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# THE MYSTIC AND MODERNITY: UNFOLDING PAST AND PRESENT IN EMPEROR AND GALILEAN

GERD KARIN OMDAL

Henrik Ibsen's first prose drama, *Kejser og Galilæer. Et verdenshistorisk skuespill (Emperor and Galilean. A World-Historic Drama, 1873)*, set in the fourth century, tells the story of Emperor Julian. Several critics have argued that, with *Emperor and Galilean*, Ibsen did not only forge history into a modern form, he also turned to history to say something essential about the emergence of a new world and about the complex landscape of ideas and politics distinguishing his own time.<sup>1</sup> The second half of the nineteenth century saw great changes in infrastructure, upheavals in society, and the rise and fall of several European kingdoms and empires, and Julia Walker draws attention to the recurring oppositions when she sums up Ibsen's project in *Emperor and Galilean*:

Attempting to riddle out the puzzles of his own historical moment, Ibsen borrowed from Hegel to oppose society and the individual, state and church, reason and faith, old and new, flesh and spirit, "Hellenist" and "Nazarene," plotting the dialectical processes that propelled the Ancient world into the Modern era. (Walker 2014, 152)

The society surrounding Julian, who in the course of the play becomes the last non-Christian ruler of the Roman Empire, is in a state of fragmentation, and almost nobody seems to be trustworthy. Constantinople is plagued with ideological and religious conflicts, and neither the learnings of the church nor of the lecture hall make much sense to Julian. In this context, he somewhat reluctantly pursues an uncertain path towards a status as emperor, in a world where the oppositions referred to by Walker are never reconciled, and the synthesis never accomplished.

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## *The Mystic and Modernity*

The play, being based on ancient history, signals a timeless value, but as it is presented in a modern dramatic form, it points to the acuteness of Ibsen's investigation. Lisbeth Pettersen Wærp's categorization of the play as "a philosophical drama" in *Overgangens figurasjoner* [Figures of Transition] seems quite accurate, as it draws attention to the fact that Ibsen turns to ancient history to find fitting material and convenient characters for his complicated philosophical reflections concerning his own time, and its dynamic relationship with history (2002, 9).

Julian the Apostate was a popular figure in the nineteenth century. In Scandinavia, Victor Rydberg's novel *Den siste athenaren* (*The last Athenian*, 1859) and Carsten Hauch's tragedy *Julian den Frafaldne* (*Julian Apostate*, 1866) preceded Ibsen's version of the story, and A. Listov wrote a series of historical articles on Julian for the newspaper *Fædrelandet* [The Fatherland] in May 1866 (Aarseth 1999, 70).<sup>2</sup> This popularity probably reflects the growing questioning of Christianity at the time. The central position of the mystic Maximus in Ibsen's version of the story, however, is conspicuously different from the other Scandinavian contributions. Maximus is a practitioner of magic rituals, including meditation and divination, and he is also Julian's closest confidant in crucial parts of the play and his adviser in spiritual and philosophical matters.

The character is probably based on the historical Maximus of Ephesus, the Neoplatonic philosopher and theurgist magician who died about year 370. According to Egil A. Wyller, the historical Maximus passed on his teacher Iamblichus' learning to the historical Julian (1999, 23).<sup>3</sup> Iamblichus was inspired by Aristotle, Plato, Pythagorean philosophy and the Chaldean Oracles (Remes 2008, 24). He also consulted sources on Egyptian mysteries to counterbalance Christianity and among the few surviving writings from his hand is *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum* [On the Mysteries of the Egyptians]. From this we may deduce that the epithet "mystic" used by Ibsen for Maximus is based on the historical Maximus' involvement with several mystery cults.

The focus on this character may seem strange in a play supposed to be scrutinizing the condition of modernity, and consequently, the central questions of this article will be: how can Ibsen's emphasis on Maximus, with his occult disposition and abilities, contribute to an investigation of his own time? And how does Maximus contribute to the play's engagement with discourse on modernity? To answer these questions properly, it is important to keep in mind that Maximus is both a magician and a philosopher, and that Ibsen expands his role as a philosopher throughout the play (even if he, in the first part of the drama, gives him the attributes of a wizard). Central questions resounding with nineteenth-century philosophy are put forward in the play and discussed by Julian and Maximus.

*Emperor and Galilean* was written in Dresden from 1871, and Ibsen refers to it as his first "German" play in a letter to Julius Hoffroy, on February 26, 1888 (Aarseth 2008, 239–240). There are obvious traces of the work of a range of German philosophers in the play, and Maximus is central in the investigation and discussion of their ideas. As both Walker and Kristin Gjesdal, among others, have observed, Hegel's dialectics (e.g. in *Phänomenologie der Geistes* 1807) are apparent on several levels, and Maximus' presentation of the idea of the third empire, as a kind of synthesis between the antipodal pre-Christian and Christian biblical worldviews, is the most outstanding example. Fichte, in continuation of Kant, famously discussed the possible influence of the individual human being on world history (e.g. in *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* 1794–1795); *Emperor and Galilean* resonates with this discussion, and Maximus' faith in Julian's abilities can be examined from this perspective. Schopenhauer's Eastern orientation and his philosophy of choice (*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* 1819) is also relevant in this context. The pessimistic universe of *Emperor and Galilean* seems to be ruled by an absolute and insatiable metaphysical will, but Maximus always forces Julian to make his own choices (even if these are often bad ones). The choice of the individual, and the faith of the individual and the world, are central themes. Last,

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but not least, Strauss' (e.g. in *Das Leben Jesus, kritisch bearbeitet* 1838–1839) and Feuerbach's (*Das Wesen des Christentums* 1841) criticisms of Christianity, are probably the determining force behind Ibsen's interest in the historical Julian the Apostate and his time (see, for instance, Aarseth, 2008, 230); Ibsen is also interested in antagonism more generally in *Emperor and Galilean*.<sup>4</sup> The play scrutinizes the relationship between mankind and the divine, and how the way in which mankind relates to the divine is central in the transformation of worldviews.

