

Mad Hero in a Box: Christianity, Secular Humanism, and the Monomyth in *Doctor Who*

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Abstract

Doctor Who is a long-running, incredibly popular work of television science-fiction, with a devoted fanbase across the Western world. Like all science fiction, it deals with the weighty questions posed by the culture around it, particularly in regards to ethics, politics, faith/belief, and the idea of the soul. These concepts are dealt with through the lens of the Secular Humanist ideology held by the showrunners and by many of the people who watch the show; however, in many areas, elements of the Christian worldview seep through. The conflict between these two worldviews has serious ramifications for the show itself, as it prevents the titular main character from being able to be a traditional, identifiable hero and pushes him ever close to the realm of the anti-hero. This thesis uses Joseph Campbell's idea of the monomyth, or universal hero's journey, to provide a framework in which to explore how Christian precepts in the show aid the Doctor in his heroic journey; how Secular Humanist ideologies draw him away from that path; and finally, how the resulting contradictions create an anti-hero who no longer represents the heroic ideal he is supposed to uphold.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the people who encouraged me in my journey of self-discovery as a writer, an academic, and a lover of science fiction. To my mother, Leigh Hardy, for introducing me to *Doctor Who*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and every other science fiction show you had loved yourself, and for guiding me in both my academic and creative writing endeavors. I never would have become an English major or made it through my graduate degree without your support and the love for *Doctor Who* that you gave me. To Tom Baker, who will always be my Doctor; to David Tennant, whose time as the Tenth Doctor helped me get through two years of brain surgery and inspired me to write this thesis; and to Russell T. Davies, for bringing back the show I love; thank you all for your incredible contributions to *Doctor Who*. To Kelly Hamren, for guiding me in my first semester of college writing and encouraging me to join the English program, and to Dr. Curtis and Dr. Prior for your mentoring throughout my academic journey thus far. Finally, to Thomas Lee, Shere-Khan Smoot, Stephanie Lee, and Jonny Eberle, for being such good friends to me for so long and for providing a community for me to become confident in my nerdiness and let my freak flag fly. This thesis never would have been written without all of you.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“You get representations of the horned Beast right across the universe in myths and legends of a million worlds. Earth, Draconia, Vel Consadine, Daemos, the Kaled god of war, the same image, over and over again. Maybe, that idea came from somewhere. Bleeding through, a thought of every sentient mind...”

-The Doctor, from the “The Satan Pit” (2006)

The idea of the universal hero’s journey is far from alien to the world of science fiction and fantasy. Joseph Campbell offers a straightforward description of this fantastical journey: “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 30). Campbell’s concept is familiar to many lovers of science fiction, most notably presenting itself in the form of the *Star Wars* franchise. George Lucas, creator of the franchise, notes that he set out to create a modern American mythology with the *Star Wars* tales, and when he read Campbell’s seminal work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, he realized just how closely his own stories mirrored Campbell’s idea of the hero’s journey (*The Mythology of Star Wars*). It should come as no surprise, then, that similar threads can be found in other branches of science fiction, as the hero’s journey appears throughout each tale, whether intentionally or not.

These monomythic ideas can be traced throughout the popular, half-century old British science-fiction show *Doctor Who*, particularly the modern incarnation thereof, in portrayals that are both positive and negative. The depiction of the monomyth in the show is not consistent, however. Threads of the stages of the monomyth and the subversion of those same stages are

often tangled together within the same series, or even the same episode. While minor contradictions of all kinds are to be expected in a television show in both current production cycles and in re-runs, in part due to the multiple changes in directors, script writers, and lead actors, frequent contradictions woven throughout the fabric of the text can cause a problematic instability within the story of *Doctor Who* itself. Such instability in the monomythic structure, and thus within *Doctor Who* itself, arises from contradicting worldviews:¹ Christianity and its ideologies are woven throughout the monomyth, while Secular Humanist precepts have no place in Campbell's theory. This clash of worldviews creates a show that both adheres to the monomyth and subverts it, ultimately destabilizing the show and negating its attempts to understand the human condition.

Doctor Who: A Very Short Introduction

Doctor Who is generally divided into two specific eras: "Classic" and "New." The former refers to the original inception of the show, begun in 1963 and ending in 1989, with a one-off movie in 1996, while the latter includes every series² since the show's rebirth in 2005. Because New *Doctor Who* is generally considered to be more of a continuation, and not just a reboot, of the Classic series (as borne out by the appearance of former Doctors, companions, villains, and frequent references to the older show within the episodes of the current show), an overview of the show must include information from as far back as its beginning in 1963. The concept is

¹ For the purposes of this thesis, I am using the American Scientific Association's definition of a worldview: "A world view is a mental model of reality—a framework of ideas and attitudes about the world, ourselves, and life, a comprehensive system of beliefs—with answers for a wide range of questions" ("What is a Worldview?"). This definition is one that can be accepted by both Christians and Secular Humanists in their attempts to seek truth about the world. The difference between the two comes from the idea that Christianity adheres to one specific worldview that it postulates as the only correct one, while Secular Humanism permits a multiplicity of worldviews that can be interchanged with each other.

² British television, unlike American shows, does not make a distinction between a series and a season, so they just use the term "series" to refer to one year's worth or a show or for one full story arc. Generally, for *Doctor Who*, series refers to the individual run of the show per year with the same overarching story instead of a full year's run, as the final episode in the year is usually a Christmas special and may be connected to the next year's show. Thus, series one (2005) consists of all episodes from "Rose" to "The Parting of the Ways"; "The Christmas Invasion" also aired in 2005, but it is part of series 2 because it begins a new story arc, etc.

relatively simple: a humanoid alien, from a race known as the Time Lords, travels throughout time and space with his companions, usually humanoid friends that join him on his adventures. In the Classic episode “The Ark in Space,” the Fourth Doctor remarks that his doctorate is “purely honorary” (1975); he is not a medical doctor nor has he earned a PhD, but he chose the title for himself to reflect his scientific nature and curiosity about the universe—his true name is never revealed in the show.³ His spaceship is referred to as the TARDIS, which stands for Time and Relative Dimensions in Space, and takes the form of an old police phone booth that is much larger on the inside than it is on the outside. The original purpose of the show, as Trisha Dunleavy notes in her book *Television Drama: Form, Agency, Innovation*, was to serve “partly as a vehicle through which to examine technology and history” (61). The show’s creators wished to avoid being purely educational or merely entertaining; they wished to combine the two into a show both children and adults could watch. As a result, many episodes, both in Classic and New *Who*, deal with various historical characters, from Shakespeare to Marco Polo, as well as technological and naturally explainable advancements in the past, present, and hypothetical future.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the show is the concept of regeneration; when The Doctor dies, resulting from accidents, enemy action, or his corporeal body wearing down, his physiognomy and personality completely change. Currently, The Doctor is in his twelfth incarnation, meaning he has died and regenerated eleven times as of the 2013 episode “The Time of the Doctor.” Technically, The Doctor has been killed thirteen times, as Matt Smith’s Eleventh Doctor points out in “The Time of the Doctor” (2013): the Tenth Doctor was struck by a Dalek’s

³ In the Classic series, the Time Lord Drax calls the Fourth Doctor “Theta Sigma” in the episode “The Armageddon Factor” (1979), but the Seventh Doctor clarifies in “The Happiness Patrol” that it is a nickname given to him while he was at the Time Lord Academy, and not his actual name (1988).

death ray in “The End of Time, Part One” but apparently sacrificed a regeneration to keep his then-current face(2009),⁴ and the mini-episode “The Night of the Doctor” (2013) and the fiftieth anniversary episode “Day of the Doctor” (2013) explain that the Eighth Doctor regenerates into an incarnation forgotten by his successors: the unnumbered War Doctor, who came to life to end the Time War. For clarity’s sake, however, the show’s writers and directors, as well as the current fan base, continue to refer to David Tennant as the Tenth Doctor, Matt Smith as the Eleventh, and Peter Capaldi as the Twelfth.

Recurring villains on the show include the Daleks, Cybermen, and a renegade Time Lord known as The Master; the modern incarnation of the show has added to this pantheon such memorable evildoers as the Weeping Angels and the Silence. Although there are a few instances in which the plotlines follow the “white hat, black hat” model, where the Doctor and his companion(s) are the definitive heroes, and whatever alien menaces they face that week are undeniably the villains, such cases are the exception, not the rule. From the show’s inception, the script writers and directors have put much effort into ensuring the complexity of both the Doctor and his adversaries; for example, the First Doctor displays a shocking callousness towards human sacrifice in “The Aztecs,” while those conducting said sacrifice are revealed as people with complex motivations instead of being mere barbarians (1964). In a similar manner, in the Ninth Doctor’s episode “Dalek” investigates the Doctor as both a savior-figure and a man full of murderous hate, while simultaneously presenting a sympathetic side to the Daleks, previously known as creatures of pure evil (2005). As a result, *Doctor Who* frequently avoids the “good-guys-versus-bad-guys” mentality of other early science-fiction shows, and produces complex stories in which the audience has to carefully consider who is in the right in any given situation.

⁴ Usually, when a Time Lord regenerates, he or she completely changes physical form and personality. In this case, the Tenth Doctor was able to keep the same body, a feat the Doctor has never accomplished before or since.

In regards to episodic structure, the Classic show is constructed of stories told in three-to-six 45 minute increments or episodes, rarely utilizing an overarching story within each series, with the two notable exceptions being the Fourth Doctor's "The Key to Time" series (1978-9) and the Sixth Doctor's terminal series, "The Trial of a Time Lord" (1986). New *Doctor Who*, on the other hand, consists primarily of individual episodes, still in the 45 minute format, held together with a series-long metanarrative that reaches a climax in the final episode of that series. The earlier structure allows for more character development and world-building, while the latter creates a more cohesive plot structure and a greater sense of urgency throughout the arc.

The episodes of *Doctor Who*, particularly in the latest incarnation of the show, though entertaining in nature, also grapple with questions of ethics, religion, and politics in the modern-day world. Lewis Hurst notes that Russell T. Davies, the scriptwriter and director for the first four series of the regenerated *Doctor Who*, focused on identifying and discussing complex social issues within each episode ("Russell T. Davies: Unfairly Criticized?"), a tradition continued by Stephen Moffat, his successor and the current showrunner.⁵ Various episodes of the show have dealt with such polarizing modern issues as violent acts of self-defense ("Human Nature"/"The Family of Blood"), the position of women in the clergy ("The Time of the Doctor"), the normalization of gay marriage and bisexual couples ("The Empty Child," "Voyage of the Damned," and others), objective good and evil ("Dalek"), and technology's place in the definition of humanity ("Rise of the Cybermen"/"The Age of Steel"), and a multitude of other weighty concepts. These ideas are addressed using fantastical elements of aliens, time travel,

⁵ "Showrunner" is the term frequently applied to Davies and his successor, Moffat. According to an article in *Rolling Stone* magazine, the showrunner writes scripts, directs the episodes, and frequently creates new characters for the show, thus combining the duties of director, producer, and scriptwriter ("12 TV Showrunners You Should Know"). Because Davies and Moffat take on all of these duties during their work with *Doctor Who*, the media tends to refer to them as showrunners, and so that will be the term used for them in this thesis.

other worlds, and the outer reaches of inner time.⁶ The show thus becomes a vehicle for its viewers to examine and wrestle with ethical and political ideology while absorbing an intriguing story with well-crafted characters.

The modern show's blatant focus on ethical, religious, and political topics through the vehicle of science fiction, as opposed to the classic version's more subtle weaving of these issues into a story-prominent approach, reflects the changes in the political climate over the past several decades, particularly in regards to sexual politics, technology, and religion. In the 1960s, homosexuality was a taboo subject: in many countries, including the United Kingdom and the United States, homosexual acts were prohibited, and the topic was rarely, if ever, addressed in "polite society." *Doctor Who* at that time never once mentions the subject, and references to such issues at that time were unlikely to occur. All romantic entanglements in the show are heterosexual in nature, and the politics or nature of marriage are not brought up, in keeping with the idea, *en vogue* at the time, that such topics are inappropriate for discussion. In the late 1990s, however, the issue of homosexual rights and marriages came to the forefront. LGBTQ groups began outspokenly and publicly advocating for equal rights with heterosexual couples, and visual media begins to embrace the discussion—for example, writer Andrew Belonsky notes that in 1991, an episode of the show *LA Law* depicts the first televised kiss between a homosexual couple ("Today in History: *LA Law*'s Lesbian Kiss"), and from that point on, though the topic remains controversial, the conversation about LGBTQ rights began to seep into visual media. Russell T Davies, the future director and head scriptwriter for the first four series of new *Doctor*

⁶ When asked if he was from outer space in the episode "The Stones of Blood," the Fourth Doctor replied that he was more from "inner time" (1978). This concept refers to the idea that he is both inside and outside time; as a Time Lord, he comes from within the time vortex to appear within the time streams of others—an outsider from their perspectives, as he is not originally part of those time streams, but he is actually the ultimate insider, since he can enter any area of time he so chooses.

Who, was very active in the LGBTQ community during this time. Mark Aldredge and Andy Murray mention in their biography of Davies that he came out as a gay man during his teenage years in the 1970's (16), and his experiences as a member of the gay community during the next several decades of uneasiness greatly impacted his work in television: every show he worked on incorporated subversions of gender and sexual norms in an effort to bring about dialogue on the subject (*T is for Television: The Small-Screen Adventures of Russell T Davies*).

New *Doctor Who* is no exception to this rule. Captain Jack Harkness, the show's first openly pansexual character, was introduced in an early episode of the very first series of the rebooted show, and he maintains a recurring role on the show. Minor characters are often shown in happy, monogamous homosexual relationships, and the entire issue is treated by everyone within the show as a normal part of life. Furthermore, although some groups, mainly conservative religious affiliations, continue to protest the trend towards an acceptance of homosexuality within the show, some controversy has arisen from the LGBTQ community itself. Steven Moffat, the current showrunner, says in an interview with Michael Jensen that he has been informed that *Doctor Who* actually does not have enough "gay content" in it. Moffat notes that he listened to this critique, even though he rarely accepts criticism about his work, and that he is working on incorporating more homosexual characters and themes throughout the show (2011). The critique, and Moffat's ready response to it, demonstrates how much *Doctor Who* has adapted to modern society's willingness to discuss and accept the shifting stances on homosexuality.⁷

⁷ The question that arises here is whether *Doctor Who* is adapting to the changes around it or is in fact facilitating the changes. The answer is most likely both—Davies helped to normalize homosexuality in the show and its subsequent spinoff, *Torchwood*, thus working to accelerate a cultural shift. Moffat's response to the interview also indicates that the show can be molded by the trends occurring around it. The show both changes culture and is changed by it.

As the technological advancements change and grow in the modern world, so does the portrayal of the ethical questions they raise in *Doctor Who*. In the Classic show, though technology is present and certainly acts as an important plot advancer in multiple episodes, the majority of it is alien and beyond any practical use for humanity that would raise pressing ethical concerns. In these episodes, the areas of technological concern primarily arise from the use of firearms, utilization of a time machine to change past events, as in Barbara's attempts to save a human sacrifice in "The Aztecs" (1964), and technology as the enabler of questionable genetic modifications, as personified in well-known villains the Cybermen and the Daleks. However valid these discussions may be, they tend to focus more on the impacts of such uses of technology, without much or even any attention to the technology itself. New *Who*, on the other hand, showcases the technology itself, and addresses many of the more modern concerns about the advancements humankind has made. In an alternate universe in the two-part episode "Rise of the Cybermen"/"The Age of Steel," for example, the show satirizes modern reliance on cell phones by depicting every inhabitant of that alternate world as addicted to their Bluetooth-esque ear pods that give them every piece of information they could need for the day. Every aspect of their daily lives is ordered and regulated by those ear pods—at one point, the Tenth Doctor and Rose watch as everyone around them comes to a halt simultaneously, as the technology receives a daily upgrade straight into the wearer's brain. A moment later, everyone laughs as they receive the same joke, and they carry on as if nothing has changed. These ear pods are later used by the Cybermen to "upgrade" those who are wearing one; the pod overrides the wearer's autonomy—not a difficult task, as the denizens of Alternate Earth are already accustomed to obeying the commands they receive through the pods—and causes them to walk to a factory where the Cybermen remove their brains, wipe all emotion from them, and implant the purely logical

brains into high-tech completely metal bodies (2006). This story of science fiction depicts very realistic modern concerns through these more fantastical elements: do we as a society rely too much on our technology, and how does it impact our humanity? The Eleventh Doctor episode “The Bells of St. John” raises a similar question through a story in which people are quite literally absorbed by an internet connection; they lose their concepts of personal identity as their physical selves become shells that absorb others into the internet databank, and their minds serve as fuel from an entity, The Great Intelligence, whose hypnotic power and vast reserves of knowledge make him a passable metaphor for the internet itself (2013). These episodes specifically draw attention to the technology itself and address the concerns arising from it, not just the issues from the results of new technological advancements.

The same shift towards frank and open discussion of the modern worldview can be seen in the show’s attitude towards religion. The Doctor’s scientific nature has always caused the show to adapt a more Darwinian worldview—the very first episode in 1963 takes the Doctor and his companions back to Neanderthal times—but it rarely openly mocks faith or religion. On the contrary, as Tim Jones notes in “Breaking Faiths in ‘The Curse of Fenric’ and ‘The God Complex,’” in the Classic episode “The Curse of Fenric,” faith is the only power that saves the characters involved from the monster Fenric (1989). These episodes took place in a Great Britain that still at least nominally went to church and overall adhered to a nominal faith in God (“British Religion in Numbers”). The modern show, however, is quite another story. Representative of the current shift towards outspoken atheism in the forums of media and popular culture, and the questioning of personal faith, the two show producers for the modern incarnation of *Doctor Who*, Russell T. Davies and Stephan Moffat, are both self-proclaimed atheists, and their skeptical worldviews very clearly comes through in the show. In the Davies-

era two-part episode “The Impossible Planet/The Satan Pit,” the Doctor emphatically denies the existence of an evil force, whether known as the Devil or otherwise (2006); in the Moffat-era episode “The God Complex,” the Minotaur monster feeds on those who exhibit faith of any kind, and only the Doctor’s companion Rory Williams is safe because he atheistically “doesn’t believe in anything at all” (2011). Jones remarks on the clear change between the Classic example and the New series example: “[The] crucial cultural shift between the production of these two stories fuels what could be described as their ultimate stance on faith—or whether holding unconditional faith, whether it be secular or religious, can be described as a good thing. ‘Fenic’ would answer absolutely yes, ‘The God Complex’ absolutely not” (45). Although “The Curse of Fenic” presents faith as a good thing in the light of having faith in anything from the Doctor to God to the Communist Party, the idea still remains that faith in an external figure is a positive part of the human experience. “The God Complex,” however, negates the idea of faith in anything at all. Such an attitude shift reflects the real-world trend towards a lack of faith; a 2011 survey by Great Britain’s Office for National Statistics shows that twenty-five percent of the United Kingdom’s population self-identifies as “atheist” or simply “no religion,” an over ten percent increase since 2001 (“Census Shows Rise in Foreign Born”). In America, according to a 2012 Pew statistical survey, twenty percent of Americans also identify as atheist or no religion, a twenty-five percent increase over the previous five years (“One in Five Americans has No Religion”). These statistical trends are clearly represented in science fiction’s shift towards a more secular worldview.

Ironically, despite its tendency to reject belief and religion, the *Doctor Who* canon itself, with its bizarre and wonderful menagerie of worlds and creatures, can be designated a system of mythology. Northrop Fry defines myth as “[a] narrative in which some characters are

superhuman beings who do things that ‘happen only in stories’” (*Anatomy of Criticism* 366).⁸

Veronica Ions takes a slightly different approach by saying that myth “is not just a tale. It is a reality. These stories are of an original, greater, more important reality through which the present life, fate, and mankind are governed. This knowledge provides man with motives for rituals and moral acts” (6). Norman Austin’s definition relates more to myth’s purpose than its structure and components: “Myth purports to offer an adequate explanation for everything—for the elements and laws of nature, for social structure, ethics and the dynamics of the individual psyche” (2). Lewis Spence notes that a key marker of a mythological system is that it attempts to answer questions about humankind’s place in the universe, where it came from, and what will happen when the universe ends (35). A synthesis of these definitions creates an idea of myth that contains stories of people involved in strange and seemingly supernatural events, and helps mankind to understand life, the universe, morality, and other complex questions through the lens of stories, whether true, embellished, or perceived to be true.

