing to a particular society or institution. A primary consideration is that if everyone defaulted, the system would collapse. The perspective is that of the system. At the postconventional or principled level, stage 5 and (occurring very rarely) stage 6, the perspective is that of a rational individual aware of abstract rights and values *prior* to social attachments and contracts, that is, one respects and upholds the law and due process not simply because to do otherwise would mean anomie or loss of esteem but because of a commitment or contract to make and abide by laws for the welfare of all, to strive for the greatest good of the greatest number, to believe that justice is the entitlement of all, to resolve inevitable moral and legal conflicts with as much impartiality and rationality as possible. Stages 1–5 can be found in every culture but not in the same proportions.<sup>3</sup> Modern nation states, societies with a high level of formal schooling or tertiary education, those with a higher ratio of adults to children, and multicultural urban communities have a higher proportion of stages 4 and 5 than traditional villages, where it is rare to find anyone beyond stage 3. Given that the Roman Empire was overwhelmingly rural and agricultural, and where the dominant social organisation was the local community, most of the population would operate at or below stage 3, regardless of whether they lived in the Greek East or the Roman West. Different social realities require different responses and stage 3 behaviour and morality based on personal honour, a stable moral heritage and a relatively high level of consensus about right and wrong may be perfectly adequate for most in the village or face-to-face communities of the fictive but realistic *Metamorphoses* 1–10. Furthermore, the oppressed and deprived have no reason to believe in a just world. If we find that the modal behaviour in Books 1–10 does not meet certain ideals of Christianity or those of the well educated in modern, industrialised societies, that will be no surprise but it will leave open the interesting question of whether or not there is any progress in Book 11 (and if not, why not?).

The motives for bestowing benefits on others in the *Metamorphoses*, in cases where this is stated or can be reasonably surmised, range from naked self-interest to spontaneous outpouring of kindness. As will become evident, the five bands into which the motivation can be organised remain within the

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<sup>3</sup> Individuals at stages 1–3 were common in all 22 societies examined in one study but stage 5 individuals were rare (Pope Edwards 1986).

motives that operate at stages 2 and 3. Firstly, ulterior motives for giving: they include the wish to put the recipient under an obligation, to win kudos for the self, to show off or outdo others, even, as an act of self-preservation, to reduce the envy wealth inevitably brings. Such motives are externally referenced or heteronomous. But they can also be purely self-interested without any consideration for one's standing in the eyes of others, in fact, dishonourable or criminal in intent. The witch Meroe takes in and treats kindly Socrates when he is left destitute by robbers but her motive was to use him as a sex slave (1,7). Pamphile shows Photis how to get animal bodies transformed back into human shape not out of kindness (*nec...ulla benevolentia*) but so that she could help Pamphile get back into her body after a magical foray in the guise of an animal (3,23). At first indifferent to her physical charms, Lucius sees cultivation of Photis as a way to gain access to her mistress' magical powers (2,6). He rationalises the cynicism of such treatment by persuading himself of her obvious desire for him. Thrasyllus lavishes gifts upon Charite's parents so that he can win her hand (8,21). The slave of the eunuch priests gave Lucius an extra helping of fodder, glad to have someone else in the house who could relieve him of his work, in particular having to service the priests. He makes it clear his concern for Lucius' welfare is motivated by self-interest (8,26). Equally obvious examples of self-interest are the robbers who offer Demochares a replacement bear (really one of their number inside a bearskin) to make up for those he had lost (4,17); Charite's fiancée claiming to be the robber chief Haemus and giving the robbers 2000 gold pieces so that he can join their band and gain an opportunity to rescue Charite (7,8–9); the care and attention shown to the widowed Charite by Thrasyllus, driven by his desire to be near her and touch her (8,7). More externally referenced and apparently magnanimous is the local magnate, Demochares, deciding to put on a gladiatorial show for his fellow citizens in Plataea. He planned a show to advertise his wealth and reinforce his status as a good and generous citizen. No expense was spared to ensure a great day and, importantly, lessen the baleful eyes of envy (*invidiae noxios oculos*, 4,13). Being able to display one's capacity to benefit was an essential element in status construction in Roman society, an investment in honour.<sup>4</sup> Thiasus, Lucius' owner in Corinth and ambitious to become a quinquennial magistrate, sought to secure this elevation and its *gloria publica* by