The analysis will focus on central scenes with Julian and Maximus, and on their dialogues. Dialogue is by far the most central component of the play. Even if grand and historically important events take place in the background, the interaction and conversation between the characters are foregrounded, and herein lies much of the relevance for the nineteenth century.

### A NEW HORIZON

Walker suggests that Ibsen's attendance at the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 would have been of crucial importance for his awareness of the current state of modernity and for his writing. Ibsen was preparing to write *Emperor and Galilean* at the time of his travel to Egypt, and Walker writes:

In Egypt, where steamships and locomotives connected East and West, and the old world was transformed by the new, history and tradition were dragged into a new relationship with the unfolding present of modernity. Finding himself in an ancient culture that employed cutting-edge technology to change the face of the earth, Ibsen would develop a narrative structure that accelerated G. H. W. Hegel's dialectic of history, compressing exposition into rising action to enfold past events into an ever-expanding climatic "now." (Walker 2014, 137)

Here Walker points out another opposition of importance, this time outside Ibsen's fictive universe, namely the opposition between the cutting-edge technology of Egypt and the ancient history and tradition of the country. She argues that the characteristic "nowness" and acuteness, which is a trademark of Ibsen's presentation of past events in his plays, may be the result of a

new awareness achieved in Egypt. To this we could add that this experience was probably also an inspiration for his experiment with a certain simultaneity between different layers of time and history in *Emperor and Galilean*.

Ibsen's opportunity to visit some of the remains of the ancient world in Egypt meant that he gained access to firsthand knowledge about the old mystery cults, as we can see from his impressions of the journey penned down in the short journal "Abydos" (1869–1870). Ibsen was one of a selected party taken on a 24-day excursion up the Nile to Nubia before the opening of the canal (Hollander in Ibsen 1909, 192). The excursion visited the excavation of Abydos, one of the oldest cities in Egypt, mentioned in *Emperor and Galilean* as the site of the heathen oracle. Ibsen writes in "Abydos" that the name of the city is an old Greek corruption of the Egyptian name Ebot, and that the city at present is called Arabat el matfun, which means "the buried one" (Ibsen 1909, 199). The name refers to the hill where the holy head of Osiris was kept, which was an important place of worship.<sup>5</sup> Ibsen reflects on the importance of this place and its mighty history:

[...] Abydos seems to have been a necropolis, a burial city, as well as a city of the living. For here was located the grave of Osiris; and for thousands of years rich Egyptians from the south and the north had their bodies brought to the spot where they might rest with their god and king, and in the ground consecrated by him. Many epitaphs bear testimony to it, to this day, and several of these inscriptions go back as far as the sixteenth dynasty, that is, some thirty-seven hundred years ago. (Ibsen 1909, 199–200)<sup>6</sup>

His sources for this knowledge were probably his co-travelers, as he mentions several Egyptologists among the people attending the excursion.<sup>7</sup> Judging by the richness of the references to the old mystery cults in *Emperor and Galilean*, it seems probable that the journey to Egypt not only increased Ibsen's awareness of modern technology and capitalist civilization. It also seems to have increased his attention of the old cults and his awareness of how ancient history always has a certain presence in the new, upheld by the knowledge of individual subjects, which may, among other things, relativize the idea of progress inherent in a progressive capitalist understanding of history.

## *The Mystic and Modernity*

The earliest among the traditions later known as Western esotericism (Neoplatonism, Hermeticism and Gnosticism) developed in Late Antiquity, exactly in the areas where the action of *Emperor and Galilean* is set (Goodrick-Clarke 2008, 3, 13, 15), and Antoine Faivre mentions Maximus' teacher Iamblichus among "the most visible Neoplatonists in later esoteric literature" (1994, 52). Neoplatonism and the other traditions were influenced by "exotic" religions and philosophy, and Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke writes that "Cosmopolitan Hellenistic culture was receptive to Egyptian, Jewish, Syrian, Babylonian and Persian currents [...]," which were combined with Greek thought (2008, 13). Well-known examples relevant in our context are Mithraism, a Roman mystery-cult, worshipping the Indo-Iranian god Mithra, of which the historical Julian became an initiate, and Cybele-, Isis- and Osiris-mysteries – the latter referred to by Ibsen in the quote from "Abydos." Like Osiris, Isis was originally an Egyptian deity, and Cybele was Phrygian. The historical Julian was, according to Wyller, fascinated by Hermeticism in addition to Neoplatonism (1999, 22–23).<sup>8</sup>

There are references to all these traditions in *Emperor and Galilean*, as we can see from some examples: In part 1 of the drama, *Cæsar's Apostacy*, rumors tell that heathens gather secretly at night in the temple of Cybele, and Julian's brother Gallus addresses the priests of Osiris in Abydos regarding the Persian war and regarding the faith of the Emperor Constantius (Ibsen 1890, 29, 32).<sup>9</sup> In part 2 of the drama, *The Emperor Julian*, Julian declares that the Sun-King (Helios) "is the same whom certain oriental races call Mithra" (206). There are several mentions of Julian consulting Etruscan soothsayers, and, towards the end of the play, he mentions that he has "discovered some Magi, who say they are well versed in the Chaldean mysteries" (328). Julian's focus on himself as a writer on divine matters (201) can be a reference to Hermeticism, as the Egyptian god Thoth, who was identified with Hermes Trismegistus was known as a divine scribe (Goodrick-Clarke 2008, 17). The act of writing is for Julian intertwined with the act of establishing the new, true empire, with new and better conditions for the human beings.