The Doctor himself, hero of his own show, fits under the category of a “superhuman being”; as an alien with two hearts and the capacity to change his body when he dies, in addition to his time and space travelling machine, he surpasses the line of the plausible or the real. The alien worlds and the creatures that the Doctor and his companions encounter on their journeys through the universe also clearly belong in this category, at least from the perspective of the viewers. *Doctor Who* also, in various episodes, offers answers to the questions Spence and Austin pose, based on its own ideology. In “The Runaway Bride,” the Tenth Doctor shows companion Donna Noble that the Earth was created when meteors and other space rock attached

⁸ This definition of mythology as “something that happens only in stories” proceeds from a more modern “present looking to the past” context, in which the stories are seen as larger-than-life and not events that could have actually transpired. They are fantastical, and we accept them as such. Even Christianity fits into this category, but with the presupposition that these fantastic events actually happened. See footnote on Tolkien and “true myth.”

themselves to the hull of a giant alien ship (2006); the end of humanity is presented in the imaginatively titled “The End of the World,” in which the ninth Doctor and Rose travel thousands of years into the future to watch the sun expand and engulf Earth as Cassandra, the last human, looks on (2005); and thoughts about mankind’s purpose in the universe are proposed throughout the show, from the ghost-channeling Gwenyth in “The Unquiet Dead” (2005) to the Tenth Doctor’s speech about mankind’s potential for growth and creativity in “The Christmas Invasion” (2005) to Clara Oswald’s unique ability to save the Doctor (and thus the universe) at every turn in “The Name of the Doctor” and beyond (2012).

All of these wide and varied characteristics make *Doctor Who* a complex and interesting magnifying glass for culture and belief systems. The arguments in this thesis focus primarily on the episodes of New *Doctor Who*, ranging from 2005-2013, Doctors Nine-Eleven, as the Twelfth Doctor’s first series had not yet finished at the time this thesis was begun. The conclusion chapter, however, will incorporate elements of the Twelfth Doctor’s episodes to apply the arguments made in chapters 2 and 3, as those episodes will have been released at that point. This thesis focuses on the episodes of New *Doctor Who*, even though many of the traits and trends discussed are also present in the Classic series, as attempting to cover eight hundred and thirteen episodes, comprising two hundred and fifty-two stories, in a project of this size is unfeasible. Furthermore, the story-arc nature of the most recent series, in contrast to the primarily stand-alone episodes of the Classic era, allows for more tightly focused analysis of the themes and worldviews on the story of each series as a whole, which will make for a more cohesive narrative.

Joseph Campbell and The Hero’s Journey

The universal hero’s journey, or monomyth, is a concept threaded throughout mythology

in general, and story-telling in particular. The term “monomyth” was first used by author James Joyce in his novel *Finnegan’s Wake*, and Joseph Campbell later appropriated the term for use in his own work about the universal hero’s journey, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell theorizes that the same basic cyclical pattern underlies every major human mythology and great story. He defines this pattern as “separation—initiation—return,” positing that these stages manifest themselves in the following manner: “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (30). This pattern, and variations thereof, he claims, manifests itself in mythological systems from Buddhism to Norse Mythology to Christianity, and by extension, into human storytelling, which arises from the telling of myths.⁹

Part one of the monomythic cycle, “Departure,” depicts the hero’s first awareness of the need for his services, and his preparations to begin the journey. This stage is divided into five sub-stages: the call to adventure, refusal of the call, supernatural aid, the crossing of the first threshold, and the belly of the whale. The call to adventure, Campbell notes, is often the result of a “blunder”—the hero rarely sets off intentionally in search of adventure, but is instead drawn into that path by happenstance, an accident of his own or that of someone else (46). He describes this sub-stage as “[signifying] that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown” (49). The hero will no longer be allowed to remain where he is, but must set forth into the realm of adventure. The second sub-stage, refusal of the call, does not always happen, but may occur when the hero decides that he does not want to seek adventure. Such a lack of acceptance may result from fear

⁹ Based on Campbell’s retellings, storytelling arises from mythology, as the first stories were myths.

or from a consciousness of unworthiness; Campbell describes it as “a refusal to give up what one takes to be one's own interest” (55). Despite the hero's unwillingness, he will eventually be saved from it, his mind will be changed and opened to a wider universe, and he will undertake the quest assigned to him. Sub-stage three, supernatural aid, consists of a transfer of power from a god/goddess-like figure from the divine or seemingly supernatural to the hero, in order to help him on his journey. Sub-stage four, the crossing of the first threshold, represents the break from the hero's world and his choice to enter into the strange new one of adventure (71). The final sub-stage, the belly of the whale, “is a transit into a sphere of rebirth . . . instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, [the hero] is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died” (83). The hero must die, physically or figuratively, and be resurrected so that he may continue his journey with more control over the elements of his quest.

The second major stage, “Initiation,” has six sub-stages: the road of trials, the meeting with the goddess, woman as the temptress, atonement with the father, apotheosis, and the ultimate boon. The road of trials is the longest and most arduous part of the hero's journey, as it involves the tasks he must complete and the pain he must endure as he attempts to fulfill his quest. Death, his own¹⁰ or another's, may be encountered here, as will external help in the times of deepest need. After this road has been traversed, the hero may encounter the next sub-stage: the meeting with the goddess. When it occurs, this sub-stage may entail a protective female figure, possibly romantic; or it may be a dark and terrifying woman in complete control (103). This goddess-figure serves as the inspiration for the hero but can also be his downfall, as Campbell describes in the sub-stage “woman as temptress”: the mythical woman may tempt the hero to lead him astray through sexual means. When this occurs, the hero is considered to have

¹⁰ Thus necessitating a resurrection, as with Christ, or regeneration, as with the Doctor.

chosen the lust of the flesh over the good of the world for which he adventures, and he is led into darkness (113). When the hero reaches “atonement with the father,” he comes to comprehend that whatever suffering he may have witnessed or endured is validated because of the order into which the world falls once understanding is reached (135). Apotheosis stems directly from this divine meeting with the “father”—the hero arrives at some form of true knowledge and accomplishes the quest which he was given, and the world begins to make some form of sense. After this revelation, the final sub-stage of Initiation is the ultimate boon, wherein the hero is given a reward for his perseverance, perhaps in the form of immortality, knowledge for his fellow man, or some other great power he may use for himself or to aid others. At this point, the main journey of his quest is considered accomplished.

After completion of the task, however, comes the third stage: “Return.” Also divided into six sub-stages, refusal of the return, the magic flight, rescue from without, the crossing of the return threshold, master of the two worlds, and the freedom to live, the Return describes what occurs when the hero leaves the realm of the supernatural—and even what happens when he does not want to do so. According to Campbell, “The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds” (179). However, sometimes the hero refuses the call to return. Often, this refusal is the result of the hero doubting that his boon will be received by his fellow man, or because he finds himself unwilling to leave the realm of the blessed to return to the world of pain (179). Usually, this refusal is met with an explicit order of some kind from an external, powerful force, and the hero is made to return from whence he came. The hero’s realm itself may have to impress upon him

the need to come back, in a “rescue from without” that will not permit him to remain in the supernatural world or form of death (192). His resulting return journey, or “magic flight,” frequently involves more tests and trials from opposing forces as the hero attempts to come back. After successfully defeating these enemies, the hero must mimic the beginning of his adventure and “cross the return threshold.” In this stage, he has to leave behind the supernatural world and plant himself securely in the realm of the real and normal, while synthesizing the two so that they become one, a combination of the concrete reality of the natural world and the knowledge and transcendence of the supernatural (212). When he has done so, he is then considered “the master of two worlds,” as he can understand the natural world in which he lives, and the supernatural one that he has experienced. Both realms add to his knowledge and his ability to aid his fellow man from this point onwards. In the final sub-stage, the hero thus finds himself with the “freedom to live”—having finished his quest, he may resume his former life with new understanding of the universe as a whole, or he continue in his new identity as a hero, and thus begin the stages of the monomyth all over again.

Campbell is careful to note that the monomythic structure he outlines is a general one: not every story, nor every myth, will hold to every part of the pattern in exactly the same way or even to each section in general. He makes the monomyth a more universal pattern by noting the different variations occurring within various mythical structures:

The changes rung on the simple scale of the monomyth defy description. Many tales isolate and greatly enlarge upon one or two of the typical elements of the full cycle (test motif, flight motif, abduction of the bride), others string a number of independent cycles into a single series (as in the *Odyssey*). Differing characters or episodes can become fused, or a single element can reduplicate itself and reappear

under many changes. (228)

Stories change based on cultural knowledge, understanding, and advancement; only the basic patterns and elements remain the same. For Campbell, enough of these base-level elements line up enough to create an outline for a universal story. Still, even with the variations he points out, he does not allow for complete contradictions of his theory of the monomyth, which can cause some interesting friction within a hero's story, as will be discussed in chapter three.

The Christian Worldview

Because the Doctor's monomythic journey lends itself to Christian precepts, it is important to understand the basic tenets of Christianity. To many, the Christian religion seems to be just another myth, a set of stories about yet another hero in a world of diverse mythologies. For adherents of this worldview, however, their religion is a true myth¹¹, a complex woven mythology that just so happens to be real and historically accurate. Christianity is founded on the Holy text *The Bible*, and on belief in an omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent deity who created the universe and everything in it, ordains a set moral code for humanity, and reigns in a supernatural realm known as Heaven, where his followers will join him for eternal life after physical death. The Christian God has one primary adversary, known alternatively as Satan, the Devil, the Adversary, or Lucifer, who rebelled against God and was cast out of Heaven with his followers (Isaiah 41:12, KJV). He now resides in a place of eternal torment, called Hell, where

¹¹ In his biography of Catholic writer J.R.R. Tolkien, Humphrey Carpenter documents the following conversation between the *Lord of the Rings* writer and his then-atheist friend C.S. Lewis: "[Tolkien says] 'We have come from God, and inevitably the myths woven by us, though they contain error, will also reflect a splintered fragment of the true light, the eternal truth that is with God. Indeed only by myth-making, only by becoming a 'sub-creator' and inventing stories, can Man aspire to the state of perfection that he knew before the Fall. Our myths may be misguided, but they steer however shakily towards the true harbour, while materialistic 'progress' leads only to a yawning abyss and the Iron Crown of the power of evil.' 'You mean,' asked Lewis, 'that the story of Christ is simply a true myth, a myth that works on us in the same way as the others, but a myth that really happened? In that case,' he said, 'I begin to understand'" (Carpenter).

those who do not follow God will go after death. The Devil's main function is to tempt humans into denying God and thus prevent them from achieving eternal life in Heaven. God created a perfect world with two perfect humans who did not know how to sin, but the Devil tempted the woman and she led her husband into temptation as well. In this manner, sin entered into the world, and the force of God and the Devil wage supernatural war for the souls of humanity, with a savior figure, Christ, serving as the intercessor without which he cannot reach Heaven. The essential doctrines of Christianity, according to the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, are as follows:

1. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was both fully human and fully God. Christ came to Earth as a sinless man to sacrifice his life for the sake of humanity. He had to be fully man to accept the burden of the sin of mankind, and he had to be fully God in order to be the acceptable sacrifice. As fully man and fully God, Christ was the only sinless man—every human being since the original temptation is tainted with sin and cannot come to righteousness of his or her own accord. This is why Christ had to be man and God both.
2. Salvation from sin can only come through the grace of God and the individual's acceptance of and faith in the sacrifice made by Christ. Doing good deeds cannot grant a human eternal life; only belief in the divine, and surrender of individual sin¹², can reconcile a person to God and cleanse him or her of evil.
3. Christ sacrificed his life for humanity, and then was physically resurrected from the dead and taken bodily into Heaven. His return from the dead proved

¹² I.e., confession of one's sinful nature and repentance of those sins.

him to be God and free from sin, and that resurrection symbolizes the spiritual renewal of any person who chooses to believe: that individual “dies” to sin and is brought to spiritual eternal life through sacrifice. Christ’s ascension into Heaven positions him as mediator between God and man, allowing the objectively sinful human race to be reunited with the father.

4. *The Holy Bible* is God’s communication with mankind; it is divinely-inspired documentation of the history of God’s people, and it lays down the moral code by which Christians are to live. Only what is contained in these Scriptures can be considered holy, and these precepts are revered as God’s law.
5. Christianity adheres to monotheism. Although Christians often refer to God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit, all of these entities are parts of one deity, simply referred to as God. No other deities are permitted; anything outside of the scriptural God is considered pagan and idolatrous. (“Christian Doctrine and Theology”)

These are the core beliefs of Christianity, adhered to by most of the denominations that fit themselves under this label. This religion believes in objective good and evil, in a definitive and perfect deity and his very real adversary, and in a literal life after death. Any denomination or religion that does not hold to these main tenets of faith cannot be considered Christian.

Secular Humanist Worldview

Secular Humanist ideology is what causes the Doctor’s journey to diverge from the monomythic path; thus, it is important to understand the ramifications of this rapidly-growing worldview. Secular Humanism is espoused by over thirty-three percent of millennials, a major increase from the fifteen-to-twenty percent listed in previous years, according the Secular

Humanist website (2013). A 2013 study by Trinity College closely agrees with those numbers, noting that twenty-eight percent of the college students in the study identified as secular, with a further thirty-two percent self-identifying as areligious (2013). As such, it is one of the fastest growing worldviews in the Western world. Secular Humanism focuses on the individual person, without regard for an external moral regulator or divine higher power. *The Minimum Statement on Humanism*, espoused by every adherent of Humanist ideologies within the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), provides the following definition:

Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality. (1996)

The Secular Humanist ideology thus finds itself in direct opposition to the Christian faith—almost every precept of Christianity is contested by *The Minimum Statement on Humanism*. The IHEU rejects the existence of any form of the divine or supernatural, instead relying on science alone, rather than a combination of both, to explain the universe and to give man a purpose. Man becomes the measure of all things in this worldview, as the individual is responsible for giving him or herself meaning, as noted above. There is no life after death; the present, physical, tangible world is all that exists, and so instead of anticipating an eternal existence, Secular Humanists encourage others to enjoy life in the here and now, and to do their best to enjoy the years that are given to them. Furthermore, there is no objective “good and evil”; instead, the individual must decide what is right and wrong for him or herself, based on sensory

perceptions—what is good benefits the individual, and what is bad harms him or her (*The Minimum Statement on Humanism*). Secular Humanism, like Christianity, attempts to understand man and his place in the universe, but it does so by using mankind as its guide, instead of set rules for human existence and behavior.

Conclusion: The Rationale

The prevalence of Secular Humanism in modern society renders this thesis important to the work of Christians in general and Christian scholars in particular, especially those interested in exploring and analyzing popular culture. Christians should be able to identify and examine the interplay of worldviews in the cultural trends around them, and *Doctor Who* is one such major cultural phenomenon. Clark Collis, writer for *Entertainment Weekly*, notes in his article “The Doctor is In,” that *Doctor Who* has recently exploded in popularity, both in the United Kingdom and in America. He describes the multitudes of screaming fans outside former star Matt Smith’s trailer, references to the show made in other areas of popular culture, and the occasionally cult-like devotion that characterizes the self-styled Whovians obsessed with the Doctor and his exploits (30-3). For Christians who participate in this cultural obsession, then, an understanding of the clash of worldviews within the show is necessary for those who seek to find ideas of truth presented in *Doctor Who*.

Furthermore, from a Christian scholar’s point of view, my work is important because it analyzes the way in which contradictory worldviews impact the literary trends of the show, particularly in regards to its utilization of the monomyth. The fact that *Doctor Who* both adheres to and subverts the monomyth is intriguing in and of itself; however, the majority of the interest lies in the fact that this contradiction arises from the conflict between Christianity and Secular Humanism within the show. Areas involving Christian themes or symbolism tend to follow the

pattern of the monomyth very closely, presenting the Doctor as the traditional hero. Places where the monomyth is subverted generally utilize traits of Secular Humanism, particularly in regards to the questions of the supernatural and good and evil. Thus, there is a major contradiction between the two worldviews: they try to coexist within the show, but are unable to do so without destabilizing the work. The ideological war in *Doctor Who* is not merely a singular aspect of the story; rather, it lies at the core of the work and creates the conflict. The resulting instability has increasing negative ramifications for the Doctor's ability to be a hero. Therefore, an understanding of how the clash between Christianity and Secular Humanism not only skews the show's idea of truth but also affects its literary aspects, is important for Christian fans of *Doctor Who* and scholars interested in analyzing the show itself. *Doctor Who* seriously attempts to examine the important philosophical ideas of the world around it; thus, the startling inconsistencies within the show cannot be ignored.

CHAPTER TWO: HIS NAME IS THE DOCTOR

"I'm the Doctor. I'm a Time Lord. I'm from the planet Gallifrey in the constellation of Kasterborous. I'm nine hundred and three years old and I'm the man who's going to save your lives and all six billion people on the planet below. You got a problem with that?"

-The Tenth Doctor from "Voyage of the Damned" (2007)

Introduction: Monomyth, Christianity, and the Doctor

Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* is a study in world religions, and so it should come as no surprise that he discusses Christianity and its themes in great detail, for the tenets of Christianity embody the majority of the monomythic stages laid out in the book. Campbell notes that the basic structure of the monomyth is that "[a] hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (30). Jesus Christ, the savior and hero figure in Christian Scripture, follows this pattern almost exactly: born to a small-town carpenter and his virgin fiancée, Christ leaves his hometown at age thirty and presses out into the land of Israel, where he performs miracles¹³ and experiences supernatural temptation from the Devil himself. The culmination of his three-year journey is his death on the cross and subsequent resurrection after three days in the tomb;¹⁴ his resurrection signifies the "decisive victory" over the power of death, and he is then able to give boons to the rest of mankind by showing it the path to eternal life.

¹³ Using what Campbell would refer to as "Supernatural Aid," the third sub-stage of the initial calling (69). Christ's supernatural aid would be His empowerment through God the Father, the head of the Christian Trinity. Christ specifically references His supernatural power as coming from God. See John 10:18.

¹⁴ Campbell notes that the "decisive victory" and the subsequent boons are frequently only accomplished after a time of great trial in which the hero sacrifices a significant part of himself to tear away the veil that covers understanding (172-92). Christ's decisive victory over death can only come when he has gone through crucifixion and three days of entombment.

Christianity and the monomyth appear to work together beyond the confines of Christ as hero, though in ways which are not specifically stated by Campbell. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* examines a multiplicity of religions that Campbell believes fits his monomythic pattern. These other religions include Buddhism, Islam, Norse and Aztec mythology, amongst many others, and they have several key similarities beyond the concrete stages of the monomyth. These correlations, though some may not be explicitly stated by Campbell, all appear in almost every religion that he lists as adhering to his proposed monomythic cycle. These similarities are the presence of singular hero, who though he may be accompanied by companions to aid him on his quest, is still the only one who can ultimately complete the task and save the world;¹⁵ an external transcendent moral regulator, a being or force outside of the individual who sets guidelines that all should follow;¹⁶ a world in which the supernatural frequently intersects with concrete reality and is accepted as such;¹⁷ a human soul that continues to exist in some form for eternity after the death of the corporeal body;¹⁸ and the importance of faith and belief for day-to-day life.¹⁹ All of Campbell's specified religions are theistic or connected to the concept of the supernatural—whether they believe in multiple deities, one god, or the Buddhist life-force of the universe—and all of the aforementioned elements contribute to their places in the monomyth.