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<sup>4</sup> Dixon 1993. On preoccupation with honour and status in the novel, see Ifie and Thompson 1977/8.

promising a lavish three-day gladiatorial show (10,18). The conduct of acquaintance and Hypata aedile, Pythias, in punishing a fish seller for overcharging Lucius has occasioned considerable discussion. Ostensibly helping Lucius, he takes the opportunity to display his power, his capacity to inflict violence and insult (1,25).

A second category of externally prompted motivation occurs when some overt, explicit action from outside moves the giver to give and remain in good standing with the requester. These cases could include simple responses to requests for information or to continue telling a story (1,21). Much more coercion was required to get Byrrhaena's guest, Thelyphron, to tell his horrific story to Lucius (2,20). Taking advantage of Photis' feelings of partial responsibility for Lucius' humiliation at the Risus trial, Lucius says that if she wants his forgiveness, she must let him watch Pamphile engaging in her magical practices. Unable to dissuade him by pointing out the dangers of this, Photis accedes to his request (3,19–20). This led to the further request to change him into a bird immediately. In making such a request and incurring an obligation that he could never fully repay, Lucius was offering a powerful inducement to a slave who must have had dreams of freedom (3,22). Psyche successfully badgered Cupid into allowing her to see her sisters again, despite his warnings (5,5–8; 5,11; 5,14). At 10,4 a young man fobs off his stepmother's requests for sex with empty promises of compliance. When robbers tried to break into his house, the wealthy Theban money changer Chryseros appealed to communal solidarity in calling for help from his neighbours and also to their self-interest by claiming that it was fire that imperilled his house, fire which could spread to their properties (4,10). They rushed to help. Refusing appeals to common decency or group welfare risks impairing honour or missing an opportunity to enhance it. A mysterious old man could rely on such considerations in begging a group of which Lucius was a part to help him rescue his grandson. One of the group offered to help with the emergency (8,21). Unfortunately, the story seems to have been a ruse to deliver a victim to a huge serpent.

Thirdly, some favours and services in the *Metamorphoses* are direct acts of reciprocity, the showing of gratitude or discharging an obligation put upon one by (apparent) kindness. In return for Meroe's hospitality, Socrates gave her the clothes he had left after the robbers' attack and whatever money he earned as a porter. The 'rent' he thus paid, in addition to his sexual service, was more than usually coerced if he was under her spell. For providing

the community with so much amusement, the magistrates of Hypata visited Milo's house to offer Lucius the honour of being town patron and a bronze statue. Lucius reciprocated in turn with an expression of gratitude but declined to have his humiliation thus immortalised (3,11). He was clearly a man of some substance, for being a patron could be expensive, and getting a man to become patron and thus enhance the community in some way posits an ulterior motive. Charite's token of gratitude to Lucius for his help in trying to escape from the robbers was an extra serve of barley and hay, and then access to the horses in the field (7,14). Demochares rewarded the robbers for the replacement bear they brought him, supposedly sent by a rich friend, giving them ten gold pieces (4,16). Thiasus rewarded his freedman for arranging Lucius' sexual encounter with the lady of rank (10,23). Thiasus features in another example of human-animal appreciation, fine trappings and kind words for the ass, (10,18). Reciprocity is anticipated when Jupiter agrees to Cupid's plea in cementing his relationship with Psyche on condition that Cupid will arrange for him to enjoy any mortal woman of exceptional beauty (6,22).