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*IN SEARCH OF THE THIRD WAY*

From the outset of *Cæsar's Apostasy*, Julian is in a state of confusion. As an initially Christian youth, he starts his search for alternative spiritual guidance motivated by an overwhelming fear, not only of the Christian Emperor Constantius, who has killed most of Julian's family, but also of Christ himself; they are both dictators in Julian's view. Julian also struggles to understand and accept the fundamentally linear idea of Christianity, that the life of the human being as flesh is so unimportant compared with the afterlife of the spirit.

Maximus represents an alternative for Julian, as he focuses on the psychology and the possibilities of human beings, not on rules and commandments from above.<sup>10</sup> The potential of the individual human being is magnificent, in Maximus' view, and here the background of the historical Maximus as a theurgist magician is essential. Theurgy was defended by Maximus' teacher Iamblichus in *De Mysteriis*, and "[i]n its original Neoplatonic meaning, theurgy refers to the process of making the human being worthy of or a likeness of a god, and thus belongs to the lengthy tradition of 'becoming godlike' within ancient philosophy" (Remes 2008, 25, 10). Maximus flatters Julian and accelerates his ambitions, and towards the end of the play Julian associates himself with the gods. But is Julian suited for the task that follows from the possibilities opened for him by Maximus? That is an important question which resonates with the emphasis put on individual responsibility in modernity.

The mystic makes his first appearance in person in act III of *Cæsar's Apostasy*, leading a symposium where he enables Julian to communicate directly with antagonists from biblical lore. But the mystic is introduced through rumors already in the first act. He is an infamous man, both in Constantinople, where the first act takes place, and in Athens, where the second act is set. It is said that he has slept for three years in the caves beyond Jordan, and that his brothers have been executed as heretics (Ibsen 1890, 17, 18).<sup>11</sup>



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Julian and his Christian teacher Hekebolius at this stage consider Maximus to be an impostor (18), but in the second act, Julian's view gradually changes. In Athens, his interest in Maximus and his teaching grows, together with his fascination for the "heathen" religion. Julian's eagerness to increase his knowledge about Maximus shines through in a conversation with his Christian friend Basilius, about a letter from Basilius' sister Makrina:

JULIAN: [...] Tell me, what does Makrina write further? There was something more; I remember, you said—; what was it you called the rest of her news?

BASILIUS: Strange.

JULIAN: Yes, yes;—what was it?

BASILIUS: She writes about Maximus in Ephesus—

JULIAN: (*eagerly*). The Mystic?

BASILIUS: Yes; that inscrutable man. He has appeared once more; this time in Ephesus. All the neighbourhood is in a ferment. Maximus is on all lips. Either he is a juggler or he has made a baleful compact with certain spirits. Even Christians are strangely affected by his impious signs and wonders.

JULIAN: More, more; I entreat you!

BASILIUS: There is no more about him. Makrina only writes that she sees in the reappearance of Maximus a proof that we are under the wrath of the Lord. [...]. (Ibsen 1890, 57–58)<sup>12</sup>

Through this dialogue, Basilius establishes Maximus as a kind of populist Antichrist, in league with "certain spirits." In this way, an opposition between Maximus and Basilius/Makrina is established, and this opposition culminates in Julian's death scene, to which I will return below. At this point, Julian's incipient spiritual reorientation is about to become manifest, as he becomes convinced that a more personal connection with the inhabitants of the spiritual world is possible.

Later in this act, in a conversation between Julian and the rhetorician Libanius, the notoriety of Maximus increases even further. Libanius is eager to warn Julian, telling him that Maximus has declared himself able to command the spirits of the dead, and that this contact with the spirits is the foundation of his

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learning (63). Libanius refers to an episode which has recently taken place in Hecate's temple in Ephesus. Maximus has "applied forbidden arts" to the statue of the goddess and animated it:

LIBANIUS: [...] It was pitch black night all around. Maximus uttered strange incantations; then he sang a hymn, which no one understood. Then the marble torch in the statue's hand burst into flame— [...] In the strong bluish light, they all saw the statue's face come to life and smile at them.

(Ibsen 1890, 63)<sup>13</sup>

Libanius finds the animation of Hecate scandalous, but for Julian, spiritual communication and divination now appear to be the ultimate wisdom and the answer to his dilemmas about how to deal with his situation and approach his future. The rumors establish Maximus as an enemy of both the Christians and the philosophers, his learning is outside mainstream thinking. For Julian the mystic represents a third way; neither church, nor lecture hall (64–65).

The episode in Hecate's temple comprises crucial information. Even before we witness the symposium with the spirits of the antagonists, we may assume that Maximus is in possession of supernatural powers. It is not a coincidence that the goddess he animates is Hecate, as she is important within Neoplatonism and the "Great-Goddess" in the Chaldean Oracles and theurgy.<sup>14</sup> In Greece's classical era, she was often described as a goddess of the underworld and of witchcraft and sorcery, something which fits well with Maximus' reputation. Moreover, Hecate is also the goddess of the crossroads (see for instance Virgil's *Aeneid*), often pictured as a three-bodied woman. This focus on Hecate at an early stage in the play underscores the centrality of the enigmatic and of the crossroads-trope. On a literal level, the crossroads-trope manifests in the fact that Julian's decisions about the routes and destinations for his travels repeatedly become crucial for his spiritual development and for his rise to power, as well as later for his fall.