Doctor Who follows patterns in the monomyth quite frequently, and it does so by exhibiting tenets of the Christian worldview specifically, out of all of the religions Campbell denotes. David Layton notes that the monomyth has been present in *Doctor Who* from its earlier incarnations in the 1960s up through the more modern episodes, as “[t]he Doctor's own personal

¹⁵ The Buddha, Beowulf, Jesus Christ, Perseus, Muhammed etc.

¹⁶ The Triune God of the Christians, the Ancient Greek pantheon, Islam's Allah, etc.

¹⁷ This idea is inherent to Campbell's monomyth, as evidenced by the stages of Divine Aid, Meeting with the Goddess, Reconciliation with the Father (god), etc.

¹⁸ The Buddhist concept of Nirvana fits this idea, as does the Christian Heaven/Hell, the Norse Valhalla/Hel, and so on.

¹⁹ Muslims must pray several times a day and adhere to the five pillars of Islam daily, Norse religious concepts organized every aspect of the day-to-day lives and actions of the Vikings, and so forth.

history corresponds to parts of Joseph Campbell's monomyth . . . particular adventures [often] follow this mythic pattern" (100). Instead of this monomythic pattern arising from a composite of all of the religions Campbell describes, *Doctor Who*'s place in the cycle arises primarily from the role of Christianity in the stages of the monomyth, because of the prominence of the Judeo-Christian theology in the world around the show at its original inception and in the modern world in correlation to the modern incarnation of the show. The show began in 1963, at a time in which the Christian worldview was still considered the predominant one in the Western world. Joanne Beckman of Duke University notes that "after the second great war, the populace seemed eager to replenish its spiritual wells" ("Religion in Post-World War II America"). *The Hollywood Free Paper*, an online magazine dedicated to examining Christian religious movements in the late twentieth century, points out that many revivals, including the "Jesus Movement" which combined hippie activism with Christian ideology, were predominant in America and rapidly spread throughout Europe in the 1960s and 1970s ("The New Jesus Freaks Movement in Europe"). Church attendance rates were high ("British Religion in Numbers") and even though politics and social behaviors were beginning to change, the public sphere still clung to what they considered "traditional values"—ones based on Christian ideology ("Culture and Values in the 1960s"). Such was the world in which *Doctor Who* began. Even though the more modern world in which the show now finds itself situated is far more secular, the Christian religion is still a major player in the public and private spheres. The UK 2012 census notes that even though religions such as Islam are on the rise, and despite the rapidly growing popularity of atheistic sects like Secular Humanism, almost sixty percent of Britain's populace still identifies itself as Christian ("Census Shows Rise in Foreign-Born"). As a result, *Doctor Who* cannot escape from dealing with Judeo-Christian ideologies, for, as director and filmmaker Kenneth Hall points out,

science fiction by its very nature interacts with the culture in which it exists (“The Value of Science Fiction”). This idea is borne out by Gabriel McKee’s observation that the Doctor embodies specifically Christian ethical views, particularly in his responses to violence and survival (29-30). In a world where Christianity is still prevalent, a science fiction show can escape that religion’s influence only with great difficulty.

Furthermore, this influence extends itself into the world of *Doctor Who*, for although showrunners Russell T. Davies and Stephen Moffat self-identify as atheists, others who contribute significantly to the show, including “Human Nature/Family of Blood” scriptwriter Paul Cornell, publically refer to themselves as Christians (“The DWO WhoCast Episode 57”). Though Cornell does not necessarily directly attempt to put his Christian beliefs into his works, he cannot avoid incorporating Christian ideology into the episodes he writes. As Ken Funk of Oregon State University writes, “[One’s] worldview influences [one’s] action [because] thought is the basis for action and knowledge is the basis for thought” (“What is a Worldview?”). Anyone associated with the show who adheres to a Christian worldview will reflect those thought patterns in their work, intentionally or no. Additionally, Davies himself allows Christian ideology and precepts into his episodes; he believes that ideas of the Christian faith are necessary and can have positive effects: ““We all sat in church [for a friend's funeral], and listened to the vicar telling us, with all his heart, that she's with her husband now, and 'whosoever shall believe in me shall have eternal life,' and you just think, no wonder we make this stuff up. It's so needed. It must be wonderful, to be a Christian” (*The Writer’s Tale: The Final Chapter* 515). Therefore, as a result of this cultural interaction and individual workers on the show, *Doctor Who* incorporates Judeo-Christian themes and ideas into its episodes, thus making that religion an appropriate aspect of a study in the monomyth, as opposed to Campbell’s other noted religions.

Furthermore, as Ishmael Cohen notes, the show can often be blatantly Christian in its presentation of the Doctor's heroics, particularly in the Tenth Doctor's era ("Religion in Doctor Who"). When the hero's journey arises, Christianity and its precepts can be found in the core ideologies at play within that place in *Doctor Who*.

Holding out for a Hero: The Doctor who Saves the World

Campbell's Hero

The core component of the monomyth is by necessity the hero himself. Campbell defines the hero as "the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to generally valid, normally human forms²⁰" (19-20). This heroic figure is called out from his natural habitat into a world of adventure, in which he will gain new knowledge and benefit those around him (30). He is often joined on such quests by companions who will aid him in attaining his goals, as with Jason's Argonauts (lv). The object of the hero's quest may be tangible, as with the fire of the Ancient Greek Prometheus (35), it may be the knowledge and understanding of the Buddha (33), or it may even be the salvation of the world itself, as with the Christian Christ (250). Whatever the boon granted to the hero, it is obtained only after a long journey and great cost, often great personal sacrifice. Never is the gift granted easily: Odin, king of the Norse pantheon, had to sacrifice an eye and spend nine days hanging on a tree to achieve enlightenment (177); Christ was crucified²¹; Prometheus was chained to a rock and condemned to have his liver pecked out every day after he stole the fire of the gods (Campbell 34). Even the heroes of film and literature must suffer to obtain the gift—Luke Skywalker of *Star Wars* has to endure physical torture to save himself and redeem his father (1983) and J.R.R. Tolkien's Frodo Baggins goes through physical pain and an extreme crisis of the soul before the One Ring can be

²⁰ The hero, in other words, is able to transcend mere humanity and its limitations.

²¹ See John 19, KJV.

destroyed and the world saved (*The Return of the King*). In all of these stories, the basic pattern holds: a hero leaves what he knows to be familiar, embarks upon an adventure, experiences suffering, and returns from the quest with some kind of gift, tangible or not. As Campbell himself notes, this is the “nuclear unit of the monomyth” (30), the path that holds true regardless of the story being told.

The Biblical Hero: Jesus Christ

Although there are many heroic figures throughout the Christian Scriptures, the dominant one is the Christ of the New Testament. Even though he is part of the supernatural realm as the “Son of God” (John 1:19), he descends into the realm of the corporeal and accepts many of the limitations thereof (Heb. 2:5-18) and thus falls into the parameters of Campbell’s human hero. The apparent son of a small town carpenter and his wife, Christ’s origins are of the natural and familiar world for his story. He is born in a humble stable in a small town (Luke 2:12), he is raised in a small town that is spoken of disparagingly by his community (John 1:46), and until the age of thirty, he follows his father’s trade of carpentry (Mark 6:3). Christ then displays his supernatural call to the world, in the form of his first miracle, at a wedding, where he is asked to turn water into wine (John 2:1-11). Upon doing so, he passes through what Campbell would refer to as a “threshold,” as “[t]he familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit” (51). At this point in time, Christ embarks upon his monomythic journey, into the world of the supernatural.

Throughout his three-year quest, Christ is joined by multiple companions who follow and listen to him. The most famous of these are the twelve disciples, men Christ specifically calls by name to accompany him and who will later serve as his apostles and messengers (Matt. 10:1-4). They adventure throughout the land of Israel, teaching enlightenment and the ways of God. At

this point, the nature of Christ's journey is revealed: he is to be the savior of the world, the means by which all of humankind can be reconciled to God and absolved of the weight of sin and evil (John 14:6). He completes his quest only at great cost: he is torturously executed at the request of his adversaries, dying only after several agonizing hours nailed to a cross (John 19). He experiences great loss at this time, through the surrender of his own life and accepting the burden of every sin committed in the past, present, or future. Once his sacrifice is accomplished, he is buried in a tomb for three days (1 Cor. 15:4). After that time, however, he resurrects from the dead and presents himself to his followers (John 20:19-20), having attained unification with the father God for all who believe in him and follow him and his teachings. Now that he is resurrected, he stands as the sole mediator between the human and the divine,²² offering eternal life as the boon he may grant to humanity (Heb. 9:15). Christ is thus the monomythic hero of the Bible, functioning as an archetype of the heroic figure of mythical narratives to come.

The Doctor as a Monomythic Hero

As the titular character of *Doctor Who*, the Doctor himself should, of course, function as the hero of his own narrative. Jennifer L. Miller quotes critic Amy Chinn, who notes, "No one disputes that the Doctor is both mythical and heroic" (108). In many ways, the Doctor does, in fact, adhere to Campbell's idea of the monomythic hero. Kevin S. Decker notes in "Who is Who? The Philosophy of *Doctor Who*" that "[i]n many ways, the Doctor resembles the questing hero of Joseph Campbell's interpretations of ancient mythology. Like this hero, the Doctor's decisions and motivations can, in a number of important ways, be 'mapped,' onto features of our own moral lives, rendering a fictive character as an extended set of metaphors" (109). Each episode represents a new quest for the Doctor, usually within the larger adventure of a series

²² Campbell, in reference to Christ as "Master of Two Worlds after his resurrection: "Here is the whole myth in a moment: Jesus the guide, the way, the vision, and the companion of the return" (230).

story arc, and so each one brings different sufferings and a different gift to be bestowed. Not for this hero is the one long adventure culminating in a return to normal life or a long sojourn in the enlightened realm. Rather, he follows the heroic journey almost daily, with quest after quest, loss after loss, and understanding upon understanding. He is a hero who will never cease to adventure; as author Michael Moorcock calls him, he is an “eternal champion” (*The Coming of the Terraphiles*), who will always seek to aid his fellow citizens of the universe.

Like Christ, the Doctor at first glance seems to belong more to the realm of the supernatural than the more ordinary one to which Campbell’s hero belongs. As an alien Time Lord, the “oldest and most mighty race in the universe” (“The Sound of Drums”), he lives many years beyond the human life span,²³ possesses the ability to travel in time and space, and has vast knowledge and experience beyond regular human capabilities. As the Ninth Doctor tells the human girl Rose, “It’s like when you’re a kid, the first time they tell you that the world is turning and you just can’t quite believe it ‘cause everything looks like it’s standing still. I can feel it . . . the turn of the earth. The ground beneath our feet is spinning at a thousand miles an hour. The entire planet is hurtling around the sun at sixty-seven thousand miles an hour. And I can feel it” (“Rose”). Although these traits would seem to set him apart from the more normal world of the monomythic hero, he, like Christ, reflects enough human traits to set him within this category. As revealed in the Classic *Who* episode “The Ribos Operation,” the Doctor was far from unusual or even exceedingly bright—he barely passed his school exams and was considered quite ordinary by his own people (1978). He then leaves his own people, the world that is normal and natural for him, by following a “call to adventure” that leads him to steal a TARDIS and set off

²³ The Fourth Doctor once noted that, at the time, he was 753 years old (“The Pyramids of Mars”); by the time he is in his Eleventh incarnation, he is well over 900 (“A Christmas Carol”).

on his own (“The Name of the Doctor”).²⁴ He continues this questing behavior by continuously avoiding anything that is familiar to him, instead seeking the wonder of something new and strange and getting excited whenever he does so (“The Runaway Bride,” “The Impossible Planet,” etc.). Furthermore, while on his quests, he stubbornly refuses to admit that he is anything out of the ordinary, simply referring to himself as “just a traveler” (“Voyage of the Damned”). His constant escape from the realm of what is ordinary for him, in addition to his endeavors to embrace a human normality, allows him to fulfill the role of Campbell’s monomythic hero without too much of an imaginative stretch.

Like any good hero, the Doctor travels with companions who aid him in his quests. His companions tend to be mostly female and human, but they are occasionally male, as in the case of Mickey Smith during the Ninth and Tenth Doctor’s tenures, or alien, as with the enigmatic River Song, who infrequently travels with the Eleventh Doctor. Whoever, or whatever, these companions are at any given time, they always fulfill similar functions: they are there to help the Doctor, as Clara does in “The Time of the Doctor”;²⁵ to learn about life, the universe, and everything from him during their travels; and, on occasion, to serve as apostles to his Christ-figure. Brigid Cherry notes that Martha Jones, companion to the Tenth Doctor, particularly fulfills this latter function, as it is her mission to spread the news of the Doctor and his deeds to humankind, to get them to believe in him, and to help him save the world (90). These companions are indispensable to the Doctor’s hero-narrative, and they aid him on his never-ending quest for knowledge and redemption.

²⁴ Another aspect of this call could be considered Eleventh Doctor’s companion Clara Oswald’s appearance at the time the First Doctor steals the TARDIS; at her insistence, the First Doctor takes a ship with faulty navigation, and this choice leads to many of his adventures in both the Classic and New series (“Name of the Doctor”).

²⁵ When the Eleventh Doctor is about to die and give up his final incarnation, Clara finds a way to help him by persuading the Time Lords to give him more regenerations (2013).

The Doctor also fulfills his quests as dictated by the monomyth, and he does so by returning through great suffering and loss, similar to the sacrifice of Christ. Each episode and each story arc contain their own adventures, each with its own varying degree of reward, and the suffering needed to attain that reward is usually directly proportional to the boon itself. In “Vincent and the Doctor,” the Eleventh Doctor risks harm to himself and his companions to save the life of Vincent van Gogh (2010). After committing a form of suicide by erasing his alien DNA and making himself human to escape a race that longs to feed on him, the Tenth Doctor achieves a deeper understanding of what it means to be mortal and live a “normal life” (“Human Nature”/“The Family of Blood”). In the most heroic, and most clearly Christ-like, example, the Doctor frequently offers up his own life to save others. Andrew Crome in his essay “Ready to Outsit Eternity: Human Responses to the Apocalypse” mentions that in the episodes “Sound of Drums/The Last of the Time Lords,” the Tenth Doctor “has to undergo his own crucifixion. He is tortured as the Master attempts to steal his body—suffering, arms outstretched, wearing headwear that appears modeled on a crown of thorns” (187). He is willing to allow himself to die, and in a very messianic fashion, to save the world. When it comes to actually sacrificing his life for others, he does so with very little equivocation. When the Ninth Doctor takes the entire energy of the time vortex into himself, he dies in order to save his companion Rose Tyler (“The Parting of the Ways”). The Tenth Doctor absorbs a lethal dose of radiation to save his friend Wilf (“The End of Time”); even though he experiences a brief moment of anguished hesitation, similar to Christ’s agonized prayer in the garden to “let this cup pass from me” (Matt. 26:39), he still accepts a death not meant for him without blame or recriminations because he cares for others more than himself. In a similar manner, the Eleventh Doctor takes upon himself a slow, painful death as he works to save the inhabitants of an entire planet (“The Time of the

Doctor”).²⁶ He is a savior-hero, who brings knowledge, salvation, and enlightenment to those around him through his own sacrifices and suffering.

After experiencing the pain and loss he must endure to achieve the goal of the quest, the Doctor then makes the triumphant return of a monomythic hero: he leaves the realm of darkness and danger and comes back to the world with which he is familiar and where he can feel safe, if only for a time (Campbell 217). After discovering the cause of the gas mask plague in “The Empty Child/The Doctor Dances,” the Ninth Doctor can confidently and jubilantly announce, “Everybody lives! Just this once, everybody lives!” as he returns from the terror of the infected hospital with the knowledge of how to save everyone (2005). Once his torment at the hands of the Master is ended in “Last of the Time Lords” and the timeline rewritten, the Tenth Doctor can leave behind that alternate history and go back to a universe he knows and understands (2007). In a more obvious and symbolic manner, the Doctor makes a heroic return every time he dies. When his corporeal form is killed, he regenerates, or resurrects, into a new body. Although this body is physically different and unrecognizable from the previous ones, unlike Christ’s resurrected form, the Doctor still returns from the dead as a savior figure, triumphant. The Christ-imagery continues in the regeneration itself: the Doctor’s body literally bursts into flame, a refining fire that burns away the old man, and leaves a new, wiser being behind it (“Parting of the Ways,” “The End of Time,” “The Time of the Doctor”). His journey as the hero now complete, the Doctor makes a quip or gives a pithy statement, and his quest ends—just in time for him to begin anew on a new adventure, a hero who never rests.

²⁶ Even more important to his sacrifice is his belief that once he dies, he is permanently dead. That incarnation, by general Time Lord rules, should be his last. He willingly gives up his own life, knowing that he will not regenerate, unlike previous times where he knew he had a chance to come back.

Called to a Higher Standard: An External Moral Compass in the World of *Doctor Who*

External Regulators in the Monomyth

One of the key similarities between every religion discussed in Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* is that each of them reflects an external moral regulator, or power outside of the individual that determines what is good and what is evil. This force, usually represented in mythology by a god or gods, creates laws to govern mankind's morality, laws which cannot be superseded. For Ancient Greeks, their mythical pantheon of Zeus instituted the laws of nature and also the rules by which the Greeks should govern themselves and pay deference to the gods; in Islam, the creator god Allah is supreme above all things, and his moral code for the universe, as revealed in the *Qur'an*, governs every action that man should take. When mankind adheres to this kind of set code, he is in the right, and the universe remains ordered. When man breaks the code, then he is punished in some way, either by the regulator itself or by some force that exists to serve the regulator and keep the laws in place. For the Buddhists, this purpose is fulfilled by karma—a natural force that will lead to negative effects if one performs wrong deeds, and good fortune if one behaves well ("The Theory of Karma"). In the Roman belief system, the gods would punish evildoers either directly themselves, or through servants sent to do their bidding. Mankind is aware of the rules it must follow, by either divine revelation from the creator of the rules, as when Islam's Allah revealed the *Qur'an* to the Prophet Muhammad, or through one's innate understanding of the requirements then preached to others, as with the path to Enlightenment followed by Buddhists.

The cornerstone of this belief is the idea that good and evil are *objective* concepts from an *external* source; they are set laws that universally apply to everyone—regardless of race, creed, age, or gender—and as such, are determined by some force outside of man's own thoughts and

ideas. According to an article on the writings of the Greek philosopher Plato, who believed in objective morality, truth, and beauty, “Objective values are those that lie outside of the individual and are not dependent on his/her perception or belief” (“Plato II: Objective Values”). For the mythologies in the monomyth, which all feature troubled worlds where man cannot necessarily be trusted to do the right thing on his own, this objective good must needs arise from an external source that orchestrates right and wrong into a code that all can understand and follow, despite their differences of opinion and perception of the world. Such morality transcends the individual, cultures, and history to create precepts that everyone must live by. Every mythology in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, from Aztec to Norse, Islam to Navajo, brings its own pantheon or force to the religious system, and credits it with creating and regulating good and evil. According to these systems, man himself cannot change these laws because they exist outside of him and are immutable and thus inescapable.

The monomythic hero needs objective, transcendent good and evil in order to exist: he can only save mankind if it needs to be rescued from something negative that is completely outside of itself, and his actions that interfere with the lives of others and against the antagonist can be considered good and noble only if an external standard exists. Perseus’ slaying of Medusa (Campbell 203) can only be considered “good” if the horrors of the Gorgon are wrong by a code outside of the hero’s personal feelings; in a similar manner, the destruction of the Death Star by Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars IV* and the subsequent deaths of all the soldiers above it can be celebrated by the victory procession at the end of the film only if Skywalker and his Rebel Alliance friends follow the path of the recognizably “light side” of the universal Force, and the antagonist Darth Vader and his Imperial troops align with the corresponding “dark side.” With objective morality, the hero has a set course of right and wrong, and he can fulfill his destiny as

he sets out on his great adventure.