Issues of reciprocity, and communal expectation and external opinion are inherent in the host-guest relationship. Milo did not know Lucius but accepts him as a guest on the strength of a letter of recommendation from a mutual friend, Demeas. On learning of his relatively high social status, Milo is delighted with his guest and grateful to Demeas for introducing such an honourific guest (Mason 1983). He apologises for the austerity of his household, lest robbers become interested in his wealth (1,22–23). He proves to be a most ungenerous and unprotective host (1,26; 2,11–15; 3,7; 3,12). Byrrhaena, by pressuring Thelyphron to retell how he lost his nose and ears, also failed in her duty to him, even if the story served as a timely warning to Lucius (2,20; it could have been simply relayed to Lucius by Byrrhaena). In contrast to these inadequate or mediocre hosts, Cupid's gracious and generous hospitality to the stranger Psyche, and then Psyche's to her sisters, sending them home with rich gifts, conform to the societal ideals. Charite's parents entertain the disliked and disreputable suitor Thrasyllus out of respect for his high social status (8,2). A certain estate owner, caught in a heavy storm, sought refuge in the modest abode of Lucius' current owner. He was received warmly (*comiter*) and as the circumstances required (*pro tempore*, 9,33). Appreciative of the kind hospitality, *benignum hospitum*, the

guest invited his host to visit his estate and receive grain, olive oil and wine, an offer quickly taken up.

Fourthly, other acts of kindness that involve natural warm feelings towards known significant others, such as relatives, lovers, friends and comrades. Psyche bravely releases her sorrowing parents from their inability to carry out the oracle and expose her on a rock to be wed by a monster. She urges its fulfilment (4,33–35). Plotina is the model of the heroic, sacrificing wife. She forsook domestic comforts to accompany her husband into exile, disguised as a man. However, when attacked by robbers, neighbours and even the escorting soldiers and slaves were too afraid to thwart their lucrative raid. She then appealed, successfully, to the emperor to restore her husband and exterminate the bandits (7,6–7). Charite's parents fuss over (*fovebant*) her on her safe return as other relatives, wards, clients, and slaves rejoice (7,13). The relatives, friends, slaves of Lucius who, hitherto mistakenly mourning his death, hasten to visit, bringing gifts and his horse, seized with sudden joy (11,18; 11,20). The loyal (*fida*) but cruel wife saves her husband from suicide, distraught at the loss of his master's meat to a dog.<sup>5</sup> Byrrhaena warns Lucius of the dangers posed by Pamphile and, probably aware of Milo's stinginess, sent to Lucius the guest-presents (*xeniola*: pig, hens, vintage wine) Milo should have been more generous with (2,11). Photis grants Lucius a night off from their strenuous lovemaking and warns him to be wary of hoodlums who make the streets of Hypata dangerous (2,9; 2,18). Feeling some responsibility for his sufferings caused by the imaginary robbers, she apologises and proffers a strap to be beaten with. Lucius refuses the offer (3,13).

Aristomenes was a good friend to Socrates. On seeing him pale, half nude, almost unrecognisable in a ragged cloak, he gave him one of his garments, took him to the baths to get clean, half-carried him to an inn, bought him food and drink and listened to his tale of woe (1,6–8; 1,18). When Socrates, now missing his heart, finally expired, Aristomenes buried him (1,19). Although the novel's *auctor* suggests this was mainly to avoid a charge of murder, it was a convention to bury the dead. Aristomenes behaves well but, as in the examples above, he is showing conventional concern and certainly does not reach the heights of the Good Samaritan's aid to a total stranger. Three brothers had a longstanding friendship (*vetus familiaritas*) with a poor man who had a small-holding that bordered the large estate of a

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<sup>5</sup> 8,31. On family life in the novel, see Bradley 2000.

rich and powerful owner. When he tried to drive the poor man from his plot, the latter called upon a large number of friends, including the brothers, for help. They answered the call but in vain and at the cost of their lives after two of them had tried to save the one being attacked by dogs (9,35–38). Similarly, *vetus amicitia* provided a respite, albeit temporary, for Lucius' gardener owner who had almost killed a soldier for trying to steal his ass. The gardener sought refuge in the house of an old friend who proved a friend indeed. He refused to admit the magistrates and soldiers who came to his door and threatened capital punishment unless he surrendered the fugitive (9,41–42). Admirable though these last two instances are, they are the actions of people embedded in a nexus of duties and obligations, and they would not necessarily extend such *fides* to strangers.