*The Symposium in Ephesus*

The fact that the third act of *Cæsar's Apostasy* is set in Maximus' hometown, Ephesus, underscores the increasing importance of

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Henrik Klausen as Maximus, Nationaltheatret (1903). Unknown photographer. Picture from Oslo Museum.

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this character in Ibsen's play. In this scene, spiritual communication is established as a central component of the play. The scene is mentioned by most scholars commenting on the play, as it introduces the idea of the third empire. Wærp refers to it as the center of the first part of the play (2002, 62–66). The scene actually also turns out to be the fulcrum of the entire play, as the conversation between Julian and Maximus returns to it on several occasions in *The Emperor Julian*, and since Maximus also refers to it in Julian's death scene at the end of the play.

The mystic is introduced with the attributes of a wizard:

*He is a lean man, of middle height, with a bronzed, hawk-like face; his hair and beard are much grizzled, but his thick eyebrows and moustache still retain their pitch-black colour. He wears a pointed cap and a long black robe; in his hand he carries a white staff.* (Ibsen 1890, 76–77)<sup>15</sup>

The way Maximus is described may be an allusion to the legendary Arthurian wizard Merlin the Enchanter, but with a Middle Eastern twist, showing Maximus' (probably) Anatolian heritage.<sup>16</sup> Julian has asked for Maximus' guidance, not only in religious matters, but also in questions and dilemmas concerning his own future. In response to this, Maximus arranges a ritual in Julian's dwelling.<sup>17</sup> A bronze lamp lights up by itself with a reddish flame as Maximus pours oil into a bowl, and Julian is given wine with a spark of the fire that the titan Prometheus stole from the gods (77, 78). "JULIAN: My senses exchange their functions; I hear brightness, and I see music. MAXIMUS: Wine is the soul of the grape. The freed yet willing captive. Logos in Pan!" (78).<sup>18</sup> A bluish circle of light is seen above the lamp, a shining countenance appears before Julian, and he starts a conversation with it (79).

This specter is not named until in the second part of the play, at this point it is only called "The Voice." The Voice says that Julian is born to serve "the spirit," and that his mission is to establish "the empire":

JULIAN: What is my mission?

THE VOICE: To establish the empire.

JULIAN: What empire?

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THE VOICE: The empire.

JULIAN: And by what way?

THE VOICE: By the way of freedom.

JULIAN: Speak clearly! What is the way of freedom?

THE VOICE: The way of necessity.

JULIAN: And by what power?

THE VOICE: By *willing*.

JULIAN: *What shall I will?*

VOICE: What you must.

[...] (Ibsen 1890, 80)<sup>19</sup>

The Voice here introduces three essential concepts in the play: freedom, necessity and will, and also the way in which the concepts are intertwined. The ambiguity that lies at the core of the will (as a power) is also formulated: The empire shall be established by the way of freedom, which is the way of necessity. This paradox is central in the philosophical universe of the play. The freedom of will is paradoxical in a universe controlled by unchangeable laws, but it is nonetheless necessary to fulfill the laws of that universe.

Maximus can apparently neither see nor hear The Voice, but he can interpret its words when Julian repeats them to him. Maximus develops the idea of the third empire in answer to Julian's questions about the empire mentioned by The Voice:

MAXIMUS: The third is the empire of great mystery; that empire which shall be founded on the tree of knowledge and the tree of the cross, together, because it hates and loves them both, and because it has its living Sources under Adam's grove and under Golgotha. (Ibsen 1890, 81)<sup>20</sup>

He tells Julian that this empire is on the threshold, but is interrupted by Julian hearing whispering voices. An interesting and important question of the play is that of the connection between this first spirit, introducing the empire which it is Julian's task to establish, and those that appear next. Maximus calls the newcomers "The three corner-stones under the wrath of necessity. [...] The three great helpers in denial" (81).<sup>21</sup> He claims that he

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does not know who they are, and he is reluctant when Julian wants to see them, but he swings his staff and commands them to appear. Cain and Judas Iscariot materialize in turns and Julian describes them thus: Cain lies on the floor, he is as great as Hercules, and he is beautiful. He has a red scar on his brow (82). Judas Iscariot is a red-bearded man. He has torn clothes and a rope around his neck (84). Again, only Julian can see them and speak with them.

Maximus' wording indicates that he must have had some clue about who would appear: "Take shape, and come to light, thou first-elected lamb of sacrifice" (81)<sup>22</sup> and "Arise and come to light, thou willing slave, thou who didst help in the next great world-transformation!" (83).<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless he expresses reluctance when Julian reveals their identity, and he is unwilling to be held responsible for Julian's conversations with them. When Cain has disappeared and Julian tells Maximus who it was, the mystic says: "By that way then! Ask no more!" (83).<sup>24</sup> So, this time no interpretation is forthcoming from the mystic. It is Julian who demands that he goes on and makes the second helper appear. Maximus seems to suspect or fear that Julian's faith will be linked to that of the outcasts, since he withdraws from the responsibility of the situation.

This is confirmed when the third helper in denial is supposed to appear, and nothing happens:

JULIAN (*shrieks to him*): Forth with the third!

MAXIMUS: He shall come!