This is My Commandment: Christianity's External Moral Regulator and Christ

The lawgiver for the Christian religion is God, King of Heaven and creator of the entire universe. According to the Scriptures, when the first man, Adam, was created, one of the first things that God did was to tell him what was good (tending to the earth and naming the animals) and what was bad (eating from one particular tree, the tree of knowledge of good and evil) (Gen. 2:15-16). When Adam and his wife Eve disobeyed and partook of the forbidden fruit, God enforced this law by banishing them from the Garden of Eden and giving them new instructions for living their lives in accordance with his laws (Gen. 3:6-23), and mankind passed into a state of sin from which they must constantly be redeemed. From that point on, man's moral compass is ordered by the laws God ordains. In the book of Exodus, God passes down in physical form the basic governing code, or Ten Commandments, that provide the foundation for human morality: abstain from idolatry, do not kill, do not steal, and do not commit infidelity, among others (Ex. 20:1-19). Throughout the rest of the Scriptures, God orchestrates morality for mankind, and even though certain laws changed from culture to culture—the Old Testament Israelites were not allowed to eat pork (Lev. 11:1-8), but New Testament Israelites were permitted to do so (Acts 10:11-18)—the rules that ordained what is good and evil stay the same, regardless of the cultural context.

In Christian tradition, God and his servants are the enforcers of this moral code. In biblical history, punishment for transgressions against the law was quick and fitted to the offense. On occasion, God himself would mete out the retribution, as when he flooded the entire planet and wiped out its inhabitants, save for one righteous man and his family, because

mankind's sin was so marked (Gen. 6:13-7:24);²⁷ on other occasions, he would use other forces, as shown in 1 Chronicles 9:1 when he allows the Babylonians to take the entire nation of Israel captive because it was no longer following his guidelines (KJV). His enforcement of the moral standards also applies in the other direction, however; although evil is punished, good is rewarded. Campbell notes that the Old Testament's Job seeks constantly to obey God's commands and lives a righteous life, and so after he loses everything and still perseveres, he is given a large family, a greater fortune, and an extended life span (148).²⁸ In the New Testament, under the salvific code, God promises that those who follow him, obey his commandments, and do his work will be richly rewarded.²⁹ These rewards may come directly from God, usually in the Christian afterlife, or they may be granted by him through others, such as public accolades or success in life.³⁰ The moral code is laid out and enforced—the good is rewarded and the evildoer is punished.

That God and not man must be the one to prescribe and enforce these tenets of objective good and evil is evidenced by God's perfect nature and by the fallen state of all mankind in the Christian tradition. The concept of God's infallibility is threaded throughout the Bible: he is completely holy and without sin (Is. 6:3), he alone is good (Ps. 16:2), and he is perfect (2 Sam. 22:31). Mankind, in contrast, has no righteousness in and of itself, as evidenced by Ecclesiastes 7:20: "For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (KJV).³¹ Furthermore, each individual is born into this state, and so has no hope of avoiding sin on his or

²⁷ Campbell references Jonathan Edwards' sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" to provide a verbal idea of God's anger and divine retribution when mankind sins (127-8).

²⁸ In reference to Job 42:16-17. For a similar application of this concept, see also Jeremiah 17:10: "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (KJV).

²⁹ See Hebrews 11:6, Matthew 6:33, and Revelation 22:12.

³⁰ King David's title of "a man after [God's] own heart" (1. Sam. 13:14), Abraham's vindication in the "Hall of Faith" (Heb. 11:8), etc.

³¹ See also Romans 3:23 and 5:12, Jeremiah 17:9, and Job 15:14-16.

her own: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5). The only one who can create an objective morality and set a code by which all men must live must needs be one who is perfect himself. Because human beings are corrupted and sinful, they are not capable of developing a universal morality, and so God is the only one who can decree what is good and what is evil. In the Christian worldview, morality by necessity has to exist outside of the deeply flawed human race, and so their objective right and wrong has to come from God himself.

The objective nature of right and wrong in this religious system is the reason why Christ must cross the threshold³² and become a hero for the human race. In a world where “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10) and where God is so perfect and holy that it is death for a sinner to look upon his face (Ex. 33:20), mankind has no hope on its own of transcending its inherent natural evil to achieve goodness and reconcile with the Father. As a result, Jesus Christ is sent to the world to redeem it. Christ is in a unique position in Campbell’s mythological pattern: he is both of the natural world as a man (1 Tim. 2:15) and of the supernatural world as he is fully God (Phil. 2:6). Because of this dual nature,³³ he can function as the hero of a world of objective morality because he can reconcile the natural world to the supernatural, since he is of both. Christ comes to Earth to instruct humanity in the paths of righteousness and to teach them how to combat evil; he sacrifices his own life to save humanity from a universal standard of evil through the universal standard of good ordained by God. In Christian doctrine, in order to achieve salvation, one must confess that he or she has sinned, thereby acknowledging an external standard of good and evil, and must accept that the only way to attain true goodness is the belief in the God who created the moral standards. Christ-as-hero is the medium by which this

³² Campbell’s term for the divide between the supernatural realm and the normal world. All heroes must cross this divide as they begin their journeys (*Hero With a Thousand Faces* 77).

³³ Called the “hypostatic union” in Christian doctrine (Merriam-Webster.com).

acceptance comes, for without his heroic journey to elevate mankind to God's standards of goodness, all would be condemned as evil, and punished to eternity in a pit of fire and torment, separated from the divine forever (Rev. 21:8). Morality is regulated outside of mankind itself, and so Christ stands as the mediator to reveal the standards for that moral code and to help humanity on its journey to righteousness.

There are Laws of Time: External Moral Regulation in the Universe of *Doctor Who*

The higher power. Despite the absence of a designated deity in *Doctor Who*, the Doctor's universe has always had some form of transcendent governance that even the Doctor must acknowledge as a higher power. This governing body dictates what can and cannot be done in the universe, and it always enforces its rules without remorse. For the worlds of the modern iteration of the show, that function is filled by what the Doctor calls "the laws of time." These laws exist outside of the individual and they are absolute³⁴, regardless of situation or the people involved. These laws include not interfering with "fixed points in time," or those that have been ordained as unchangeable ("The Fires of Pompeii"); and avoiding making significant changes in the lives of individuals when their paths have been fated to go in another direction ("Father's Day"). The laws of time are inviolate and absolute; the Doctor himself knows that he cannot transcend them because they order the universe. In her essay "Everything Dies: The Message of Morality in the Eccleston and Tennant Years," Kristine Larsen notes, "The Doctor is often faced with the impossible task of acting despite the fact that he knows someone may die as a result, and is also sometimes faced with the equally hard task of remaining inactive and allowing someone to meet their fate. His hands are tied by the sacrosanct laws of time" (157). He must

³⁴ Although in "The Waters of Mars" the Doctor refers to the Time Lords as the keepers of the laws of time (2007), the fact that the Time Lords were wiped out but the laws themselves remained and are knowable indicates that they exist outside of the Time Lords and are universal.

obey this higher power, regardless of whether or not he wants to, because it exists outside of himself—it is universal and therefore must be obeyed. Additionally, the laws of time function as a moral code in that if one willingly breaks them, that person has knowingly committed an act that is objectively wrong in the eyes of the universe. Michael Charlton comments that when the Doctor wants to save the doomed Mars colony in “The Waters of Mars,” “He knows he wants to act—that he wants to violate the laws of time—but insists to himself that this is not just immoral but actually impossible” (70). Not only does the Doctor know that he cannot, he must not, disobey this external code, but *he admits that to do so would be an immoral action*. Breaking the laws of time cannot be immoral if there is no objective standard of right and wrong, and the Doctor would not be bound to obey them if they were rules that did not hold sway over everyone equally. From the ashes of the doomed city of Pompeii to the car accident that claims the life of Rose Tyler’s father, the laws of time remain immutable and objective, holding the universe together in one set of rules.

Just as sinners are punished for breaking the laws of God, those who err against the laws of time are dealt with swiftly. The two most notable instances of this principle are revealed in the Ninth Doctor episode “Father’s Day” (2005) and the Tenth Doctor episode “The Waters of Mars” (2009). In “Father’s Day,” the Doctor takes his companion Rose Tyler back to the day her father died in a tragic hit-and-run accident. They can only watch, he cautions her, as the laws of time forbid them from preventing the death of someone who is fated to die at a specific point. As the accident is about to occur, however, Rose cannot control herself, and she rushes forward, pushing her dad out of the way and saving his life. Over the next few hours, people begin to disappear amidst a rush of wings and some horrible screeches. The Doctor hurries everyone

inside a church³⁵ as bat-like monsters begin pounding at the door. He tells the terrified group that the creatures are called Reapers, and that “[n]othing in this universe can harm those things. Time's been damaged and they've come to sterilise the wound. By consuming everything inside” (2005). The laws of time have been violated, and the Reapers have come to exact the penalty: the deaths of everyone involved in the situation. Furthermore, although the Doctor tries frantically to resolve the situation so that time will be restored but Pete Tyler will still be alive, his efforts are futile: his TARDIS is empty, the Doctor himself is absorbed by a Reaper, and the situation seems hopeless. For time to be set right again and the damage to be undone, Pete Tyler must die, as he was originally fated to, and he chooses to accept the law as it was laid out. He says goodbye to Rose, and runs out in front of a swerving car,³⁶ dying in the middle of the road as his daughter sits with him. Time is restored, the Doctor, his TARDIS, and all those who disappeared are brought back, and the world goes on (2005). Although some slight details of the event have changed, such as the time of death and Pete no longer dying alone, the larger picture has been restored as Pete dies in the same way and on the same day on which he was meant to. The wrong has been righted, the Reapers disappear, and time resumes its course.

Disobedience to the absolute laws takes a much darker turn in the Tenth Doctor's episode “The Waters of Mars” (2009). At this time, the Doctor pays a visit to a colony that Earth established on Mars in the mid-twenty-first century. Upon his arrival, he quickly realizes the

³⁵ Taking refuge inside the church is reminiscent of the concept of sanctuary, by which one accused of a crime could enter a church and be under God's protection. Rose and her group find temporary safety in this holy building, but the wrath of the higher power can only be forestalled for so long, as the Doctor points out (2005). Parallels could be drawn between the concept of moral salvation in Scripture, as in the Old Testament, going to the temple constituted a sanctuary in which one was made righteous before God, but that ritualistic righteousness could not last forever. Eventually, a savior had to come and sacrifice himself for the punishment of sin to be waived, much like how Pete Tyler must die to permanently save everyone from the Reapers.

³⁶ The same car that was supposed to kill him from the beginning; because of the time distortion, the vehicle has been swerving around in the same path over and over since Rose saved Pete (2005), a symbol of how the wrong must be righted through the means that had already been designated. The laws of time are immutable in this situation, and they consistently remind Pete of the law that has been broken.

importance of where he is: the colony will mysteriously explode with all hands lost on November 21, 2059—the same day the Doctor himself has just arrived. Although he does not know how the station will be destroyed, he knows that this moment is a “fixed point in time,” an event that cannot be changed no matter the cost. As he tells Adelaide, the captain of the expedition:

Today, on the twenty-first of November 2059, Captain Brooke activates that [nuclear] device, taking the base and all her crew members with her. No one ever knows why. But you were saving Earth. That's what inspires your granddaughter. She takes your people out into the galaxy because you die on Mars. You die today. She flies out there like she's trying to meet you . . . Most times I can save someone, or anyone. But not you . . . Your death is fixed in time forever. *And that's right.* (2009, emphasis added)

The laws of time have decreed that the colony must be destroyed and its crew, particularly Captain Adelaide, must die. The Doctor recognizes that she must not be saved and that furthermore, letting her die in accordance with her fated path is objectively the *right thing to do*. However, racked with guilt, he does try to save them—he evacuates Adelaide and her remaining two crewmembers back to Earth, deliberately breaking the code he knows he must obey. As in “Father’s Day,” though, retribution is shocking and swift. Adelaide acknowledges that the right path is the one decreed by the laws of time: “But I’m supposed to be dead,” she tells the Doctor. “This is wrong” (2009). She goes inside, pulls out her pistol, and commits suicide as the Doctor realizes, “I’ve gone too far” (2009), thus realigning time on the correct path and obeying the external force that tells her and the Doctor that her death is right. One again, the laws of time that regulate the behavior of the universe have set right what was wrong, leaving the Doctor standing

alone in the snow in shock and horror, defeated in his attempt to willfully disobey the rules that govern his existence. His attempt to swerve from the moral code that governs his hero's journey is swiftly dealt with, leaving him again subservient to the laws of the universe.

Much as the objective nature of right and wrong in a universe regulated by the Christian God necessitates the figure of Christ-as-hero, the transcendent objectivity of the laws of time require the Doctor to serve as a hero in his own universe. Like Christ, the Doctor is also a blend between the supernatural realm and the world of reality. As a Time Lord who can live for thousands of years and has the power to explore all of time and space, there is a marked aura of the divine about him. Miller agrees with this assessment, noting: “[T]he Doctor seems touched by divinity. Such a reading of the Doctor is reinforced by his power to regenerate, his seemingly infinite knowledge of the universe, and the powerful technology that allows him to travel almost anywhere and access anything—a combination that renders him nearly omnipotent. Even the Doctor’s very identity as a Time Lord contains a suggestion of divinity” (106). However, in addition to these elements of the supernatural, the Doctor also retains a connection to the natural and the very human. Not only is his form consistently outwardly human, but, as David Layton notes, “Within the fictional universe of the series [The Doctor] is not ‘human,’ yet it is clear that he is a human character, a type representing some configurations of the human condition” (61). As an alien, he represents the strange, bizarre, and wonderful universe beyond the majority of human experience; as a man, he understands the human spirit and the world of the familiar. As such, he can bring the order of the supernatural (the laws of time) to the finite minds of the people whom he encounters. Without the Doctor’s explanation of the rules, Pete Tyler and Adelaide Brooks would not have understood why they had to die, and it is highly unlikely that they would have been capable of sacrificing themselves for a universal good if they did not know

that it existed. Through the Doctor's hero journey, others come to an understanding of the laws that regulate their universe, and it can only happen because the Doctor represents nature and super-nature, and he is thus able to synthesize the two worlds so that those whom he encounters can be reconciled to the idea that there are some laws that cannot be broken, that a power outside of themselves orders and maintains the universe.

Objective right and wrong. Although the laws of time are the only higher power the Doctor acknowledges, the show still hints at the idea that objective, inescapable right and wrong do exist and that they are applicable to the universe as a whole. When the Ninth Doctor encounters the last surviving Dalek in the eponymous episode, he calls the creature "a living nightmare," a being that can do nothing good and exists only to kill (2005). In the episodes "Age of Steel/Rise of the Cybermen," the Tenth Doctor tells the Cyber Controller that he cannot upgrade all of humanity to Cybermen because it would be wrong to do so (2006). In "Planet of the Ood," companion Donna Noble decries the enslavement of the Ood as something horrible and despicable (2008). In conditions of life and death, of slavery, and of racism, the Doctor and his companions make it very clear that there is a wrong path to take, and conversely, that the opposite is the right one. The Doctor is justified in the heroic actions he takes on these occasions precisely because that objective right and wrong exists. He can eternally imprison the Family of Blood because their attempts to wipe out the human race are wrong ("Human Nature/The Family of Blood"); he can leave Davros to burn in the desolation of the Daleks because the maniac's plans are objectively evil ("Journey's End"); and conversely, he can reward Karzan Sardick with extra time with his beloved Abigail because the former helped the Doctor and did what was objectively right to help save the inhabitants of Earth ("A Christmas Carol"). Although the Doctor (or anyone else, for that matter) never admits to objective standards, the character's

words and actions frequently insinuate that they must exist.

Don't Stop Believin': The Importance of Faith and Belief in *Doctor Who*

Faith in the Monomyth

One of the most integral parts of any religious system is faith and belief in a power outside of oneself. In the monomyth, this idea often manifests itself in two facets: belief in a god or gods, and faith of others in the hero himself. The former needs very little in the way of explanation, as every mythological system and religion has some form of pantheon, whether it be the Triune God of the Christians, the multiple thousands of deities for the Hindus, or the relatively conservative fifty-plus gods of the Ancient Greeks. Regardless of how many gods each system follows, all of them have this external force that the ordinary people of the natural realm obey and worship. Belief in a deity or deities often carries with it belief in the opposite, a supernatural force that exists for chaos and disorder, such as the Norse pantheon's trickster god Loki, the evil Ahriman in Zoroastrianism, or the mischievous Edshu of the African Yoruba tribe (Campbell 41). In the monomythic *Star Wars*, the external power manifests itself not in a physical deity, but through the concept of "The Force," which embodies both good (the "Light Side") and the bad (the "Dark Side"). Each religion and each monomythic story has its own set of "light" higher power, and some form of "dark" deity, which orders the world and can render aid to faithful worshippers who call for it.

The other side of faith in the monomythic system is that which others place in the hero himself as he works through his quests. This faith usually takes the form of trusting the hero to carry out his assigned task or believing that he will be able to save others from whatever danger encroaches. The Greek Argonauts trust that their intrepid leader Jason will take them safely through the paths ahead and complete the task to retrieve the Golden Fleece. Valkyrie Brunhilde

faithfully believes that Sigurd will rescue her from Odin's ring of fire and that he will return for her as he promises. Obi-Wan Kenobi and Yoda in *Star Wars* trust that young Luke Skywalker will be able to defeat Darth Vader and tear down the evil Empire. Both kinds of faith and belief play an integral part in the world of the monomyth and in the hero's journey, for without belief in a higher power, there is no supernatural realm for the hero to venture into, nor is there a reason for the hero to accept his quest; and without the faith of others in the hero as he journeys, he would receive no external help other than his granted supernatural aid, and the lack of encouragement and support would likely doom him to failure long before his quest is complete.

For We Walk by Faith, Not by Sight: Belief in the Christian Worldview

The hero's journey of Christ perfectly exemplifies the dual nature of faith exhibited by all of the systems in the monomyth. All adherents to the Christian religion believe in an external power that regulates and orders the world: God. For Christians, he is not some abstract concept or metaphysical idea; rather, he is an eternal being with an actual presence and personality. He is accessible through prayer and is both willing and able to answer the supplications of his worshippers. Christ tells his disciples to "[h]ave faith in God" (Mark 11:22) and to place their trust in him because he will attend to their needs and give them aid when needed (Matt. 6:8). He is also the one who sets Christ on his hero's journey, because the task set for the hero is one that will save the world. Belief in God is thus necessary for faith in Christ, for without a higher power that declares the world needs to be saved, there is no reason for Christ to go on his journey and no reason to believe that he can, in fact, save anyone.

The faith of others in Christ-as-hero is also a key facet of this belief system, because it is how his mission is accomplished. For a person to accept his sacrifice and be saved from the Damocles sword of death hanging over each representative of mankind, that individual must

believe that Christ is the one chosen to save the world and have faith that his death will expunge the sins of the past: “Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31).³⁷ Without belief, there is no salvation, for “without faith, it is impossible to please [God]” (Heb. 11:6). If there is no faith in Christ and the completion of his journey, then his quest and his sacrificial death are in vain and no one can be saved. There must be faith and belief in both God and his chosen hero Christ for the journey to be successful and the world to be saved.

The Christian religious system places the idea of faith and belief in a unique position when compared with the rest of the monomyth, for in this case, the line between belief in the external power and faith in the hero becomes blurred. Since Christ is both God and man, both of the supernatural realm and the hero, the faith in him as the hero extends to belief in him as the external power. This conjunction sets Christianity apart from the rest of the monomyth in that no other religious system mentioned by Campbell has a hero who is both God and man; the ideologies of belief in other systems have to be kept separate, for faith in Perseus is not the same as faith in Zeus, nor is trust in Luke Skywalker the same as trust in the Force. Only in Christianity can the two aspects of faith be combined, both integral and necessary but similar in thought and action.

Well, if that’s what You Want to Believe: Faith and the Doctor

Faith in *Doctor Who* falls into the same complex category as Christianity, because in many situations, the Doctor himself functions as both the external power and as the hero completing his journey. As the “lonely god”³⁸ (“New Earth”),³⁹ he is a higher power to many of those whom he encounters, particularly in regards to Earth and its residents, and they frequently

³⁷ See also Eph. 2:8-9 and 2 Cor. 2:5-7.

³⁸ A term coined by the Face of Boe to describe the Doctor’s role in the universe.