Communal ties, strengthened in part by the sense of reliance on others for survival and success, account for much heroism, self-sacrifice and camaraderie, even amongst thieves. In the raid on Chryseros' house, the robber Lamachus has his hand pinned to the door by a large nail. Rather than leave him to his fate, his comrades cut his arm off, staunched the wound, and fled with him. Their ties (*religio*) to their weakened and failing leader here temporarily overrode their own selfish instincts for survival. Even when he urged them to abandon him they could not do it. Lamachus resolved the issue by killing himself. His comrades gave him a decent burial (4,11). He may have felt he was doomed anyway, and, lacking a right arm, a robber faced a difficult future. Although the heroic struggle of Thrasyleon inside the bearskin after the failure of the attack on Demochares' house provided a diversion for his companions to escape, he was also seeking to preserve his own and the band's honour. One of them even lingered to watch and try to save him by pointing out to onlookers that a fine and valuable beast was being needlessly destroyed (4,21–22). A different, less histrionic kind of concern for companions occurs when the travelling party sent one of their number to look for the one who had offered to rescue the mysterious old man's grandson (8,21).

Manifestations of pity and concern, expressions of common humanity towards friends and relatives are usually genuine and spontaneous. Thoughts of future benefit or reciprocity do not obtrude. However, if one expects to see such people again or to possibly figure in their talk, being well regarded is not an entirely irrelevant consideration. A fifth, more altruistic category of motivation concerns generous behaviour towards strangers, people one is

never likely to meet again, or from whom no return can ever be expected.<sup>6</sup> In the novel, the robbers show a streak of common humanity when they assure the kidnapped Charite she will not be killed or raped and when this fails to calm her, they order the old woman to console her (4,23–24). They could have gagged or frightened her into silence. The old woman's obedience to this order goes beyond the call of duty when she tells a very long and possibly instructive story. The Cupid and Psyche story is interesting for some examples of disinterested giving and the way these come from non-humans. Pan calms the distraught Psyche, who has just tried to drown herself and advises her to pray to Cupid. In view of Cupid's current wounded and confined state this was not perhaps the best advice but it was well meant and banished her despair for the moment (5,25–26). Implored only by one of their number to have pity on Psyche, *miseremini... miseremini... puellae lepidae*, a colony of ants completed the near-impossible task set for Psyche by Venus of sorting seven different kinds of seeds (6,10). Set another difficult task by Venus, a green reed urged Psyche not to commit suicide and gave her instructions on how to fetch the golden wool from dangerous sheep (6,12). Likewise, a speaking and prophetic tower saved and aided Psyche with her third task.<sup>7</sup> Well-meant (and ignored) advice by villagers to travelers on lurking dangers (8,15; 8,19) expect nothing in return apart from a thankyou, probably, but do not cost the donor much, as is so for all the above instances except possibly the old woman's tale.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, the service rendered to the cuckolded baker by Lucius in betraying the whereabouts of her hidden lover (9,26–27). His motive was more about disgust at the behaviour of the wife and a desire to undo her. The baker did spare the boy's life but not before raping and flogging him.

A feature of all the above benefits, arranged in a rough spectrum from interested to disinterested giving, is that they are localised in their impact. Even if the latter appear to go beyond stage 3, they do not require much ef-

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<sup>6</sup> A calculating person might hope that their kindness is bruited abroad or is being noted favourably by some deity particularly impressed by altruism. On the subject of deities, Jupiter supposedly provides Lucius escape from ass form by supplying a bed of roses for him to chew but this is really a figure of speech, 3,29, as is the *fortuna munus*, gift of fortune, at 9,2.

<sup>7</sup> 6,17–19. Less clear is the altruism of the eagle that also helped Psyche with her third task. He may have been the agent of Providentia or even Jupiter, 6,15.