(*He swings the staff.*)

Come forth, thou third corner-stone! Come forth, thou third great freed-man under necessity!

(*He casts himself down again on the couch, and turns his face away.*)

What seest thou?

JULIAN: I see nothing.

MAXIMUS: And yet he is here.

(Ibsen 1890, 85)<sup>25</sup>

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This suggests that Julian is the third antagonist, but how does that fit with his alleged mission as the founder of the third empire? Maximus is convinced by the words of The Voice that Julian has the potential for establishing the third empire, which is to be a unification of the first, founded on the tree of knowledge, and the second, founded on the tree of the cross, and his advice for Julian is directed by this. But somehow in this way, paradoxically, Maximus becomes the driving force in establishing Julian as the third antagonist. What does this imply? There is no easy answer, but what is certain is that the necessity of antagonism in history is put on display in a striking manner, as the establishment of both the first, the second, and the third empire in this scene is tied to antagonism.

Maximus is a transmitter between the present of the play and other historical world orders. Through him different layers of history are activated simultaneously, and this is important on the level of ideas. Through the symposium with the biblical antagonists an “unholy” trinity is established, the three deniers are linked together: Cain, Judas Iscariot, and Julian the Apostate. Since the fire of Prometheus is used as a magical tool for facilitating the communication with the biblical antagonists, the Greek and the biblical religious spheres also become intertwined in the symposium.

Prometheus, the enlightened or the wise, is supposed to have created the first human beings from clay (Braarvig 1989, 36). But when he helped them to resist the power of the gods – by stealing fire for them to create civilization – he was banned from the company of the gods. Later Julian, in a conversation with the philosopher Priscus from act IV of *Emperor Julian*, compares himself to Prometheus, as a contrast to Jesus:

JULIAN: [...] I will remind you of Prometheus in ancient days. Did not that preeminent hero procure for mankind still greater blessings than the gods seemed to vouchsafe— wherefore he had to suffer much, both pain and spiteful usage, till he was at last exalted to the communion of the gods—to which, in truth, he had all the time belonged? (Ibsen 1890, 281)<sup>26</sup>

In Julian’s interpretation, Prometheus was ahead of the gods – the one who knew better than them, and who had the strength

to follow his own will instead of adhering to someone else's. Cain and Judas Iscariot interfered with, resisted, and questioned the will and the power of the biblical God, and, in this way, antagonist voices from different religious spheres are combined in the context of the play.

The biblical antagonists do not seem to have acted unprompted, though, at least not according to Maximus' summoning, which binds them both to someone's will. Consequently, a new question arises: it seems that the biblical antagonists were the tools of God. What does this imply for Julian as the third antagonist?

*The Fall of an Emperor and the Foundation of an Empire*

In *The Emperor Julian*, Maximus is first and foremost an interlocutor for Emperor Julian. Julian seems to have gained his power with assistance from the ancient gods, and he has now tried to restore them to their former position. Maximus is still an interpreter of signs, but the complete picture seems to be more and more obscure, even for him. His philosophical reflections in the conversations between him and Julian, especially in those referring to the symposium scene in *Cæsar's Apostacy*, are of great importance, though, and so is his 'conclusion' in Julian's death scene.

The first scene referring to the symposium covers the final pages of the third act of *The Emperor Julian*. Maximus and Emperor Julian meet in the moonlit ruins of the temple of Apollo (270 ff.). The scene is of great symbolic value: the Greek world has withered, and its gods seem to be powerless. Julian's reputation as emperor is declining as a consequence of his religious conflicts with the Christians, and he wants to know who shall be victorious, the Emperor or the Galilean. Maximus' answer is enigmatic; he says that they both shall succumb, but neither perish. He reminds Julian of their conversation about the three empires during the symposium in Ephesus, and he criticizes Julian for his policy as an emperor:



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MAXIMUS: You know I have never approved your policy as an Emperor. You have tried to make the youth a child again. The empire of the flesh is swallowed up in the empire of the spirit. But the empire of the spirit is not final, any more than the youth is. You have tried to hinder the growth of the youth,—to hinder him from becoming a man. Oh fool, who have drawn your sword against that which is to be—against the third empire, in which the twin-natured shall reign! (Ibsen 1890, 273)<sup>27</sup>

Maximus has established Julian's connection with the past, but he is disappointed that the Emperor has chosen to remain there mentally. Julian's reactionary religious practice makes him an enemy of the third empire. The one who shall rule the third empire is the twin-natured, the Messiah, whom the Jews are awaiting – Emperor and Redeemer in one, “Emperor in the kingdom of the spirit and,—and god in that of the flesh” (274).<sup>28</sup> Julian asks Maximus how the Messiah of the two empires, of the spirit and of the world, is begotten, and Maximus' answer is “He is self-begotten in the man who wills” (275).<sup>29</sup> Julian interprets this as if to will is all it takes to conquer, and he restarts the Persian war.

Julian is not capable of digesting Maximus' message, which is that the third empire is to be the synthesis of the thesis and the anti-thesis, that is, the mature empire. Julian has somehow paradoxically become a religious fanatic, just of a different religion, and this is his blind spot. He has become the anti-thesis, which is as insufficient as the thesis, and he has moved away from the possibility of a synthesis, which is, unsurprisingly, the ideal for the Neoplatonic mystic Maximus. It seems that Julian's misunderstanding of – or unwillingness to understand – the implications of the third way is his main flaw as emperor. He just extracts what he finds useful from Maximus' words in a given situation.