³⁹ This is not the only deific term used for the wandering Time Lord; after the Tenth Doctor rescues them from the exploding Mount Vesuvius, the Caecillius family creates a shrine to him and worships him as the “god of Time” (“Fires of Pompeii”).

call on him for aid. In “The Christmas Invasion,” the people of Earth express their belief in him and they practically pray for him to help them from the moment the Sycorax ship appears over London. The Doctor then accepts this role as Earth’s protector; the Tenth Doctor defeats the Sycorax leader and sends the Klingonesque warriors away with no uncertainties as to who is in charge of the planet: “I forbid you to scavenge here for the rest of time. And when you go back to the stars and tell others of this planet, when you tell them of its riches, its people, its potential. When you talk of the Earth, then make sure that you tell them this: it is defended!” (2005). He often functions as the protector of Earth and the higher power outside of his individual quests on his hero’s journey, helping humanity when called upon to do so and taking the care of the Earth upon his own rather skinny shoulders as the people of that planet give him their hope and trust for the future.

The role of faith in the journey of the Doctor-as-hero is also an incredibly important one. His companions have always believed in him; Rose Tyler believes the Ninth Doctor will rescue her from the Daleks (“Parting of the Ways”), Martha trusts the Tenth Doctor to stop the Family of Blood (“Human Nature/Family of Blood”), Donna knows that he will save the world from Davros and his army (“The Stolen Earth/Journey’s End”), and Amy has faith that the Eleventh Doctor will come back for her no matter the cost (“The Eleventh Hour,” “The Girl Who Waited”). Beyond that faith, however, comes the belief of others that the Doctor will be successful in his quests. This faith often gives him the encouragement he needs to carry on, and it sometimes literally enables him to complete the task. The biggest example of this concept, one that embodies the elements of encouragement and enabling, comes from the two-part episode “The Sound of Drums”/“The Last of the Time Lords.” In this storyline, renegade Time Lord and the Doctor’s insane arch-nemesis the Master has taken over the entire planet of Earth. The

Master enforces his dominion over the world, wiping out over a tenth of the population and keeping the rest enslaved. The Tenth Doctor is captured and tortured, eventually having centuries of his life stripped away until he is nothing but a pitiable cat-sized creature kept in a cage. His companion, Martha Jones, encourages him to keep going, and she escapes the Master's clutches. On Earth, she is tasked with working as the Doctor's apostle, making sure that the whole world knows about him and who he is: "But if Martha Jones became a legend, then that's wrong, because my name isn't important," she tells her spell-bound human audience. "There's someone else. The man who sent me out there. The man who told me to walk the Earth. And his name is the Doctor. He has saved your lives so many times, and you never even knew he was there. He never stops. He never stays. He never asks to be thanked. But I've seen him. I know him. I love him. And I know what he can do" (2007). The power of the Doctor's name spreads through the world until at one particular moment, everyone stops, and billions of people start chanting the Doctor's name. The power of their faith and belief in him transfigures him, as he floats above the ground, arms outstretched as if he is being crucified, then glowing and returning to his younger body, a mutually symbolic Christ-like death and resurrection. With his body renewed, he stops the destruction of the Earth and defeats the Master (2007). Time is restored, the Earth reborn, and the Doctor succeeds on his mission to save the world, all because of the faith placed in him by the people of Earth. Though the universe of *Doctor Who* may not acknowledge a deity, there is no denying that faith plays an important role in the salvation of the world and the completion of the Doctor's quests.

My Soul Will Go On: The Human Soul and The Doctor

The Monomyth and the Concept of the Soul

A point of similarity between all mythologies in Campbell's monomyth is that all of them

espouse the idea of some sort of human soul, a transcendent element of humanity that goes beyond the fleshly body. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the soul as “the immaterial essence, animating principle, or actuating cause of an individual life” (Def. 1). This essence contains the spirit, personality, and often the memories of the individual person, and is capable of existing after the corporeal body has ceased to be. Every religion has some concept of this soul quality; for the Old Norse, the soul of a valiant person would travel to the realm of the gods to live eternally in the warrior’s hall of Valhalla, while a coward or a craven would be condemned to wander in Hel and be tormented with the memories of his evil deeds. For the Ancient Greeks, the soul was even more important: a good person would retain all of his or her memories and personality in the Fields of the Blessed, the evildoers would be eternally tortured and retain only their negative traits and memories, and the ambivalent would wander the Fields of Asphodel, forever memory-less and empty. Souls were thus the truly human part of the body, as even after the corporeal form had dissipated, loved ones could communicate with the spirits of the dead—Greek Orpheus attempted to retrieve his beloved wife Eurydice from the Underworld, and he recognized her even without her body; Norse Queen goddess Frigga could speak to her dead son Baldur, who retained all of his memories of his former life. In Buddhist tradition, the soul of a dead person is transferred into another body in a process referred to as reincarnation;⁴⁰ even though all of the memories may not remain intact, the physical host of a reincarnated soul may remember what happened to previous hosts. Furthermore, at the end of the reincarnation process, when the soul is pure and has achieved nirvana, that soul exists as the composite of the experiences and memories of every host, an eternal piece of a person that is the sole constant for each body it has inhabited. Regardless of where the soul goes after the body dies, the fact

⁴⁰ The Doctor’s regenerations are thus an interesting inversion of the Buddhist concept of reincarnation; instead of the soul traveling from body-to-body, the soul stays in one place as the body changes.

remains that each of Campbell's mythologies attributes such a soul to everyone, allowing a piece of each person to live on long after the corporeal form has returned to the dust from which it came.

The Spirit of the Matter: Christianity's Immortal Soul

In the Christian religion, the soul is an integral part of the human self. The soul is actually what separates mankind from the beasts in this tradition, for both have physical bodies and thinking minds, but man is the only one to have an immortal soul, or the image of God. When man is first created in the book of Genesis, Scripture describes the process as God forming the body out of the dust of the ground and then physically breathing his own air into the man's lungs, at which point "man became a living *soul*" (Gen. 2:7, emphasis added). Animals are created at God's spoken command and let roam free without even physical contact from God, but the first man is physically formed by the deity and breathed into so that he has an eternal soul. This soul contains the person's memories, emotions, and experiences, everything that makes an individual uniquely human and not merely another animal. Christians believe that the soul is immortal, able to live on after death: "Then shall the dust [human body] return to the earth as it was, and the [soul] shall return unto the God who made it" (Ecc. 12:7). Furthermore, these souls are completely recognizable as the persons they were when alive, even when the physical body is absent. In 1 Samuel 28: 8-17, the spirit of the prophet Samuel is recognizable as himself and he retains his memories from when he was alive (KJV). When Moses and Elijah appear with Christ during his transfiguration, the apostles Peter, James, and John all recognize them, even despite having never met them in person (Matt. 17: 3-4). This soul is also what allows the body to be resurrected as the same person. When Lazarus dies and is brought back to life by Christ, he is the same man he was before he died (John 11:1-44). If the body had been the only thing that made

Lazarus human, then his death would have completely killed Lazarus the person. The resurrection would have of necessity created a new Lazarus, since the old one ceased to exist the moment his heart stopped beating. But because of his human soul continuing to exist after he died, Lazarus returns as himself, knowable and recognizable. At resurrection, his body is reanimated and the soul recalled to its dwelling. Christ himself, when he resurrects from the dead after three days in the tomb, is recognized for who he is by his disciples and other followers (Matt. 28). For these reasons, every human being in the Christian worldview has an eternal soul, an essence outside of the flesh and blood body that persists in some recognizable form even when the body itself is gone.

More to Humans than Meets the Eye: Finding the Soul in *Doctor Who*

The Doctor should be no stranger to the concept of some kind of soul, since he frequently encounters aspects of it throughout his journey. Although the show never acknowledges a divinely-given or God-breathed soul, it cannot be denied that the characters in this universe all contain the human quality that sets each individual apart—a center of memory, emotion, and personality traits that can continue in some form after the body itself has died. The Doctor himself contains this soul-quality, as evidenced by his multiple regenerations. Throughout his journeys, he has died thirteen times⁴¹ and each time has regenerated into a different body with new personality traits.⁴² In all of these changes, however, he still remains the same person. He retains the memories of all of his past selves,⁴³ exhibits some consistent character traits,⁴⁴ and

⁴¹ Even though the current actor, Peter Capaldi, is known as the Twelfth Doctor when he should be the Fourteenth. See footnote in Chapter One for chronology consistency.

⁴² With the exception of his twelfth body (canonically part of the Tenth Doctor's incarnation), which kept the same face and personality as David Tennant's Tenth Doctor. See "Journey's End" (2008).

⁴³ See "The Christmas Invasion" (2005), "The Day of the Doctor" (2013), and "Deep Breath" (2014).

⁴⁴ His love for learning, the "ice and fire and rage" in the face of evil or injustice ("Family of Blood"), his passion for humanity, his strong sense of justice, etc.

never denies that his past selves are all part of one whole: the Doctor.⁴⁵ Furthermore, he is recognizable as himself even when the body changes; each incarnation can recognize the others as being parts of the whole, and when non-Time Lords meet other “Doctors” different from the one they know, they can see and understand that all of those incarnations are still the same person (“Day of the Doctor”). From body to body, he remains the same person because of the soul inside him that transfers from one incarnation to the next.⁴⁶ As with Lazarus, were it not for the incorporeal core inside of him that could survive the death of the body, the Doctor would continuously become a completely new person every time he died, and his name would become more of a James Bond kind of title passed from individual to individual instead of uniting all the facets of one man together.

This idea of the soul extends itself into the people the Doctor meets throughout his wanderings across the universe. As Bonnie Green and Christopher Wilmott note, for the denizens of the worlds of *Doctor Who*, it takes more than a physical body to make something human; there is a kind of “soul-quality” that makes an individual a person (104-5), and both the Doctor and his enemies make this discovery quite frequently. In “The Voyage of the Damned,”

⁴⁵ With the exception of the War Doctor—until “Day of the Doctor,” the incarnations past the Eighth suppressed the memories of him and refused to acknowledge his existence because of what he supposedly did to end the Time War. By the end of that episode, however, his personality and memories have been reintegrated into the mind of the Eleventh Doctor, and the War Doctor is now recognized as a full regeneration of the Doctor (2013).

⁴⁶ Some may say that in *Doctor Who*, the memory is what constitutes the “human quality” that separates the individual from crowd and the person from the animal, but I disagree. When the Doctor temporarily becomes human and gives up his memories in “Human Nature/The Family of Blood,” he still retains the core that makes him the person he is—he shows the same bravery in the face of danger, the same desire to protect those around him, the same commitment to non-violence despite the WWI-era culture around him, and he makes the ultimate sacrifice in the same way he would have if he still had his Time Lord DNA: he gives his own life to save those around him (2007). Furthermore, the Daleks, an ultimate hive mind that scorns individuality and that most would call decidedly non-human, retain memories, as evidenced by the Dalek’s instant reaction to try to exterminate the Doctor when confronted with him in “Dalek” (2005). Very few, if any, would argue that Daleks have a soul, and they certainly do not have the individuality associated with humanity. Therefore, I conclude that even in this non-theistic show, something beyond the memory has to contribute to what makes something “human” in the broadest sense of the term.

when Astrid Peth sacrifices herself to save the Doctor, the Time Lord tries to save her life by using the spaceship *Titanic*'s computer system to reassemble her molecular structure, which is suspended in stasis in her teleportation bracelet. He manages to bring back a ghostly version of her, an image of a spirit floating in mid-air, for as his friend Mr. Copper points out, Astrid's physical body is already gone (2007). However, for those brief moments where she exists as a ghostly presence, she is still Astrid. She speaks to the Doctor in a recognizable voice, remembers that she was "falling" to her death, and asks to be released so that she can stop falling. The Doctor kisses her and releases the stasis system, allowing her spirit to carry itself to the stars, where a part of Astrid will live on forever (2007). In "Rise of the Cybermen/The Age of Steel" and "Army of Ghosts/Doomsday," the Cybermen kill every human they come into contact with, strip the brain of emotions and memory, and put the brain into a new cybernetic body that is supposed to be the ultimate in human evolution, for it can feel no pain or emotion and it cannot die.⁴⁷ In a similar manner, the Daleks, whenever they do not just kill their victims outright, transform them into either full Daleks themselves ("Asylum of the Daleks") or slaves with Dalek appendages and no wills of their own ("The Time of the Doctor"). However, there is a very human part, the soul, which survives beyond the metal villains' attempts to force mankind to conform. In "The Age of Steel," the Doctor comes across a damaged and dying Cyberman who now recollects the human part of itself. Before being upgraded into a Cyberman, it was Sally Phelan, a young woman about get married. She feels the pain of being upgraded, remembers her life before, and asks where her fiancé is (2006). Similarly, in "Doomsday," when the Cybermen upgrade Torchwood Director Yvonne Hartman, she manages to override the cybernetic

⁴⁷ Except, of course when the Daleks attack ("Doomsday") or when huge disintegrator guns are involved ("Nightmare in Silver") or in really big explosions ("The Age of Steel"). Or whenever the Doctor shows up, really. In other words, not that immortal.

programming and revert to her very human and patriotic identity, mowing down Cybermen while repeating over and over, “I did my duty for Queen and Country” (2006). The assimilated Daleks exhibit similar traits at times; in “Asylum of the Daleks,” Oswin, despite having been turned into a Dalek without realizing it, retains all of her memories, personality traits, and penchant for soufflés. When she does realize that she is now a Dalek, she holds onto her humanity—despite the death of her body and the programming implanted in her brain, she stays Oswin and turns on the Daleks to help the Eleventh Doctor, telling him as he leaves, “I am Oswin Oswald. I fought the Daleks and I am *human*” (2012, emphasis added). When Tasha Lem, Priestess of the Mainframe, is taken over by her Dalek slave programming, the Eleventh Doctor reawakens the human soul inside the dead and harvested body by mocking her the way he always did. Tasha automatically responds by slapping him, and then fully regains control of herself and helps the Doctor and Clara escape by fighting off the Daleks. She has to continuously struggle with her new programming, but the soul part of her keeps her memories and personality alive, allowing her to be Tasha Lem, not a Dalek slave, for the rest of her existence (2013). There is something unique about every one of these people, something beyond their memories and their corporeal forms that makes them individuals and keeps them human, and that is the soul that lives on even after death.

Conclusion

Layton notes that “[t]he Doctor's own personal history corresponds to parts of Joseph Campbell's monomyth” (100), and he is quite right. It cannot be denied that the Doctor can be very heroic, and that many times, he functions as a hero when his stories conform to monomythic patterns. Beyond the overall concept of the monomyth, however, it becomes clear that the Doctor's part in the monomyth more closely parallels that of the Christian religion, which holds

a unique part in Campbell's work because its hero is both God and man, both supernatural and of the natural realm. In a similar manner, the Doctor walks the line between both worlds, and so it is quite natural that many precepts of Christian ideology can be found within his stories. Despite these similarities, however, they remain the exception, not the rule. While parts of his journey may mimic the monomyth through the Christian worldview, far more elements fall under a more humanistic worldview, thus taking him away from the hero's path into a darker realm.

CHAPTER THREE: ALL THAT COUNTS IS HERE AND NOW, AND THIS IS ME!

“An ordinary man: that’s the most important thing in all of creation!” –The Ninth Doctor in

“Father’s Day” (2005)

Introduction: A Monomyth Subverted

Although it is undeniable that the Doctor often fulfills the role of the traditional hero in a monomythic setting, a more recent trend in modern *Doctor Who* has directed its protagonist into a journey that subverts the traditional hero’s journey. This trend is Secular Humanism, an ideology that is unfamiliar to the mythological systems of Campbell’s monomyth. This particular worldview’s core principles are directly opposite to those of monomythic religions in general, and Christianity in particular. While traditional heroic stories usually involve one primary extraordinary hero who by virtue of his superior characteristics is alone burdened with completing a task or tasks, the Humanist hero is the ordinary individual who saves the world or finishes the journey at hand because of his or her ordinary humanness.⁴⁸ The Secular Humanist hero will also find right and wrong within him or herself instead of through an external moral regulator, travel through a world in which the supernatural can be naturally explained through scientific measures, understand that there is no soul or afterlife and that the here and now is all there is, and reject the idea of faith and belief in anyone outside of the individual. As these traits are the polar opposites of the patterns found in the religions of the monomyth, it should be no surprise that any story espousing this idea subverts rather than adheres to the idea of a universal hero’s journey as described by Campbell.

⁴⁸ Humanism places a great deal of weight and emphasis on the strength and capability of each individual human (“The Minimum Statement on Humanism”). As a result, anyone in this system can complete the task, whether they are the designated hero, a companion, or a random redshirt extra.

Modern *Doctor Who* frequently takes a path that meanders away from the traditional hero's journey, and it primarily does so in areas wherein the show reflects Secular Humanist thought. Layton says, "Though the term 'secular humanism' never appears in *Doctor Who*, the show provides multiple case studies for defining, revealing, and testing secular humanist ideas. Many episodes expressly raise philosophical and ethical principles related to secular humanism, and usually the show will promote the secular humanist interpretations of the ideas" (43). It may not be explicitly stated, but the ideology is there. This worldview manifests itself because Humanism is one of the rapidly growing ideological structures in the modern world, and many of the writers and directors for the show personally adhere to this particular view. In the modern world, Humanist ideology is quickly gaining followers in the general population; the British Humanist Association's website notes that in the 2011 United Kingdom census, thirty-nine percent of individuals identified themselves as irreligious, while in 2014, another major survey reported that the percentage of the population that describes itself as areligious rose by almost 20 percent in the past thirty years (2015). A further personal beliefs survey, conducted by independent research firm IPSOS Mori, reveals the connection between the areligious trend and humanism, by also indicating that this trend extends into the tenets of faith and belief, not just religious affiliation:

36% of people – equivalent to around 17 million adults [in the United Kingdom]—are in fact humanist in their basic outlook. Another question found that 41% endorsed the strong statement: 'This life is the only life we have and death is the end of our personal existence'. 62% chose 'Human nature by itself gives us an understanding of what is right and wrong', against 27% who said 'People need religious teachings in order to understand what is right and wrong'.

(“Humanist Beliefs”)

The 2011 United Kingdom Census, run just a few years later than the aforementioned beliefs survey, revealed similar belief trends, with twenty-five percent of the population saying that they are irreligious, up ten percent from 2001, with the percentage of self-identified Christians down by thirteen percent, at only fifty-nine percent of the population (“Census Shows Rise in Foreign Born”). Despite the fact that Christianity is still a dominating religion in the world,⁴⁹ Secular Humanism is rapidly gaining a foothold in Western culture overall, and is thus quickly becoming one of the dominant ideologies of the modern world.

Since this worldview permeates the culture around modern *Doctor Who*, then, it should be no surprise that many of the people associated with the show follow the tenets of Secular Humanism, and by doing so, express those ideas in the stories of the Doctor’s travels. Russell T. Davies and Steven Moffat, the previous and current showrunners, respectively, are both self-confessed atheists, and both of them determinedly write their viewpoints into the show. Liam Whitton writes in his article “*Doctor Who*: Fifty Years of Humanism” that *Doctor Who* is “one of the most humanist television shows of all time,” and that Davies and Moffat have never been shy about expressing their worldview through their writing in the show (2013). Davies began the trend of blatantly working his point of view into the show when he revived it in 2005. In an interview with *The Boston Phoenix* in 2009, Davies says quite frankly that, “The only way I can write—whether that’s good or bad—is to put my worldview in everything” (qtd. in “The Freedom from Religion Foundation”). As a result, the episodes he wrote for his time on the show tend to mirror Davies’ own beliefs and ideologies.

When Moffat took over the show in 2010, he continued those themes in a much more

⁴⁹ See Chapter II.

pronounced way.⁵⁰ Robert Shearman, a writer for the show, notes that Davies took the show in a darker direction that challenges the Doctor's right to be a hero, and that when Moffat took over, he had to follow through on those themes, because of both his worldview and because it was the logical progression for the show ("Personal Interview"). In Moffat's *Doctor Who*, religion of any form becomes a much more negative concept than it was in earlier conceptions of the show, and the Humanist ideological standards become more blatant and pronounced. As a result of all of these traits, the modern era of the show tends to reflect Secular Humanist ideals, much as it does with Christianity, and in so doing, the hero's path of the Doctor takes a much darker turn.