<sup>8</sup> Unless there was a real danger of the ants and other helpers of Psyche suffering from the wrath of Venus: cf. 6,3–4.

fort or grappling with moral dilemmas. They take place face to face and/or within groups and small communities. It was easy to put themselves in another's place and respond to a need. Benefits such as putting on lavish entertainments can be viewed as noble and self-sacrificial but are, nevertheless, the products of Kohlberg's stages 2 or 3 behaviour and driven by the expectations of others. (Stage 1 benefits are usually the result of someone being ordered to bestow them). Arguably the two most noble individuals in the book are Plotina and the friend who provided refuge to the gardener. Both are courageous and loyal. In appealing to the Keeper of the System, the emperor, and getting the robber band exterminated, Plotina, in this false tale, got her revenge (*vindicta*. At least this is the way 'Haemus' puts it, 7,7). She also did the wider society a favour but there is no sign that this latter good was her *aim*. It was Lucius' asinine curiosity that betrayed his gardener owner, not any deficiency on the part of the protector, which caused him to be arrested and led away to his death (9,42). But would the friend have been so resolute on behalf of a stranger? There is no larger cause or system being upheld and contributed to, no ideals of a greater good being embraced. In this respect, the fictional world of Books 1–10 is no different from the comic, more one-dimensional catalogue of mishap in the *Onos*.<sup>9</sup> A critical mass of individuals who can operate at Kohlberg stages 4 and 5 supply cultures with some of the dynamism and vision that gains and maintains large empires (Gibbs 1991, 216). A larger vision is precisely what Roman jurisprudence reflects as it combined ingenuity and rationality to articulate absolute values, and universal principles, such as the *ius gentium*, that can be applied across a heterogeneous empire. It takes into account and tries to integrate multiple perspectives. This is why Ulpian called jurisprudence true philosophy.<sup>10</sup> The lack of fair application of principles is precisely what Apuleius, who had a good knowledge of Roman law, shows is so lacking in the world of the *Metamorphoses*. Roman justice was either too far away to be of use or else was perverted to inflict humiliation and loss of life or prop-

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<sup>9</sup> The *Onos*, as we have it, does not contain the Plotina episode and the gardener's friend is little more than just that, not an egregiously courageous and loyal protector. There are instances of conventional favour and kindness at cc. 1, 4, 11, 13, 22, 27, 45, 48 and 55.

<sup>10</sup> 'In the last resort, all law can be deduced *a priori* from abstract principles defined by philosophy' (Grimal 1963, 140)

erty.<sup>11</sup> People had to rely on self-help to protect their rights and safety, a situation that favours the strong at the expense of the weak. Obeying the law was no guarantee of safety. The working of the system was extremely capricious and increased the hunger for something or someone who could bring security and meaning to people's lives. Appealing to emperors for aid was a last and often futile resort. But if everyone operated at the level of morality found in Apuleius' fictional world, the Greco-Roman achievement would have been far less impressive and enduring.

Clearly, to be protected from such endemic and unpredictable violence and insecurity, to be given a sense of meaning and significance, to be bolstered by a sense of Isis' watchful solicitude and promise of extended life and immortality thereafter, is a salvation of sorts. But, assuming for the moment that initiations into the cults of Isis and Osiris offered not only immediate benefits but potential for growth, could there not have been an introduction into and assumption of the characteristics of postconventional behaviour, Kohlberg's stages 5 and 6? After all, Lucius was a lawyer and pondering ways of upholding lofty moral principles was a natural step to take, especially when the story is in the hands of an author dyed in Platonism. And becoming less dependent on external opinion and communal standards values is one way of taking more control of one's life. A feature of the higher Kohlberg stages is that they are movements away from preoccupation with personal safety and protection. They are progressions towards autonomy and transcendental idealism, that is, not conforming to the moral judgements of adults around one if that conflicts with a sense of duty towards the welfare of larger wholes or systems, and upholding principles that transcend the mutual succour and loyalty of families, clans, villages, nations. In other words, one moves away from heteronomy and towards philosophical positions such as those embodied by the historical Socrates, or exemplified by Apuleius' contemporary, Marcus Aurelius, believer in a lawful universe and the greater good.