Despite his rebellion, Julian is not the revolutionary figure who represents the new. While his initial way of thinking held that potential, he has ended up not being a man outside his own time, but instead lagging behind it. It is interesting to read this in light of what Matei Calinescu writes about people with revolutionary and expanding minds in *Five Faces of Modernity*, here exemplified by Petrarch:

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Petrarch himself, in spite of his conflicting allegiances, was stimulated by his belief in the future. This prevented him from ever becoming a passive admirer of the ancients' grandeur. On the contrary, his cult of antiquity – far from being mere antiquarianism – was a form of activism. He was convinced that the passionate study of antiquity could and should kindle a sense of emulation. It was because he wanted so much to *revive* the spirit of antiquity that he was conscious of the dangers of an exclusive and single-minded cult of the past for its own sake, and so outspoken in his opposition to those who despised anything modern, *contra laudatores veterum semper presentia contemnentes*. (Calinescu 1987, 22)

Calinescu's description of the revolutionary poet points exactly to what Julian has been unable to do; he has been unable to use his knowledge of the past to develop something new. It is actually Maximus who is the closest to become this man outside or beyond his time, or, in other words, the visionary in more than one sense. It is Maximus who formulates the idea of the third empire and who (to his own disappointment) is closest to seeing the implications of it. When we read the implications of Maximus' idea of the third empire in a nineteenth century context, it appears to be a sort of neo-Hegelian philosophical idea of synthesis, impossible to fulfill under the given circumstances. In a universe that is still governed by the laws of God, the new ideal is impossible.

Maximus, with his background as a Neoplatonic philosopher, seems to be the only representative in the play of what Gjesdal, in *The Drama of History: Ibsen, Hegel, Nietzsche*, calls the full conceptual understanding of the dialectical process of history, which Hegel finds in his own time and modernity (2021, 70). This again places Maximus outside the fictional time of the play.<sup>30</sup>

The second reference to the symposium scene is in act V, where Julian and Maximus dwell in the woods outside the camp awaiting an attack from the Persians. Julian has been contacted by The Voice, without any of Maximus' doing:

JULIAN: I had fallen asleep on my bed in the tent. Suddenly I was awakened by a strong red glare, that seemed to burn through my closed eye-lids. I looked up and saw a figure standing in the tent. Over its head was a long drapery, falling on both sides, so as to leave the face free.

MAXIMUS: Did you know this figure?

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JULIAN: It was the same face as I saw in the light that night at Ephesus, many years ago,—that night when we held symposium with the two others.

MAXIMUS: The spirit of the empire.

(Ibsen 1890, 335)<sup>31</sup>

Maximus now refers to The Voice as “the spirit of the empire.” In this final appearance, the spirit is not able to speak, and it hides its pale and distorted face with a drapery as it leaves through the tent walls.<sup>32</sup> The spirit seems to be haunting Julian as a result of his failure, since Julian has not been able to realize the third empire. Julian will enter the realm of the great war lords, but he will not successfully establish the third empire, nor be loved by the people, like Christ was. A dream about himself and Christ, expounded by Julian over the next page, seems to confirm this. But is it possible that Julian has still served the spirit of the empire, as was his mission? Julian’s death scene may be an indication of that.

Just as the Persians are almost defeated, Julian dies, having been wounded in the final battle by his childhood friend Agathon, who strikes him on behalf of Christ and the Christians with “The Roman’s spear from Golgotha” (334). Before he does, Agathon declares that he will “slay the beast with seven heads, and then I shall get back my soul again. Christ himself has promised me that” (332).<sup>33</sup> In the Book of Revelation, where it is the first of two beasts to appear, the beast with seven heads represents blasphemy (13:1).<sup>34</sup> The comparison seems to affirm Julian as an antagonist, who, earlier in the play, is also compared to Pontius Pilate and called Judas’ brother (Ibsen 1890, 251, 258). The mystic’s last lines in the play, uttered at Julian’s deathbed, also underscore this, and Maximus confirms the antagonists as victims of divine predestination. But he also indicates that their defeat is not final:

MAXIMUS (*rising*): The world-will shall answer for Julian’s soul!

MAKRINA: Do not blaspheme; though surely you have loved the dead—

MAXIMUS (*approaching the body*): Loved, and misled him.—No, not I! Misled like Cain. Misled like Judas. Your God is a prodigal God, Galileans! He uses up many souls. Wast thou not, after all, the chosen one—thou victim of necessity?

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What is life worth? All is sport and make-believe.—To *will* is to *have to will*. Oh my beloved—all omens deceived me, all auguries spoke with a double tongue, so that I saw in thee the mediator between the two empires. The third empire shall come! The spirit of man shall once more enter into its heritage—and then shall the smoke of incense arise to thee, and to thy two guests in the symposium.

(Ibsen 1890, 351–352)<sup>35</sup>

Importantly, Maximus predicts that Julian shall join the two others in the world of the spirits, and according to his words, the third empire still exists as an opportunity, as an unfulfilled ideal or idea. Julian has contributed to the enforcement of this idea through his antagonism. But Maximus' vision of Julian as the one immediately establishing the third empire has been misleading, as it was incompatible with Julian's role as the third antagonist. In the universe of this play, the antagonist must, like Cain and Judas Iscariot, accept the loosing part in the short term. This does not mean though, that his part has not been important in the long-term.