The Potential of Humanity: The Human as Hero in *Doctor Who*

Heroism for the Secular Humanist

Humanism is by its very definition mankind-centric. According to H. J. Blackham, "Humanism, then, is a concept of man" (35). The American Humanist Association builds upon this definition by explaining that Humanism "derives the goals of life from human need and interest," "is an approach to life based on reason and our common humanity, recognizing that moral values are properly founded on human nature and experience alone," and "affirms our ability and responsibility to lead meaningful, ethical lives capable of adding to the greater good of humanity" (2015). As a result, the fact that a Humanist hero is man-centered and based quite heavily on the normal human experience is not a shocking or surprising one. This kind of hero focuses on the potential of humanity and of the capabilities of the ordinary, in a pattern that is consistent with the Humanist worldview.

⁵⁰ Davies ends up being far kinder to religion, however, which may be why there are more blatant references to Christ-figures and other tenets of Christianity during his tenure as showrunner. Cohen argues that based on Davies' previous works that incorporate religious references, he understands the importance of religious traditions in peoples' lives, and so he does not see it as a fatal flaw ("Religion and *Doctor Who*") in the same way that Moffat does.

A hero of this nature must needs subvert the traditional monomythic heroic pattern as laid out by Campbell, because the mythological characteristics of the protagonist of such tales do not align with Humanist precepts. Although both the monomythic hero and the Humanist one tend to be normal people at the starting point of the journey, the similarities begin to split once the hero has begun the journey. The ultimate goal of the monomythic journey, as defined by Campbell, is to bring together the two worlds, natural and supernatural. The merging can occur through knowledge, as with the revelations of the Buddha (33), or it can be an actual physical connection, as when Prometheus connected the Greek gods to mankind by stealing fire (34). The other side of this path, however, keeps the hero's journey firmly within the world of the tangible, with no supernatural world to access. This contrast is particularly clear when comparing the latter heroic type with the savior figure of Christianity. The hero-figure of that religion, Christ, holds a connection to both the world of the supernatural and the normal human realm; as the god-man, he can walk the line between both and venture into either. In this worldview system, mankind needs something of the supernatural to save it, as it cannot be rescued on its own. In Humanism, however, there is no supernatural realm, and so there can be no true hero who walks both paths—there is no need to unite the physical world with the supernatural, and so the hero tends to be quite firmly of the natural realm. Mankind is capable of saving itself because it *has* to do so—there will be no help from outside, nor is any such assistance needed.⁵¹ When the supernatural other world does not exist, the traditional hero becomes one whose goal is not to merge the two realms, but rather benefit humanity in the one universe it is given. This hero is purely human, or

⁵¹ Which in itself raises an interesting contradiction—if mankind does not need anyone outside of itself to save it, then why does anyone need a hero at all? Shearman says that the heroes should not be the ones who meddle in time and save others; rather, the heroes should be the ones who keep to themselves and trust that everyone else can do their own rescuing (“Personal Interview”), which seems to be the logical implication of this worldview. Despite that, however, heroes with humanist ideology still continue to exist.

at least obsessed with the concept of humanity itself, and follows a path based on that pattern, rather than seeking a universal goal outside of mankind.

Furthermore, the Humanist hero differs from the monomythic one in that even though the latter may have flaws, he or she will remain incorruptible and still triumphantly overcome them in the course of the journey;⁵² the Humanist hero, conversely, tends to be deeply flawed and lean more towards the realm of the corruptible and nearly anti-heroic. In the monomyth, the pure nature of the hero is an intrinsic and necessary part of the story. For Christians in particular, the hero must be incorruptible because it gives humanity something to aspire to; Christ-as-hero is perfect, even when he is tempted by Satan in the desert, and he can complete his journey as a paragon of virtue. It is particularly important for Christ, because the completion of his task—the sacrifice of himself for the sins of the world—necessitates his purity. The Humanist hero, however, is frequently hindered by his flaws, and may even give into them in the end, because humanity is a flawed species in which perfection is not possible. According to Scott LaBarge at the University of Santa Clara, these kinds of broken and realistic heroes are necessary in the modern world because it is the only cure for modern cynicism—we as a society can no longer handle idealism because it always fails, and so we need to see the brokenness that makes heroes just as human as we are (“Heroism: Why Heroes are Important”). Khoren Arisian in “Ethics and the Humanist Imagination” points out that “[m]an is imperfect and fallible by definition,” so it would be ridiculous to try to portray a human as anything but flawed, because “[o]nly a god has no problems, and man gets into no greater difficulty than when he tries to act—or to not act—as if he were a god rather than a human being” (171). A traditional hero is often elevated to a

⁵² In the original *Star Wars* trilogy, for example, Luke Skywalker experiences a brief flirtation with the Dark Side in *The Return of the Jedi* as the evil Emperor tempts him with unlimited power and the ability to save his friends. However, the audience does not expect Luke to accept the offer, and indeed, he does not. Instead, he rises above the temptation and stands victorious, his virtue intact and shining as bright as the glowing lightsaber in his hand.

godlike status, particularly in regards to Christianity's main hero, and so these heroes would fail to be realistic by Humanist standards. Thus, the Humanist hero may overcome his or her failings, like Sherlock Holmes in the BBC show *Sherlock*⁵³; or, he or she may succumb to these flaws and descend into tragedy, like Walter White in AMC's *Breaking Bad*⁵⁴. These situations arise because of the outlook that mankind is broken and that idealism no longer works; flawed heroes may thus overcome their failings as some real people do, but they may also fail utterly, because not everyone can move past their shortcomings.

While the monomythic hero is unique and is chosen to undertake the heroic path because of his or her specialness, the Humanist hero tends to rely on others and to be heroic as a result of natural human ordinariness. In the Christian tradition, Christ is a special and different hero because he transcends humanity; as both god and man, he is fully God but also completely human, someone powerful and unique who is capable of saving the world because he is different. Even though he has disciples who travel with him, he is not dependent on them for help—they are there to learn from him and follow his example. For Humanism, though, such a hero is unthinkable. Blackham notes that one of the key elements of the Humanist ideology is giving “moral equivalence to all men as human beings” (36). Every individual is on a level playing-field; each person has the same capabilities and capacities for furthering the happiness and safety of humanity as every other human being. As a result, anyone has the capability to be a hero, and no one is more qualified to carry out heroic tasks than anyone else. What gives one the capability to do great things is the fact that one is human. Furthermore, the Humanistic hero will rarely work alone; *The Humanist Manifesto II* declares that one of the most important attributes of

⁵³ Sherlock is a self-described “high functioning sociopath” (“A Study in Pink”) whose shortcomings are numerous, but he still manages to rise above them to save the day—albeit not always for altruistic purposes.

⁵⁴ Walter White begins as a school teacher dying of cancer who starts making and selling methamphetamines to help pay for his treatment; he begins with good reasons as he genuinely wants to provide for his family, but his natural anger and pride eventually lead him too far into darkness.

Humanism is that all will work together for the common good (americanhumanist.org). No one can stand alone to save the world; humanity must band together to enact change and be heroic together.

An Ordinary Man: The Humanist Heroic and the Doctor

The Doctor fulfills the role of the Humanistic hero in that his adventures tend to remain within the realm of the material and quantifiable, the Doctor himself is deeply flawed and sometimes unable to overcome his failings, and because he is frequently relegated to the role of unnecessary supernatural aid as ordinary humans—whether companions or other citizens of everyday life—must take over his role and step in to save the day. Although the Doctor, as an alien and practically immortal Time Lord, maintains a connection to the world of the supernatural, that element can be seen as a connection instead to a scientific world not yet understood by humans. He also tends to ground himself firmly in the natural realm. His time-traveling powers arise not from a birthright or a boon, but because he chose to steal a spaceship and flee his homeworld (“The Name of the Doctor”). The seeming immortality granted to him by means of regeneration will not last forever; Time Lords are given twelve regenerations—thirteen bodies—after which, they expire (“The Time of the Doctor”). Although he is granted extra regenerations when his last one runs out, it is clearly established that despite the reprieves he may receive, he will not live forever and must also succumb to mortality (“The Name of the Doctor,” “The Time of the Doctor”). The Doctor himself takes pains to establish himself as part of the natural world, whether it be by vehemently denying any connection to the supernatural (“The End of the World”)⁵⁵ or through emphatically referencing himself as a traveler or a wanderer when others try to make him special (“Voyage of the Damned”). He also displays a

⁵⁵ The Ninth Doctor tells the visitors to Satellite One, “Don’t worship me. I’d make a very bad god.”

longing for the normal humanness of the people around him, as if he wishes to separate himself from anything that sets him apart from people (“Father’s Day,” “The Impossible Planet,” “Human Nature/The Family of Blood,” etc.). The Doctor may have traces about him that seem to others to be supernatural, but he does his best to establish himself in the natural and quite human world.

He also separates supernatural from reality in his adventures, as almost every seemingly mythical or strange circumstance is ultimately revealed to have a rational explanation. David Rafer points out the Doctor’s subversion of a traditional heroic pattern:

. . . the ‘scientific’ rationalist Doctor continually seeks out the irrational and the disordered and then imposes order and brings about resolution and the return to harmony. He frames mythical and monstrous opponents within a scientifically oriented worldview, providing pseudo-scientific rationalisations for the fantastic, the irrational, and the preternatural. The Doctor is thus positioned as the scientist-hero and generally imposes a logical worldview upon myth and the fantastic.

(126)

The Doctor’s job in each of his adventures is not to understand and explore the supernatural realm, but to explain how the seemingly supernatural is actually rational and easily explainable by science. In “The Unquiet Dead,” Victorian Cardiff is haunted by what appears to be ghosts who are animating the corpses of the dead. In the midst of the panic, however, the Ninth Doctor arrives to explain that the ghost-zombies are actually just gaseous alien creatures called the Gelth, who inhabit the bodies of the dead in order to gain corporeal form (2005). Although these threats hold the tinge of the supernatural, they are still considered to be scientifically rational by the standards of a universe of aliens. Similarly, the Eleventh Doctor shows the inhabitants of an

alien world that their planet is not threatened by a vengeful god known as Grandfather, but is rather being attacked by an alien parasite that devours memories and experiences (“The Rings of Akhaten”). In each circumstance, the Doctor instantly recognizes that the seemingly-supernatural occurrences must have a natural explanation, and because he never for an instant believes that whatever is happening cannot be explained by science—unlike the terrified Victorians, aliens, and so on—he ends up being the only one who can solve the problem and figure out what is happening around him.

The Doctor’s deeply flawed nature also contributes to his portrayal as a Humanist hero. His key flaws throughout his modern incarnations are his arrogance and his failure to show mercy, and he frequently fails to transcend these shortcomings. The Ninth Doctor is frequently dismissive of others because of his pride, and it almost leads to disaster on multiple occasions. When he calls Rose (and by association, other humans) “just another stupid ape” in “Father’s Day,” he antagonizes her to the point where they separate. Without his guidance, Rose gets further involved in the complex set of paradoxes she has already created, and the world is nearly destroyed by the time-mending Reapers (2005). The Tenth Doctor refers to Adelaide and her crew as “the little people” in “Waters of Mars,” showcasing the arrogance that led him to ignore a fixed point in time, an event that cannot be changed according to the laws of time. He does not work past this arrogance in time, and Adelaide herself must intervene to solve the problem and save the world (2009). The lack of compassion is also a nearly devastating flaw; although the Ninth Doctor suffers no consequences when he strands failed companion Adam in the twentieth century with a dangerous two-hundredth century device implanted in his head (“The Long Game”), other situations are not nearly so cleanly ignored. In “Human Nature”/“The Family of Blood,” the Tenth Doctor draws dangerously close to the side of anti-heroism in the way he

treats the titular family. He traps Sister-of-Mine in every mirror on every world, freezes Brother-of-Mine in time and condemns him to life inside a scarecrow in a field, chains Father-of-Mine inside a pit, and eternally imprisons Mother-of-Mine in a forever-collapsing galaxy (2007). The punishments he metes out to this family are beyond any he imposes on any other enemy he encounters, even though he spares their lives; according to Jason Wardley's argument, mercy does not just mean refraining from killing someone—it means not condemning them, and the Doctor fails this test (43). The outpouring of his wrath and fury are terrible to behold, revealing a darkness within him that may yet be his fatal flaw. His inability to overcome these shortcomings in his character marks him as a more modern and Humanistic hero than his monomythic counterparts.

Perhaps the most telling intrusion of Humanism into the character of the hero for *Doctor Who* comes from the fact that in many cases, the Doctor himself fails his quest and it is ordinary humans who must step in to do what he cannot. The entirety of the Ninth Doctor's series heavily punctuates this idea; from the very first episode, the dénouement of each story involves a normal person taking up the role of the hero to save the day. In "Rose," the titular blonde has to swing across a chasm on a chain to rescue the Doctor when he is taken prisoner by the Nestence Consciousness; in "The Long Game," the journalist Cathica saves the Doctor, Rose, and the entirety of Satellite Five after the Doctor is imprisoned by The Editor; and in the final episode of the year, "The Parting of the Ways," Rose must absorb the time vortex to keep the Daleks from destroying the universe after they surround the Doctor, thus allowing to him to succeed in one heroic task only after many others have saved the world for him⁵⁶ (2005). The pattern continues

⁵⁶ Charles Dickens saves the Doctor when he is literally behind bars in "The Unquiet Dead" (2005), Mickey saves the world when the Doctor is trapped in 10 Downing Street ("World War Three"), etc. Series One has quite the blatant pattern of the Doctor being taken prisoner and having to be rescued by someone else.

throughout *New Doctor Who*, as each Doctor frequently fails and must be rescued by his companions or by the other regular people he encounters on his journeys, from the Tenth Doctor being saved by Donna Noble in “The Runaway Bride” (2006)⁵⁷ to the Eleventh Doctor being resurrected from the dead by his companion Amy Pond when she recreates the universe (“The Big Bang”).⁵⁸ The Doctor himself is not enough to save the world; as a partial member of the supernatural realm, humanity must often save itself because the Doctor is not strong enough to do so.

The Answers to Moral Questions Are in Ourselves: Humanism and Moral Regulation

Unlike every religious school of thought, all of which posit that some higher power or external force regulates humanity’s conscience and what is good and evil, Humanism firmly believes that there is no objective right and wrong, and that each individual must determine within him or herself what constitutes morality. According to the International Humanist and Ethical Union’s website, “The answers to moral questions are here in the world, in ourselves, others, and our relationships, not in the mystical beyond” (“Aspects of Humanism”). Noted Humanist philosopher and writer Paul Kurtz agrees with this assessment, noting that “Humanists have some confidence in man and they believe that the only bases for morality are human experience and human need” (“Humanism and the Moral Revolution” 49). Fred Edwards of the American Humanist Association writes that morality comes from the individual, and the fact that many people share the same morality is not a flaw in the belief system, since people frequently have common goals,⁵⁹ and so it is unsurprising that various groups will have the same concept of morality (“The Human Basis of Laws and Ethics”). Ronald A. Lindsay, a writer for the Council

⁵⁷ When the Doctor drowns the Racnoss Queen and her eggs, his anger and vengeance run so deep that he nearly ends up drowning with them as he stays to watch the flood. Donna has to remind him to leave.

⁵⁸ By just thinking it into existence. Power of the human mind.

⁵⁹ Such as survival, reproduction, etc.

for Secular Humanism, says that although humanity has some rules that it needs to function as a society—such as do not kill, because it harms the well-being of others—morality itself is a subjective concept⁶⁰ that cannot be determined by an external force, be it a god, lawmakers, or society itself (“How Morality Has the Objectivity that Matters—Without God”). Morality then becomes a choice determined by the individual, based upon that person’s ideology and experience in the world. There is no higher power that orders the universe or designates a moral code; rather, each person must decide for him or herself what is right and wrong, and what action to take based on that assessment.

This concept of subjective morality causes a divergence from the monomythic path. Hence, for the Humanist hero, if he or she no does not have any external guidance to look to when faced with a critical decision or life-changing circumstance, and if there is no objective morality, then there is nothing that mankind actually needs saving *from*. Many laws thus become mutable, which means that the hero can deviate from the original path, based on whatever choice the hero deems to be “most right” for him or herself at that particular moment in time—a decision that might be helpful to that person, but might also cause harm to others.⁶¹ If there is no objective standard, then there is no one to keep the hero from stepping outside the bounds of what would be seen in monomythic tales as his or her appropriate place in the setting. In this situation, the hero can then take on the role of his or her own deity, to the point where the protagonist tries to exert dominance over people or situations he or she has no business trying to control. At this point, the hero can then become the villain by attempting to exert his or her own

⁶⁰ He is careful to explain that by “subjective,” he does not mean chosen by personal preference, but rather that people make decisions about morality based on their experiences and observations of the world, so that subjective morality is rationally chosen, not a nihilistic or hedonistic “anything goes” attitude.

⁶¹ *Star Trek*’s Spock often says, “The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, or the one.” Such a philosophy exemplifies the issue at hand with Humanism’s lack of external transcendent morality. Spock may do what he believes is right to save others at the time, but is he doing the right thing objectively? Is it really the best decision?

standards of morality on others, a situation that would be abhorrent to Humanist ideology (*The Humanist Manifesto II*). A Humanist hero, then, cannot bring knowledge of a transcendent, overarching moral code to others, like many heroes in the monomyth do,⁶² but instead must keep his or her ideas of morality personal.

This particular issue causes a further subversion of the monomythic path because a traditional hero can only fight battles and defeat monsters if an objective standard exists by which the hero is right to engage in combat, and if the monsters truly exist as monsters; therefore, without that moral code, the hero can have no standard by which to judge who is human and who is monstrous. Hercules does not commit murder when he kills the hydra only if that creature is un-subjectively evil and monstrous; Link from the *Legend of Zelda* games is vindicated in fighting Ganondorf only if that king poses an objective threat. When these particular concepts of morality are removed from the equation, then there is nothing left for the hero to save the world from without committing some crime or harming something just because it is different. Indeed, there is very little place for the heroic battles of *The Iliad* or the warrior-quests of *Beowulf* in Humanist ideology; rather, its worldview advocates for a transcendent understanding of others and a banding together of every human being for a common cause, without the use of any violent means whatsoever (*The Humanist Manifesto II*). While such a goal is admirable, it leaves no place for a traditionally heroic figure who can save the world, because there is nothing to rescue humanity as a whole from, save for the occasional mad dictator threatening to wipe out everyone, thus threatening the safety and lives of the greater community. Without objective morality, the Humanist hero must forge his or her own path, seeking out knowledge whilst desperately trying to not offend anyone or impose external standards of

⁶² Christ, Muhammed, the Buddha, heroes of Greek mythology, etc.

morality anywhere he or she goes.

Humanist Morality and the Doctor

The universe of *Doctor Who* tends to accept the Humanistic concept of morality, and the Doctor himself is a frequent proponent of that ideal. Each individual must decide what is right for him or herself based on the society and culture in which one lives. In “The Planet of the Ood,” the Tenth Doctor tells companion Donna Noble that she cannot apply her twenty-first century standards of morality to the future culture they are currently visiting—the Ood choose to serve humans, so Donna has no right to try to free them from slavery (2009).⁶³ In a similar manner, when the Eleventh Doctor discovers that the future United Kingdom colony survives by commanding an enslaved space whale, he chooses to erase his knowledge of the situation; because that is how the colony as a whole had chosen to survive, the people aboard are the only ones who can choose to set the whale free—the Doctor can have no say in it because it is not his choice to make (“The Beast Below”). There can be no transcendent objective standards of what is good in this universe because there is no external force to determine right—instead, humanity must look within itself to decide what is right and good for it as it evolves.