Apuleius' narrative of Book 11 makes possible several ways of approaching the events therein. There are so many elements of parody and humorous paradox in it that taking it as an unvarnished and sincere account of religious experience is fraught with dangers. It is possible to argue that

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. the way Ceres and Juno, when faced with the plea of Psyche for asylum, privilege their ties with Venus and legal property rights over compassion. They see Psyche as Venus' runaway slave, 5,31; 6,3–4. See Summers 1970.

thematically Book 11 is really not that different from Books 1–10 and that Lucius remains a gullible and curious dupe who surrenders whatever autonomy he had. Although the depths of depravity and cruelty plumbed in Books 1–10 are not reached in 11, there is, arguably, no evolution of behaviour beyond the best we encounter earlier when one examines the benefits that are exposed. Isis makes a bargain with Lucius whereby he will enjoy a longer than fated life and freedom from the vicissitudes of blind Fortune in return for a great deal of worship on his part. In fact, she has long before decided he should become one of her priests (11,21). A great favour, therefore, but one could argue that her epiphany was simply part of a plan to recruit him. One could also argue that compassion and unconditional love requires Isis to rescue Lucius from his ass form and then simply stand back and leave feelings of gratitude to manifest in some way, if they do at all. Lucius will have little time for cultivating any other deity. He has to undergo an initiation into her mysteries and two initiations into those of Osiris, which cost him a good deal of money and raise doubts in him as to how necessary it all was. He is promised fame and fortune beyond the modest success he has already enjoyed (11,28; 11,30). Osiris thinks these incentives should appeal to him. But was Lucius successful because of his sonorous eloquence, skill in argument, winning difficult cases, the loftiness of the sentiments he expressed? We have no idea. The contemplation of Isis' statue, the participation in ritual and the privileged nature of the secret teachings that were conveyed to him were a source of joy and satisfaction. But if Lucius is still susceptible to the incentives offered by Osiris, then he is still captive to conventional normative values and small-system perspectives. He relishes becoming a cynosure when clad in the Twelve Robes of the Isiac initiate, an object of benign attention from the witnessing crowd. This was a pleasant change from the humiliation of persecutory and mocking stares endured in the earlier books.<sup>12</sup> If the higher teachings of philosophy and religion can be absorbed through revelation and intuition as well as by cognitive effort (Plutarch *DIO* 351E), there is no unambiguous sign of spiritual insight being used to relate life and morality to a transcendent sense of the whole, that a

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<sup>12</sup> 11,24. Just how immobilising, freezing, paralysing, and therefore inimical to autonomy it could be at times to incur the ridicule or condemnation of the community, see Lateiner 2001. If one accepts the arguments of Lateiner for the frozen state of Lucius in Book 11, this would further support the case for his not achieving much autonomy after Isis' epiphany. Lateiner 2000, also argues that the role of son and spouse of Isis assumed by Lucius infantilises him.

meaningful experience has significantly uplifted behaviour.<sup>13</sup> There is service to Isis and Osiris and to legal clients (presumably able to reward him fairly generously) but not to humanity in general. One of the aspects of Isis was *Adrasteia*, but her concern for justice does not figure strongly in Book 11.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, there is a suspicion that, despite the chief priest vouching for the integrity of his priests (11,21, another ironical touch by Apuleius?), the priests of Osiris are exploiting a credulous devotee to the extent of removing the clothes from his back and reducing him to a symbolically castrated, shaven-headed slave, having done very well out of their investment.<sup>15</sup> Their cruelty is the more exquisite for Lucius not appreciating the extent of this humiliation.