### MAXIMUS AND THE ANTAGONISTS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Maximus' enabling of the communication with other spheres in the symposium scene in *Cæsar's Apostacy* is fundamental for the presentation and discussion of ideas in *Emperor and Galilean*. The scene may be the key to fundamental aspects of the play, and thereby also the key to the play's relationship with modernity. As a consequence of the questions raised in the scene, *Emperor and Galilean* can be said to investigate important aspects of the condition and position of humankind and the individual human being in the world, both historically and metaphysically. Maximus enables a kind of simultaneousness between Greek Antiquity, early biblical times, the time of Jesus Christ, and the Late Antiquity of Julian. Important questions regarding these historical periods are revived in the nineteenth-century context through the drama, and they also open for reflections on the condition of the human beings in modernity. The returns to the

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symposium scene in *The Emperor Julian* develop the perspectives introduced in the scene further, and Maximus' participation is crucial.

It is important to take a closer look at the riddles and ideas presented in Julian's conversations with the biblical antagonists in the symposium scene. Cain says that he had to sin because he was himself and not his brother, he willed what he had to will, as sin was his task in life.

JULIAN: [ ... ] And what fruit has thy sin borne?

[Cain's spirit]: The most glorious.

JULIAN: What callest thou the most glorious?

[Cain's spirit]: Life.

JULIAN: And the ground of life?

[Cain's spirit]: Death.

JULIAN: And of death?

[Cain's spirit] (*losing itself as in a sigh*): Ah, *that* is the riddle!

(Ibsen 1890, 82–83)<sup>36</sup>

In Ibsen's dialogue, it is explicit that Cain's fall was predetermined. He was the first murderer of biblical lore and his uproar against God and God's favoritism of his younger brother, leading to the fratricide, is well known.

Cain is a character who, like Julian, was "rediscovered" in the nineteenth century, by, among others, Lord Byron and Georg Brandes. Wyller refers to Brandes' discussion of Byron's play *Cain* (1821) in *Hovedstrømninger i det 19. Aarhundres Literatur* [Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature], where Brandes professed that the play would '[ ... ] sink deep down into the heart of the world' (Brandes cited in Wyller 1999, 200, my translation).<sup>37</sup> In Byron's *Cain*, the protagonist is furious with God for his exclusion and punishment of the human beings, and for trying to keep them away from knowledge. In the extensive dialogues between Cain and Lucifer, filling the entire second act of Byron's play, Cain repeatedly asks critical questions concerning God and his will and intentions when it comes to human life

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and death. In Byron's version he is a tragic romantic hero. This is not the case with Ibsen's Cain, however. He is simply a victim of divine predestination. It seems that God did disadvantage him in order to make him kill his brother and make death a part of human life.

When the spirit of the second antagonist appears, Julian asks what he was in life:

JULIAN: What wast thou in life?

[Judas' spirit] (*close beside him*): The twelfth wheel of the world-chariot.

JULIAN: The twelfth? The fifth is reckoned useless.

[Judas' spirit]: But for me, whither had the chariot rolled?

JULIAN: Wither did it roll by means of thee?

[Judas' spirit]: Into glorification.

JULIAN: Why didst thou help?

[Judas' spirit]: Because I willed.

JULIAN: What didst thou will?

[Judas' spirit]: What I must.

JULIAN: Who chose thee?

[Judas' spirit]: The master.

JULIAN: Did the master foreknow when he chose thee?

[Judas' spirit]: Ah, that is the riddle!

(Ibsen 1890, 84)<sup>38</sup>

As we can see from the dialogue, Judas is also presented as a victim of predestination. He willed what he had to will. When it comes to him, Satan is directly involved in the biblical version of the story (Luke 22; John 13:2). He used Judas' greed as a tool for making him betray Christ. The dialogue between Julian and Judas ends with the grand enigma about whether it was God's will or not, that Christ should die. Was Judas' betrayal a part of God's plan? Did Christ know this while choosing him as his disciple? Satan's involvement complicates the question as it could be problematic to look at Satan as God's tool. In the poem

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“Judas,” which Ibsen wrote while he was working on the play, he asks the ultimate question about the man who betrayed Christ: What if he had not been willing to do it?<sup>39</sup> Could Judas, by his choice, have changed the track of history completely? Probably not, as according to the dialogue from *Cæsar’s Apostacy*, he just did what he was predestined to do.<sup>40</sup>

Ibsen observes and investigates the strength of religion in *Emperor and Galilean*, especially the strength of Christianity, and he points to the antagonists as crucial for the formation of our history, our world, and our worldview. The antagonists are not, however, only important as antagonists in this play; they also represent crucial questions of humanity, especially when they conclude their dialogues with Julian with riddles, leaving him with his final questions before they disappear: What was the ground of death? And did God/Jesus foresee the betrayal when Judas was chosen? The dialogues with the antagonists represent another kind of dialectics, differing from the Neo-Hegelian approach represented by Maximus’ idea of the synthesis. Gjesdal briefly mentions that the symposium is a typical setting for Greek and Roman antiquity, and her general description of the symposium fits well with what happens in the symposium with the antagonists: “In this context, dialectics refers to the way in which each asserted view, through the permutations of an open-ended dialogue, is criticized from within its own horizon” (2021, 71). She underscores that this is a kind of dialectics that differ from thesis–anti-thesis–synthesis–structure, and that several kinds of dialectics can be found in *Emperor and Galilean*. This appropriation from the Greek and Roman tradition, is here incorporated in Ibsen’s investigation of fundamental questions related to Christianity and the paradoxes of the will.