This concept extends beyond determining what it is good into explaining the lack of objective wrong. In “Dalek,” the Ninth Doctor tells Henry van Statten that the Dalek kills people because that is what it is genetically programmed to do, and it is doing what it genuinely believes to be “good.” As a result, the Dalek is actually better than van Statten, because it is following its own moral code (2005). By exterminating everything that is not of its own kind, the Dalek believes that it is purifying the universe and cleansing mankind, thereby doing the greatest good

⁶³ An interesting question to ponder, however, is if the Doctor would still object to Donna’s interference if the slaves were human instead of monstrous-looking aliens. Writer Paul Cornell remarks in *The Doctor’s Monsters: Meanings of the Monstrous in Doctor Who* that the Doctor’s concerns often seem to limit themselves to the human or at least human-appearing, and that he seems to have fewer qualms with opposing the “monstrous ‘other’” (qtd. in Sleight).

for the universe. Robert Shearman, the author of the episode agrees, saying that within the perspective of the show, the Dalek cannot be perceived as evil because there is no such thing as “true evil”; the Dalek does what it believes to be right, and as a result, it cannot be objectively wrong (Personal Interview).⁶⁴ Courtland Lewis extends this distinction to the Cybermen as well, pointing out that they too are only doing what they think is right and what would be good for the whole of humanity:

Cybermen believe that they’re a superior race, and that their way of life is superior to that of humans because they’ve achieved what all humans strive for: a life free from pain and death . . . Their conquests, then, should not be viewed as mere killing sprees, but as altruistic campaigns to grant weaker beings what they’ve long wished for—a pain-free, immortal existence . . . Like doctors, Cybermen are altruistic in the sense that they really believe they’re helping an inferior species gain a better life by removing the pain and death that the human species itself strives to be rid of. (203-4)

The Cybermen are not evil when they try to upgrade all of humanity; they are doing what they believe is right and good for mankind, which is to free each person’s mind from its mortal form and make it a perfect, immortal being. Because these beings are honestly and genuinely doing what they think is right, they cannot be considered evil. Their actions are in keeping with their own standards of morality, standards they determine for themselves without the presence of a

⁶⁴ Shearman also points out that this view is an interesting change from the one proposed in Classic *Doctor Who*. In the Fourth Doctor episode “The Pyramids of Mars,” the Doctor calls the villainous Sutekh evil, to which Sutekh replies “Evil? Your evil is my good” (1975). Shearman and I discussed the idea that in “Pyramids of Mars,” the viewer is not supposed to accept Sutekh’s statement as true or as justification for his actions—just because he believes creating chaos is good for him does not make it right—and the viewer is supposed to side with the Doctor’s assessment of the Osiran as pure evil. However, in modern *Doctor Who*, the viewer is supposed to question whether the Doctor is right whenever he calls something evil, and Shearman says that he definitely is not justified (“Personal Interview”).

moral force to create a universal code of what is evil.

The negative ramifications of the lack of objective morality from an external regulator are major for the Doctor's heroic journey. For the Doctor to save Earth, any other world, or even any person or group of people on his journey, he must have an objective reason to do so. In "The Rise of the Cybermen"/"The Age of Steel," the Tenth Doctor cannot be justified in killing the Cyber-Controller and destroying the Cybermen army if the latter's actions cannot be described as objectively wrong. The Cybermen and their attempts to upgrade the human race cannot themselves be considered wrong—the only part of this scenario that could possibly be seen as objectively wrong is that they force people to upgrade without giving them a choice. Lewis agrees with this assessment, noting that if people were allowed to choose to become Cybermen, then there would be absolutely no problem with the upgrade system (204). Shearman notes that like the Daleks, the Cybermen themselves are not evil and neither are their motivations; the Doctor can stop them from forcibly upgrading others, but he cannot destroy them for doing what they believe to be right ("Personal Interview"). As a result, the Doctor is wrong in calling the Cybermen and their process evil. Many of his other adventures also involve objective standards of right and wrong, such as the Eleventh Doctor's interference in the justice system in "A Town Called Mercy." His actions to save an alien war criminal from execution cannot be seen as heroic in this ideological system because he is interfering with the legal system that another culture has determined to be good (2012). If there is no transcendent objective right and wrong, then the Doctor's actions throughout the show, whenever he meddles with another culture or alien race, cannot be seen as heroic, and he fails to be a traditional monomythic hero. When he acts as the Humanist hero and does not interfere with the morality of other cultures, as when he chooses to send Margaret Slitheen back to her homeworld to be executed as her people's legal system

decrees (“Boom Town”), his actions are again decidedly not those of the traditional hero, showing that he cannot hold to a world of subjective right and wrong and still follow the monomythic path.

**This Life Is All There Is: *Doctor Who* and Humanism’s Perspective on the Afterlife
Humanism and the Finite Nature of Life**

Because Humanism completely rejects the idea of the supernatural,⁶⁵ it is unsurprising that they also reject the ideas of an afterlife and an immortal soul. In regards to an afterlife, the *Humanist Manifesto II* states that “Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful . . . There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body” (1973). For the Humanist, this life is all that there is, and once the heart ceases to beat, then the individual ceases to exist. Noted Humanist philosopher Corliss Lamont proposes that death is indeed an end to existence, and that once the body dies, that is the end of the matter (*Humanism as a Philosophy* 132), and deFord agrees: “[T]here is no survival of personality after death” (“Heretical Humanism” 82). In Humanism, there is no Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, or anything similar. Furthermore, this worldview posits that belief in an afterlife is not just scientifically unfounded, but is also harmful to humanity. They believe that “[p]romises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful,” as these beliefs can distract people from focusing on the here and now, which has a negative connotation for humanity as a whole (*The Humanist Manifesto II*). Therefore, there is no place for a world beyond this one in the views of Secular Humanism.

⁶⁵ According to the International Humanist and Ethical Union, “There are no gods or ‘ghosts in the machine.’ There is no divine realm. Of course there are strange or as yet unanswered questions about the world, but when we really know or understand the answers then these phenomena are always brought into the natural world, or under the laws of nature” (“Aspects of Humanism”). Miriam Allen deFord also says quite bluntly, “Humanism . . . must be atheistic or it is not Humanism as I understand it” (“Heretical Humanism” 82).

This rejection of the idea of an afterlife also connects to the lack of belief in a soul-quality that can be separated from the body. Lamont declares that what some might call the soul (personality, memory, and emotions) cannot survive when the body dies; if the corporeal form is alive, the “soul” is there, but if the bodily functions cease, then the “soul” dissipates with it; furthermore, he believes that it is “beyond all comprehension how [the ‘soul’] could possibly outlast the brain in which [it] originated and had [its] being” (*Humanism as a Philosophy* 105). The signers of *Humanist Manifesto II* agree, positing that “[m]odern science discredits such historic concepts as the ‘ghost in the machine’ and the ‘separable soul’ . . . the total personality is a function of the biological organism transacting in a social and cultural context” (1973). The body and the soul must coexist; one cannot continue without the aid of the other. Lamont thinks that this concept is a good one, rather than depressing: “[T]o confront with simple and unflinching courage the stern fact that death means death [for both the corporeal and incorporeal self] is in itself an ethical achievement of deep significance” (*The Illusion of Immortality* 270). Other Humanist philosophers concur with his line of thinking, as concern for a soul that can exist without the body yet again distracts from the concerns of the present (*Humanist Manifesto II*). For Humanists, the only life that exists is the one in which the body resides, and neither soul nor body have a chance of living again once the physical form expires.

These concepts have a strong negative impact on the hero’s journey and the monomyth, since the afterlife and a separate soul are key elements of the stories within that cycle. Each belief system mentioned by Campbell contains the ideas of the soul and the possibility of eternal life, whether in a positive or negative connotation. The belief in the afterlife frequently functions as the catalyst for human behavior on Earth—negative behavior will be punished⁶⁶ while positive

⁶⁶ The Fields of Punishment for the Greeks, Hel for the Vikings, etc.

morality will be eternally rewarded⁶⁷—but even beyond that element, it often plays a major role in the journey of the hero himself. For example, the Christian Christ completes his journey and sacrifices himself in order to save humanity from the torturous flames of eternal Hell, and to offer them the alternative of perpetual bliss in Heaven.⁶⁸ Regardless, the idea of an afterlife frequently gives a hero's story scope and universal purpose: to better prepare people for the life that is to come. When the concept of eternal life is removed from a hero's story, however, the pattern itself changes. Because this one life is all there is, the preservation of one's own life becomes the greatest good. It is therefore the hero's duty to save life whenever possible, whatever the cost. In this kind of situation, the hero is then often faced with an impossible choice that may prevent him or her from carrying out the original task; for if there is no eternal good, then what is here and now matters more than some hypothetical boon. The monomyth also becomes subverted when the soul-quality is removed from the hero's journey. Hope and encouragement for the hero often come from the shades, or ghosts, of those whom have passed on, and the journey itself often entails the rescue of the soul.⁶⁹ If there is no soul, then the loss of a companion or friend is absolute, and they can no longer lend aid to the hero as he or she quests. There is no way to overcome death once the body expires; no one can be resurrected from the dead, and communication becomes impossible, thus eliminating a major monomythic pattern.⁷⁰ If this life is all there is, and no soul or afterlife exist, then a large portion of the traditional hero's journey becomes impossible, and here the paths must diverge.

⁶⁷ The Fields of the Blessed, Valhalla, etc.

⁶⁸ See also the examples of Mohammed and the Buddha.

⁶⁹ Christ's sacrifice becomes meaningless if man does not possess a soul that survives when separated from the body; likewise, the Buddha's trials to achieve the enlightened understanding of reincarnation are wasted if some part of the soul does not carry on when each body dies.

⁷⁰ Monomythic stories outside mythology also fail to function when the concepts of soul and afterlife are removed; imagine *Star Wars* without the Force ghost of Obi-Wan Kenobi to help Luke Skywalker, for example.

The Doctor's Perspective on the Soul and the Afterlife

Modern *Doctor Who* frequently repudiates the idea of a soul and an eternal afterlife. Layton says, “While Doctor Who repeatedly demonstrates a belief in a human spirit, this spirit is not the same as the religious and mythic concept of the soul ... The ‘spirit,’ such as it is, becomes something more like an abstract will or vital force” (122). As such, this “abstract will” does not retain any individuality, memory, or personality after the body dies, thus completely negating the concept of a soul that can survive the death of the corporeal. When Astrid Peth falls to her death in “The Voyage of the Damned,” Mr. Copper tells the Tenth Doctor that there is no point in trying to communicate with her because she is already dead (2007). In “The Girl Who Waited,” the Eleventh Doctor and Rory having to choose which version of Amy to save becomes all the more stark and grim because when the other Amy dies, there is nothing left of her—no memory, no soul (2011). The Ninth Doctor knows that when he arrives in a supposedly ghost-ridden Victorian Cardiff that something alien must be happening because he understands that there is no immortal soul; the people involved are dead, and so they cannot be trying to regain their own bodies (“The Unquiet Dead”). Similarly, when ghosts start appearing all over the world in “Army of Ghosts,” the Tenth Doctor knows that they are not actual spirits trying to communicate with the loved ones they left behind because there is no soul to return to Earth when the body dies (2006). In each circumstance, he is correct; Astrid has become star dust, the London ghosts are Cybermen trying to travel through the time rift, and so forth. All that can be considered human ceases to exist when the corporeal form dies.

The lack of the soul connects to the Doctor's perspective on immortality and the afterlife. In the universe of *Doctor Who*, physical immortality is problematic for the same reason belief in life after death is: both try to expand man's lifespan beyond the here and now, past what is

granted to each individual. Layton notes that in this worldview, the concept of life can be very close to that of existentialism: “[T]he life of any person is a “concrete duration” without a prior or subsequent different kind of existence. There is no prior life, so no reincarnation, and no afterlife, so no eternal soul” (46). He then connects this idea very specifically to *Doctor Who* and its characters’ perceptions of life and death:

[I]t is important to note that in nearly all cases, none of the main characters, and certainly not the Doctor, acts as if there is a certain afterlife. In fact, the show repeatedly emphasizes the point that dead is dead. Thus, the Doctor and his companions stand outside the majority of public opinion, which is firmly convinced of basic religious notions ... An implicit message of this is that for the dead, at least, there is nothing more that one can do for them. (64)

Once someone dies, that is the end for that particular person. There is no eternal Heaven or Hell, no reward or punishment beyond the corporeal world. No one can have any hope of seeing his or her loved ones again—when Pete Tyler is killed by a car accident, Rose and Jackie are devastated because they know that they will never see him again,⁷¹ and it is Rose’s desperate attempt to contact her long-dead father that nearly destroys the universe (“Father’s Day”). The Tenth Doctor implies that Queen Victoria’s attempts to communicate with her dead husband Prince Albert are a waste of time (“Tooth and Claw”). Dead is dead. There is no hope for those without a convenient time machine to see those whom they have lost, and the message from this fact is quite clear in *Doctor Who*: mankind should be content with the time it has and make the most of it, instead of working towards a mythical afterlife or attempting to contact those one has

⁷¹ Except for alternate reality Pete Tyler, who eventually ends up marrying the Jackie Tyler of this reality, but he is not really the same person, even though he looks the same (“Army of Ghosts”/“Doomsday”). Time travel is a tricky business.

lost.

The search for immortality is bound up in this lack of an afterlife, because the implication in *Doctor Who* is that trying to become immortal is the same thing as seeking the afterlife: it distracts mankind from the here and now and prevents people from being content with the life that they have.⁷² It also almost always leads to disaster because of the failure to accept death as it comes. Kristine Larsen points out that any attempt to seek immortality in *Doctor Who* always leads to something horrible, whether it be the Master's madness or the Doctor's attempt to cheat fate in "Waters of Mars" (170, 172). "Everything dies," she says, "and those who cannot accept it come to no good end" (169). When Professor Lazarus tries to defeat death by creating a machine that will make him younger every time he ages, thus functionally making him immortal, the whole experiment goes horribly wrong and mutates him into a completely inhuman monster ("The Lazarus Experiment"). The Doctor chastises him for it, reminding him that "[f]acing death is part of being human. You can't change that" (2007). All men must die in the universe of *Doctor Who*, and failure to accept that death is permanent often leads to unfortunate and unlooked for consequences.

**Forget Your Faith in Me: Humanism's Denial of Faith and Belief as it Relates to the
Monomyth and *Doctor Who***

Humanism's Concept of Faith

In a Humanistic worldview, faith and belief in something beyond oneself are considered not only unnecessary, but also quite dangerous. In its list of key Humanist traits, the American Humanist Organization notes that "Humanism is a philosophy of reason and science in the

⁷² Classic *Doctor Who* episode "The Five Doctors" echoes this theme; the plot revolves around the Time Lord High President's desperate search for immortality. He gains it, but only through becoming a statue emblazoned on the tomb of former President Rassilon—an eternally conscious stone face (1983).

pursuit of knowledge. Therefore, when it comes to the question of the most valid means for acquiring knowledge of the world, Humanists reject arbitrary faith, authority, revelation, and altered states of consciousness” (“What is Humanism?”). Mankind’s understanding of the world should come from scientific observation and rational conclusions based through what one can understand based on the five senses. The authors of the *Humanist Manifesto II* concur:

[H]umanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to live and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith . . . Reason and intelligence are the most effective instruments that humankind possesses. There is no substitute: neither faith nor passion suffices in itself. (1973)

Faith in a god or gods outside the individual cannot help mankind to progress. Furthermore, religious belief can often be harmful, not merely nugatory, in the human experience: “Traditional religions often offer solace to humans, but, as often, they inhibit humans from helping themselves or experiencing their full potentialities. Such institutions, creeds, and rituals often impede the will to serve others. Too often traditional faiths encourage dependence rather than independence, obedience rather than affirmation, fear rather than courage” (*Humanist Manifesto II*). Because external belief cannot help but only harm humanity, whatever faith exists in this worldview must come from a person’s belief in mankind and in him or herself. Sarah Oleberg of the Unitarian Universalist Association discusses her first encounter with a Unitarian pastor, who taught her Sunday School class that the Bible has good stories about Jesus loving people and everyone should love one another, but that it does not mean that people should place their faith in Jesus. “We do not belong to Jesus,” the minister said, then explaining that if someone believes in

him or herself and proceeds in the strength of that self-belief, then there is no limit to what the individual can accomplish (“The Faith of a Humanist”). Mankind is in control of its own destiny, faith in anything external is not only invalid but also quite ridiculous, and the individual can do all things through “man, which strengthens me.”⁷³

In terms of the monomythic adventure, Humanism’s rejection of faith and belief undermines the hero’s journey to a large extent. In the monomyth, the hero is called forth by the power of the supernatural, and his or her journey frequently involves reliance on that power and trust in the god or gods to survive the trip, as with Sigurd’s journey to save the Valkyrie Brunhilde. Furthermore, in many cases, the hero often has a connection to the world of the supernatural, usually through the bloodline. Most of the heroes in Roman and Greek mythology are demi-gods, mortal men with a god for a father or mother,⁷⁴ and they rely on a combination of aid from their godly parent and their own god-like prowess to help them survive. More modern heroes often have this trait as well; Luke Skywalker is able to defeat the Empire in part because of his Jedi heritage as the son of Anakin Skywalker, and also because of his faith in the strength of the Light Side of the Force (*Star Wars VI: Return of the Jedi*). The most notable example in any story or mythological system is Christ, who as both God and man is the only one capable of saving the world and redeeming humanity. When the Humanist worldview is introduced into a story, however, that entire major component of the story is eradicated and the hero must rely on himself and his own prowess. Layton points out the problems that a Humanist worldview has with a traditional heroic approach involving faith:

Mythological heroes all have a sort of predetermined existence, a plan laid out for them by the supernatural forces to which they partially belong ... Thus, the

⁷³ Contrast with Phil. 4:13.

⁷⁴ Perseus, Odysseus, Achilles, Aeneas, etc.

mythological hero is always apart from human existence, always something other and beyond. ... In existentialist terms, the mythological hero demonstrates the folly of belief in divine forces that watch after people. Under those circumstances, a person cannot be held responsible for his or her own life or actions, since they are merely the inevitable unfolding of some cosmic plot. (56)

The entire idea of faith in a deity or the divine in general is incompatible with a Humanist story because it stands against their views that faith detracts from humanity's ability to take care of itself and decide its own destiny. As a result, in a story for the Humanist hero, the supernatural becomes irrelevant, and the story departs from reconciling the two worlds and instead focuses on humans succeeding precisely because they are humans.

The Humanist worldview's negation of the monomythic structure also carries into the idea of the faith of others beyond the hero. In a traditional heroic story, the friends and companions of the hero believe that he or she will complete the task and help to save the world. Christ's disciples trust that he is the Messiah and that he will redeem the world; the adherents of Christianity also must believe in Christ as their savior and hero.⁷⁵ Regardless of the circumstances, stories in the monomythic pattern present the idea of faith and trust in the hero as a natural and good thing, necessary to the heroic journey and something to aspire to. From a Humanistic perspective, however, faith in the hero is not necessarily good or desirable, because it means placing trust in someone outside of oneself, whether it be in the supernatural or in another person. As Oelberg notes, the individual alone is responsible for his or her own destiny ("The Faith of a Humanist"); as a result, one cannot rely on a hero, super or otherwise, to save

⁷⁵ In a similar manner, Leia trusts that Luke will be able to defeat the Emperor and Darth Vader in *Star Wars VI: The Return of the Jedi*; Greek mythology's Medea believes that Jason will capture the Golden Fleece and rescue her, etc.

the world. Faith in anyone else has only negative consequences, and thus the traditional heroic journey cannot be fulfilled.