We do not know any character in the *Metamorphoses* well enough to be sure that they are truly pure in heart<sup>16</sup> and we do not find peacemakers or advocates of the poor and oppressed.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, they abound who are the exploiters, the unjust, the exalted, they who threaten violence, anarchy and terror. Who will take action against the foes of a healthy society in any sustained way? Probably not Lucius, safe under the guardianship of Isis, even though he does have the resources to think beyond mere survival, and conducts a legal practice at the centre of the empire. Instead, he will join the ranks of the exalted as he wins fame and glory for his rhetorical skill. He joins the ranks of the privileged as he purchases special initiatory knowledge (11,30: *gloriosa in foro patrocina...laboriosa doctrina*. Such success, the god warns, will inevitably bring detractors, *malevolorum disseminationes*).<sup>18</sup> Lucius accepts some externally mandated sacrifices and abstinences, he

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<sup>13</sup> Burkert 1987, 3, argues that even attitude, never mind behaviour, change was often too much to hope for after initiation into the mysteries. Cf. Beck 1996, 133, on initiations aiming to change attitudes through an experience of the sacred rather than through teachings.

<sup>14</sup> On Isis and *Dikaiosyne*, see Solmsen 1979, 57, and on Isis *Thesmophorus*, Witt 1971, 128, 193.

<sup>15</sup> On baldness as a mark of ugliness, greed, lust and stupidity in the ancient world, see Van Mal-Maeder 1997, 106–107, who questions whether Lucius has changed at all.

<sup>16</sup> We should be wary of attributing too much nobility to the conduct of Psyche and Cupid. See Penwill 1998.

<sup>17</sup> That is, advocacy that goes beyond the justice and compassion associated with Isis. These thoughts were prompted by the article of Joy 1986, on the hierarchy of virtues in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

<sup>18</sup> On Osiris' message, cf. Griffiths 1975, 342: 'The great god's exhortation seems to be somewhat materialistic in tone'. Or, as Burkert 1982, 13, puts it, Lucius is not withdrawing from but integrating with 'respectable society'.

meets certain expectations and embraces a more disciplined life. His ego has been fortified by assurances of protection from capricious fortune and the various other marks of divine grace and favour. But Lucius' autonomy had not been significantly advanced because he remains dependent on external sources of strength and esteem. Safeguards against excessive gullibility, such as scepticism and rationality, are jettisoned.<sup>19</sup> He has, it seems, been rescued from a dire condition but not delivered to any real freedom.

It is possible, however, to take a less bleak and sceptical view of benefit bestowal and the moral economy of Book 11, to make a case that there is some moral advance on the earlier books and Kohlberg's stage 3, at least potentially. Isis overcomes her revulsion for asses and answers a generalised appeal to the queen of heaven for help (11,1–6). She does not take into account his birth, *dignitas* or *doctrina* (11,15). The Isiac priest's prayer for the whole empire, however conventional such prayers were, acknowledges a wider perspective (11,17). Assuming that some genuinely useful and enlightening knowledge and experience were imparted to Lucius at his initiations, the teachings of a cult, particularly its more esoteric and intellectually challenging elements, can stimulate broader perspectives on human welfare, so that one is led to ask, 'What is the greater good?' as well as, 'What does it all mean?'<sup>20</sup> The unusual combination of Roman lawyer and Isiac priest, if it is not Apuleius challenging the reader to spot the implausible nonsense in all this, may be a way of his emphasising that Lucius contributed to maintaining the larger Roman system (however imperfect that was) and remained in a position to do something to promote justice and exert an uplifting influence on those he met. Celibacy, humiliations and the loss of Lucius' much-valued hair can be seen as part of the material sacrifices and physical disciplines that candidates and initiates traditionally undertake as a test and as mark of their perspective on what really matters in life. Some

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<sup>19</sup> Solmsen 1979, 94, describes Isis' claim to be able to extend human life beyond its preordained limit as suspiciously exaggerated. Not even Zeus could defy Fate.