Faith and the Doctor

For the Doctor and his companions, faith is almost never a good thing. Layton says, “[W]e have seen that in *Doctor Who*, religion and the supernatural are largely rejected as meaningful or valid ways of encountering the world . . . It also demonstrates that a positive humanism . . . is a superior worldview to religion, which is based upon emotion, faith, and the desire to isolate oneself from the unknown rather than to investigate it” (155). Faith, whether it be in a person or in a deity, is almost always negative, causing major consequences for the characters who place faith in anyone outside of themselves. Faith in deities is always misplaced, whether it be Rita’s faith in Allah in “The God Complex” (2011), the alien faith in Grandfather in “The Rings of Akhaten” (2013), or the Caecillius family’s trust in the Roman gods in “The Fires of Pompeii” (2009). In every instance, the belief in a god or gods is proven to be completely unfounded—Rita is killed by the Minotaur, Grandfather turns out to be a parasite that tries to destroy the planet, and Pompeii erupts regardless of the family’s prayers to the household gods. In every instance, the gods turn out to be either alien imposters or nonexistent and impotent, proving to the denizens of the *Doctor Who* universe that placing one’s faith in a deity is ridiculous and irresponsible.

The problem with the lack of faith runs much deeper when it comes to the Doctor himself, however, as it prevents him from being the hero that he should be. The show’s disregard for faith extends itself to faith in the Doctor himself, the one person they should trust to help them. This particular issue does not present itself quite as deeply in the episodes of the Ninth and Tenth

Doctors, although it does creep in from time to time;⁷⁶ however, it does become readily apparent in the episodes involving the Eleventh Doctor. From his very first episode, he proves himself untrustworthy when he promises to take the seven-year-old Amy travelling with him; he fails to keep this promise, though, returning for her almost two decades later (“The Eleventh Hour”). His failure to keep his promise should indicate to Amy that the Doctor may not be someone she should trust deeply, a theme more deeply explored by the two back-to-back episodes “The Girl Who Waited” and “The God Complex” (2011). In the former episode, Amy gets caught in a world where time runs differently than it does in the rest of the universe. When Rory and the Doctor find Amy within what appears to them to be less than an hour, they discover that thirty-six years have passed for her. She berates the Doctor for leaving her, telling him that she waited for him to fulfill his promise and save her, and that she now hates him more than she has ever hated anyone before. Although the group manages to restore time and bring the younger Amy back, the Doctor ultimately fails on his promise to save the previous Amy: she dies, completely wiped from existence, so that the younger Amy can return (“The Girl Who Waited”). The Doctor cannot save her, despite his promises, proving that her faith in him was wasted.

This theme of lack of faith in anyone or anything is taken even further in “The God Complex,” where a Minotaur feeds off the faith of everyone within a small hotel. The Doctor realizes that faith in anything at all puts people in danger: “Not just religious faith, faith in something . . . They all believe there's something guiding them, about to save them . . . And all this time, I have been telling you to dig deep, find the thing that keeps you brave. I made you expose your faith” (2011). People are quite literally dying because they believe in someone or

⁷⁶ Jackie Tyler questions whether Rose should be okay with travelling with the Ninth Doctor, despite the latter having just saved the world (“Aliens of London”/“World War 3”); Martha’s family has a similar distrust of the Tenth Doctor (“The Lazarus Experiment”). Such questioning on the part of the companion’s families invites the viewer to wonder if they may be right, and if the Doctor is really worth our trust in him as a hero.

something outside of themselves. The only one who is safe throughout this whole situation is Rory Williams, Amy's fiancé, because "[he is] not religious or superstitious, so there's no faith for [him] to fall back on" (2011). Because he does not believe in anything, he is the only one immune from the creature.⁷⁷ The Doctor immediately follows up this observation by pointing out that Amy is the one most in danger right at that moment because she has faith in something: The Doctor. That faith is dangerous, and it will get her killed (2011). The placement of this realization right after the Doctor telling Rory that faith is religious or superstitious emphasizes the idea that believing in and trusting the Doctor falls into one of those two categories as well. For anyone to trust in the Doctor is to give into religious or superstitious fantasies, both of which are negative things in the Humanist worldview. Tim Jones points out that in this episode, Amy *must* surrender her faith in order to survive, as only by giving up her superstitious trust in the Doctor can she make it through alive. Furthermore, he points out that the episode "portrays Amy's loss of faith as not only a positive experience, but a lasting one. Most obviously, the Doctor does not ask for Amy's faith back" (57). Losing one's faith is a good thing, and the Doctor seems to believe that it should be a permanent change, since he never asks Amy to trust him ever again. When people put their faith in the Doctor, he fails to live up to their expectations, and he cannot be the trustworthy hero that he should be for the universe.

Conclusion

When Secular Humanist ideology is introduced into the universe of *Doctor Who*, the Doctor finds himself wandering away from the monomythic hero's path he has taken before. His characterization as a deeply flawed man who often needs to be saved by ordinary humans frequently prevents him from being a traditional hero, as do the failure of faith, the idea that this

⁷⁷ A strange contradiction, as Rory quite clearly has faith in Amy—if he trusts anything in the universe, it is her, and if faith in anything is enough to get someone devoured by the Minotaur, Rory should be the first to go.

life is all there is to existence, and the lack of an external moral regulator to give him real, valid battles to win and worlds to save. These subversions of the hero's journey have far-reaching consequences for the beloved Time Lord, from both the inherent contradictions in worldviews between Christianity and Secular Humanism, and from the path *Doctor Who* is now treading.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

“Clara, be my pal, and tell me, am I a good man?”

“I don’t know.”

“Neither do I.”

-The Twelfth Doctor and Clara Oswald from “Into the Dalek” (2014)

The arguments discussed in chapters two and three have twofold implications: first, that the show is destabilized through the clash of the two worldviews; and secondly, that the resulting destabilization creates a further fracture in the hero’s journey in *Doctor Who*, leading to negative ramifications for the story as a whole. These implications indicate that the conflict between Christianity and Secular Humanism, and the more forceful presentation of the latter, are destroying the work from the inside out.

No Man Can Serve Two Masters: Worldview Contradictions

By their very natures, Humanism and Christianity are mutually exclusive. Although Humanism tries to market itself to everyone so as to be inclusive of all who are interested in its precepts (“What is Humanism?”), but the belief that “traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species” (*Humanist Manifesto II*) naturally excludes everyone who is not atheistic, or at the very least agnostic. Christianity is also incompatible with Humanistic ideology because at its core is firm belief in a God, the soul, objective morality, and life after death, all of which are precepts rejected by Humanism. The two are completely contradictory and thus cannot work together, no matter how hard people may try to reconcile the two worldviews.

This fact points to a marked instability within *Doctor Who*, as not only do the ideologies of Christianity and Humanism clash within the entirety of the show, but the contradictions frequently crop up within the same episode. The Eleventh Doctor maintains in “Time of the Doctor” that death is the end, which is why he is afraid to die, so how is it that in the same episode, Tasha Lem, who verbally admits that she completely and physically died, is able to overcome her programming as a Dalek killing machine and regain the personality and soul that should have vanished when her body perished (2013)? In “The Waters of Mars,” the Tenth Doctor declares himself “the Time Lord victorious”; since his people are dead, he is no longer bound by the laws of time and can thus save a woman who is supposed to die, but Adelaide kills herself to put time back on track, pointing to a transcendent objective standard that must be obeyed (2009). Shearman notes the major inconsistencies with the Doctor in relation to morality, as he frequently becomes angry with his companions for imposing their twenty-first century moralities on other cultures, but then moments later he decides who is right and wrong in the situation and puts himself in charge of who has the right to live and who should die (“Personal Interview”). In “Dalek,” for example, one moment the Ninth Doctor is screaming at the titular creature, taunting it, calling it evil, and alternating between trying to convince it to kill itself and trying to destroy it himself; the next, he is informing van Statten that the Dalek is only doing what it believes to be right and good (2005), thus both implying that there simultaneously is and is not a standard of morality by which the Doctor *can* call the Dalek evil. These contradictions, and others like them, cause a definite instability in the fabric of the show, as evidenced by the recently aired Series Eight, starring Peter Capaldi as the Twelfth Doctor.

Impact on Current *Doctor Who*

“I don’t want to stop watching *Doctor Who*, but I feel like I already have.” This statement

comes from one of the reviewers at Androzani.com, a team of devoted people who have been fans of *Doctor Who* for decades, after watching the series eight episode “Kill the Moon” (“Kill the Moon Review”). Others agree with her, as evidenced by a petition on Change.org for the BBC to remove Steven Moffat as *Doctor Who*’s showrunner, because of how deeply he has changed the show: “The Doctor has been replaced by a doppelganger. This was once a relatable, empathic, pacifistic character who was willing to sacrifice himself for ordinary people. Now, he is two-dimensional, detached, violent, and has even been seen committing premeditated murder for the sake of revenge” (“BBC: Remove Steven Moffat from *Doctor Who*”). The ratings for the past two series are also fairly low, with the majority of the episodes of series seven and eight experiencing airdate viewing numbers under 5.5 million, several million below the episodes of series one-six (“*Doctor Who* Series 8 Ratings Accumulator”). It seems that many people are unhappy with the way the show is headed, perhaps because they no longer have a hero to cheer for or a companion to aspire to, and it seems that the shift away from the traditional heroic is to blame.

Russell T. Davies, the man who brought back *Doctor Who* in 2005 and stayed with it through every episode of the Ninth and Tenth Doctor’s journeys, is a self-confessed atheist and activist for Humanistic ideas, but he recognizes that Christianity and religion have their good points and are necessary for human daily life (*The Writer’s Tale: The Final Chapter* 515). Even though he does not believe in God, he sees that religious ideals do have a place in the world, that humanity really needs belief, and by extension, the heroes that align with these precepts. This fact may explain why more of the examples of Christian precepts and the resulting monomythic hero’s journey come from the episodes of Doctors Nine and Ten, both of whom spent all of their years on the show under his guidance and leadership. Though Davies does visibly include his

worldview into his work, he provides more of a synthesis of the two, with many of the Christian elements, such as the Tenth Doctor's "crucifixion" and subsequent resurrection in "The Last of the Time Lords" (2007), purposefully included.

Steven Moffat, the current showrunner, on the other hand, is far less kind to organized religion and the traditional hero. Each series he has worked on has become more and more blatantly oriented towards with Humanism, with the traces of Christian ideology more hidden and seemingly unintentional. "The God Complex" (2011) is the most obvious depiction of his worldview, with the episode's presentation of faith and belief as a dangerous thing, and the Doctor as a supernatural hero who cannot be trusted. The heroines and companions Moffat creates, all human or at least half-human, are just as good as or better than the Doctor: half-human River Song is the only person in the universe to know the Doctor's real name ("The Name of the Doctor"), she can fly the TARDIS ("The Time of Angels"), and she frequently talks to him condescendingly ("Silence in the Library/ The Forest of the Dead"); Amy Pond can quite literally recreate the universe and bring the Doctor back to life just by thinking of it, even when she should have no memory of him ever existing ("The Big Bang"); and fully-human companion Clara Oswald saves the Doctor time after time, including throughout his Classic incarnations, in a montage that insinuates most of the big victories in the Doctor's entire life could not have occurred without her interfering without his knowledge ("The Name of the Doctor"). His episodes seem determined to prove that the Doctor is a hero that mankind does not need. Humanity can take care of itself, and the Doctor is no longer necessary in the modern universe.

The implications of these ideas, previously hinted at or introduced in earlier series, now come into full fruition in the recently-aired Series Eight with the Twelfth Doctor, still under Moffat's leadership:

The Rise of an Anti-Hero

The Doctor's current path leads him away from the hero's journey and creates a descent into anti-heroism. The physical appearance of the Twelfth Doctor gives a subtle indication, although perhaps not intentionally, that the show may be on the fast-track away from the story of the traditional hero. Doctors Nine, Ten, and Eleven are all relatively young and attractive with charming smiles and generally charismatic personalities; meanwhile, Peter Capaldi's Twelfth Doctor is much older, with a rather terrifying smile that—on the rare occasions he uses it—makes him look like a cadaver, and he has the tendency to brood and ignore people. He appears as a much less sociable and engaging person than his three predecessors, which makes it difficult for people to approach him or to trust him. His cadaverous appearance can also symbolize the death of the traditional hero—humanity no longer needs a hero full of vitality and eager to save them, so now he appears almost as a corpse surrounded by the young and the strong, a supernatural hero who can no longer save a world that can now save itself.

The Twelfth Doctor's actions throughout series eight also contribute to his path towards the anti-hero. Shearman notes that modern *Doctor Who* is becoming more and more the story of how the good Doctor becomes an anti-hero and how it brings “something of the monstrous” to his character (“Personal Interview”). In his introductory episode, “Deep Breath,” the Half-Face Man, a droid who has repaired itself using human parts, tells the Doctor, “I am not human.” The Doctor responds, “Neither am I” (2014). In a universe where humanity is the “most important thing in creation” (“Father's Day”), having the Doctor admit to the non-human antagonist that he himself is not human sets him apart from humanity, and not in a good way. The Doctor tells the droid that there is only one way this encounter can end; they struggle near an open door in a balloon high above London, and though the camera cuts away from the door before the droid

plummets to his death, it is implied that the Doctor, heretofore a man of non-violence, has pushed him out (“Deep Breath”), in a clear violation of the principles that used to set him apart from others. In “Mummy on the Orient Express,” the Doctor knows that he cannot save everyone from the Foretold, a mummy who systematically sets about killing everyone aboard, but instead of reacting with compassion towards those who are dying or who have lost friends and loved ones, he reacts with a cold scientific detachment that horrifies everyone around him (2014). In “Flatline,” he remains trapped inside his TARDIS for the majority of the episode, leaving his companion Clara to save him and everyone else under threat (2014). Danny Pink, Clara’s boyfriend, calls him an “officer,” and accuses him of having plenty of blood on his hands and not caring about anyone he considers beneath him (“The Caretaker”). There is very little of the heroic about this Doctor, who is cold and callous towards the universe and will do whatever it takes to meet his own ends.

His status as the anti-hero further cements his unnecessary role in the universe. The clearest example of this concept is in the episode “Flatline” (2014). When the Doctor becomes trapped in a miniaturized TARDIS, Clara literally takes over his role, introducing herself to everyone as “the Doctor.” She carries the TARDIS with the Doctor inside it to safety, takes up the use of his Sonic Screwdriver and psychic paper, and even gives a grand speech that mimics the Doctor’s usual pontifications when he is about to save the day, albeit much more succinct: “I’ll tell you who I am. I am the one chance you’ve got of staying alive. That’s who I am” (2014). Later, when she can no longer contact the Doctor and danger is getting extremely close, she starts to ask what the Doctor would do in this situation, but stops herself and says, “No. What would *I* do?” (2014, emphasis added). At the end of the adventure, it is Clara who is responsible for saving everyone’s lives, and she smugly says, “I was the Doctor, and I was good” (2014).

The Doctor is barely needed in the entire episode—the companion takes over his heroic duties and saves everyone herself, without him having to interfere. He is both an anti-hero and quite unnecessary in the universe.

Broken Companions

The Doctor's companions function as a stand-in for the audience; they are the characters people imagine themselves as when they watch the show because the companions are human, ordinary people who are invited to travel time and space. They allow people to imagine leaving their own daily routines and venturing out into an almost-supernatural world of wonders, which can provide a powerful connection to the show. The companions have great adventures, are changed for the better in some powerful way, and grow as human beings. Rose Tyler expands beyond her humdrum shop girl life once she starts traveling with the Doctor; Mickey Smith overcomes his clingy cowardliness to become a dimension-jumping warrior; Martha Jones is able to take on the world by herself; and Donna Noble becomes a kinder, stronger person—when she loses her memories and reverts to her former self, her grandfather Wilf tells the Doctor, “But she was better with you!” (“Journey’s End”). They all change and they all become better people for their travels. Currently, however, the trend with companions in *Doctor Who* is to break them, showing how damaged they can be when they travel with the Doctor and that adventuring with him is not necessarily the good thing that an audience who hope for it to be.

Shearman says that being a companion is no longer something for people to aspire to because everyone who travels with the Doctor becomes fundamentally damaged, stating that “[journeying with the Doctor] would make monsters of us all” (“Personal Interview”). Nowhere is this concept more clear than with series eight’s companion Clara Oswald. The first indication that something is wrong with Clara’s internal moral compass comes from how easily she lies to

her boyfriend, Danny, about where she goes and why she is so often late for their dates (“The Caretaker”); even though she hates it when the Doctor lies to her, she internalizes that trait and glibly uses it on the man she claims to love. She also uses it on the Doctor, denying for episodes that there is anything out of the ordinary or that she is dating anyone. In “Mummy on the Orient Express,” she takes the concept further by willingly lying when the Doctor asks her to do so; she knows that Maisie is dying and that the Doctor cannot save the young woman, but she lies to her to get her to do what the Doctor wants (2014). Everyone in the show, from Danny to Clara’s family, views this problem as stemming from her contact with the Doctor, indicating that travelling with him is not good for her moral health.

Clara’s brokenness extends beyond just her willingness to lie, however; she also shows a disregard for the laws of the universe and for the sanctity of life. When Danny is killed in a traffic accident, Clara shows herself willing to do anything to save him, even if it means breaking the laws of time. She steals the Doctor’s TARDIS keys and threatens to destroy them all if he does not take her back in time to save Danny, even though the Doctor explains that he cannot because doing so would mean disobeying the laws that govern the timestream. Clara refuses to take his answer and starts destroying the keys one by one, trying to force him to do her bidding (“Dark Water”). Her actions in this scenario are a clear parallel to the Tenth Doctor’s “Time Lord Victorious” moment in “Waters of Mars”; both are willing to break the laws of time to do what they want to do at that moment, and it is clear in both circumstances that their actions are wrong. Clara is essentially becoming as arrogant as the Doctor in this moment, pushing to force the laws of time to bend to her own will. The image of her standing on the edge of a volcano, threatening the prostrate Doctor and throwing TARDIS keys into the magma is a terrifying one

that indicates to the viewer that something is dreadfully wrong with Clara.⁷⁸

In a final, terrible confrontation, Clara does something that heretofore would have been considered unthinkable for her: she demonstrates that she is so willing to commit murder that it pushes the Doctor to step in to do the deed for her. During the final confrontation in “Death in Heaven” between Missy (the Master, regenerated into a woman), the Doctor, and Clara, Missy is defeated and left unarmed in front of the Doctor. Clara, angry that Missy is responsible for Danny being transformed into a Cyberman, and ultimately for his permanent death as he defends the Earth, threatens Missy with the latter’s atomizer weapon. The Doctor begs her not to, but Clara says she will not allow the Doctor to let Missy live. Defeated, the Doctor declares that he will execute Missy in order to prevent Clara from doing it, because it is the only way to save her soul (2014). Although a freed Cyberman ultimately shoots Missy before the Doctor can, the implications of this exchange are terrifying. Clara’s time with the Doctor has changed her so much that she is willing to kill an unarmed woman, not because it will save anyone, but purely out of anger and vengeance. Clara has become cold and broken, and the message her story sends is clear: travelling with the Doctor is not something to dream about or aspire to, because it will damage you in ways you cannot even imagine.

Conclusion

The heroes of the monomythic pattern are people the audience can look up to. They overcome their failings to complete an epic quest of world-changing proportions, and we look up to them as they save us from the demons and monsters who threaten the universe. For decades, the travelling titular Time Lord of *Doctor Who* has been this kind of hero, embodying Christ-

⁷⁸ It is revealed a few moments later that the confrontation only happened with Clara in a dream-state, but at that point the Doctor makes it clear that he was mentally following through on what Clara would have actually done if he had allowed her to.

figure traits and many of the aspects of the Christian worldview as he saves the world from Daleks, Cybermen, and whoever else means humanity harm. With the rising popularity of the Secular Humanist worldview, however, the Doctor begins to diverge from his heroic path as the contradictions in the worldviews create a conflicted character who begins to descend into anti-heroism. Abraham Lincoln says in one of his political addresses that “A house divided against itself cannot stand” (1858), and in a similar manner, a text that continuously contradicts itself will fall. In the case of *Doctor Who*, this fall from hero to anti-hero is unlikely to keep the show alive for much longer. Steven Moffat once said, “There will never be a time when we don’t need a hero like the Doctor” (2013). That may be true, but it will only be so for as long as the Doctor actually remains a hero. When two inherently incompatible worldviews struggle together within an ongoing text, it carries serious ramifications for the stability of the work in the future.

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