<sup>20</sup> Shumate 1996, 107, 311, argues that Isis's primary appeal to Lucius is as a locus of cosmic order and that his problem is epistemological rather than moral: he needs a sense of meaning rather than moral teaching. But epistemology and morality are not entirely discrete. An amoral world can easily seem meaningless. It is hard to imagine how teachings on Isis as a force for order did not include some reflections upon justice. The question concerning justice is: was the message Lucius absorbed one of 'Leave it all to Isis' or was he expected to make an impact? If the latter, Lucius could go beyond a sense of being protected and guided by a powerful parental figure.

philosophers would understand. In return, the security, support and salvation available from Isis and Osiris were benefits beyond rubies. Agreeing to go baldly into the world may even be a declaration of independence from normative values where appearances matter, and hence a step towards autonomy.<sup>21</sup>

To conclude: whether any moral development takes place in Book 11 depends to some extent on whether one thinks Apuleius is narrating a sincere and genuine religious experience, such as he himself may once have had, or whether Apuleius is satirising the naiveties and enthusiasms of (especially, new) devotees. Or Book 11 may be a mixture of both perspectives, a simultaneous invocation and critique of religious experience (Shumate 1996, 311). Beginning with his release from the body of an ass, the young man Lucius can point to a series of benefits, actual and prospective. He becomes either a happy, deluded, unredeemed slave, victim of those who prey on the vulnerable, and liable to eventual disillusionment, or one reformed and reborn into a life *potentially* richer in joy and service, and whose autonomy is not compromised.<sup>22</sup> It is important to stress potential here as there is a tendency for many people to move to a higher set of values and higher moral stages as they get older.

Strong support for the view that much of the behaviour in Book 11 conforms to Kohlberg's stage 3 (when it is not stage 2) comes from the 6-stage scheme of faith development devised by James Fowler (Snarey 1996). Fowler's stages correspond closely with Kohlberg's moral development stages. His stage 3, Synthetic-Conventional Faith, is featured by unreflective acceptance of what one's religious teaching presents, and corresponds to Kohlberg's stage 3, conformity with communal standards. The supreme deity is imagined as an all-knowing friend, lifeline, companion and preserver of harmony. This seems to capture the essence of Lucius' devotional fervour. Alienation from God at this stage of development manifests in feelings of estrangement from the people around one, and is common in adolescents and young adults. This is reflected in the difficulty Lucius has in relating to peo-

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<sup>21</sup> Easier to do in a metropolis than in a village. Further, any sense of autonomy achieved thereby, like any conversion experience, does not necessarily lead to moral growth. It may rather be a test of faith, a test of fortitude and the belief that the favour of Isis and Osiris will sustain him in the face of any mockery. That remains to be seen. Faith does not always overcome shame (Pattison 2000, 214).

<sup>22</sup> Smith 2001 likens Lucius' conversion to that of St. Paul: a movement to a higher kind of righteousness that does not manifest immediately in outer action.

ple in the first 3 books, not to mention his experience of alienation as an ass. Apuleius himself is at either stage 4, Individuative-Reflective Faith, the modal stage of mature adults, where there is more critical examination and re-organisation of what one believes, or, more probably, stage 5, Conjunctive Faith, rare before midlife, where there is an openness to mystery, surprise and uncertainty combined with a delight in paradox, irony and playfulness when dealing with the divine. Such playfulness holds positions lightly and inclines to a view of the cosmos as a great game or jest. Just such a mercurial playfulness informs Apuleius' prologue. If Apuleius' faith is indeed that of stage 5, he would be in a good position to both portray profound religious awe and gently mock the novitiate zeal of one so enthusiastic that he abstained from meat for more than the stipulated ten days.<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, if one is unwilling to accept that Kohlberg's scheme suggests that the development of Lucius *actor* has still some way to go, one could turn to Apuleius and say that his stance, his perspectives, his humour imply just this about Lucius.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> 11.30. See Methy 1997, on the idiosyncratic nature of the divinity Apuleius brings to his portrait of Isis; Harrison 2000, 247–248, on the striving for comic effect in Book 11; Shumate 1999, on the way the proliferation of themes and sub-themes fragments perspective; and Sandy 1999, 93, on the playful insertion of Platonism into the alien environment of the *Metamorphoses*.

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