The idea of giving voice to the antagonists, and of making amends for their underrated role in history, was a bit shocking for some critics in the Norwegian context of the 1870s. In the first comprehensive study of the play, Arne Garborg’s *Henrik Ibsens ‘Keiser og Galilæer’. En kritisk studie* (1873), the emphasis on

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Cain and Judas Iscariot is considered much more radical than the idea of the third empire:

An Empire where all contradictions should be solved, and where God and the world should merge, – well, that might pass as an apocalyptic dream, a chiliastic fanaticism; – but an Empire of peace and reconciliation, where incense is burned for men like Cain and Judas, what is that? (Garborg 1873, 59, my translation)<sup>41</sup>

As we can see, Maximus' final prophesy is central to Garborg's reading of the play, and he seems to share Narve Fulsås and Tore Rem's view, that the conclusion makes a pro-Christian reading difficult (2018).<sup>42</sup> Christianity is undoubtedly the dominant religion in the play, especially in the end, and God's will may be the world's will, but Maximus' final words indicate that the antagonists and their antagonism have been Ibsen's primary interest in this play. Maximus says that Julian's spirit shall join those of Cain and Judas Iscariot, and that he shall become part of the history of the antagonists.

It seems that the world is a stage, and that the human beings, even the mighty ones are to some extent puppets. But some of them can become something more when they return to the immaterial sphere, and the death scene indicates that the opposition represented by the antagonists can live on, even if they cannot join the company of the Gods, like Prometheus did. That would be impossible in a universe controlled by the autocratic Christian God. Nevertheless, they may have been balancing factors in the universe, disturbing God's power, despite their possible function as his tools. This possibility was created by God himself, according to Maximus, when he created humans, and God did not have enough foresight to see it coming:

MAXIMUS: Behold, Julian,—when Chaos seethed in the fearful void abyss, and Jehovah was alone,—that day when he, according to the old Jewish scriptures, stretched forth his hand and divided light from darkness, sea from land,—that day the great creating God stood on the summit of his power.

But with man arose will upon the earth. And men, and beasts, and trees, and herbs re-created themselves, each in its own image, according to eternal laws; and by eternal laws the stars roll through the heavenly spaces.



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Did Jehovah repent? The ancient traditions of all races tell of a repenting creator. [...] (Ibsen 1890, 291)<sup>43</sup>

God himself made antagonism possible, but this was unavoidable since creation would not exist without being able to recreate itself. In a way God himself becomes a victim of predestination in Maximus' reading. The cyclical movement of creation will, in the long-term, undermine God's power, which is bound to the linear worldview of Christianity. On an interpretative, philosophical level, this is, to a great extent, a metaphorical quest; the opposition represented by the antagonists and the questions raised by them fuel a dialectical development towards a secular world where human beings take center stage, even if they are not allowed to appear in this world undisturbed or forever. The questions posed by Julian about God's will and intentions with the human beings are his central contribution to philosophy and world history, not the way he rules or his concrete conflicts with the Christians. It is not evilness that is at the core of antagonism, as it is discussed in this play, but the questions posed by the antagonists. Philosophically, antagonism can mirror and facilitate the modern condition; by demolishing religious hegemony, other ideas and new thinking can come to light. This opens up for more freedom, but also for more confusion and more responsibility for mankind.

Garborg claims that Maximus is the character through which Ibsen is talking to his own time, and also that the mystic is the character who most resembles Ibsen himself (1873, 66).<sup>44</sup> In Garborg's view, Ibsen, like the character Maximus, poses questions and deals with problems *without solving them*: "He was a living expression of his time's misguided fumbling and fermentation." And if Henrik Ibsen is content with this relative position in the world, then he has accomplished his goal' (60, my translation).<sup>45</sup> Maximus' connection with the three-bodied goddess Hecate fits well with this kind of interpretation; he represents or personalizes the crossroads-trope as he, to a great extent, raises new questions and riddles, instead of solving anything. But at the same time, Maximus proposes a new kind of synthesis of

the earlier world orders, a unification of the empire of the flesh and the empire of the spirit. But neither Julian, nor the world is ready to see the real implications of the third empire in the fictional time of the play. Perhaps Maximus, nevertheless represents the positive worldview that Ibsen attributed to *Emperor and Galilean*?<sup>46</sup>

Calling the play a “World-Historic Drama” implies that the destiny of the world is at stake, not only the destiny of a specific Roman Emperor or even his empire. Ibsen asks all-important and probably unsolvable questions about the faith of the world from perspectives that surprised some contemporary critics, and his most important tool is, apart from the Apostate himself, the Neoplatonic mystic Maximus. Maximus’ occult disposition and abilities contribute to the investigation of Ibsen’s own time in several ways, and again it is important to stress that he is both a wizard and a philosopher. By bringing together different layers of time in magic rituals, and by virtue of his knowledge of philosophy and religion, Maximus can be a helpful tool in Ibsen’s attempt “to riddle out the puzzles of his own historical moment” (Walker 2014, 152). He calls attention to how historical moments relate to each other, and how they have an active presence in the current moment by furnishing the present with restrictions and opportunities.

The philosophical questioning of the position of God and Christianity in the nineteenth-century resonates with the antagonism of earlier periods, and the discussion of the individual human being’s status and responsibility in world history resonates with Neoplatonic philosophy. Goodrick-Clarke writes that:

The historical incidence and efflorescence of esoteric ideas at times when the dominant worldview no longer commands general assent is suggestive of their social construction and selection, but it also begs the question of their function. It is notable that esoteric ideas often attend the breakdown of settled religious orthodoxies and socioeconomic orders. Hermetic, Neoplatonic, and Gnostic works of literature were produced in the first three centuries a.d. in the Hellenistic arena of the Roman Empire where globalization, urbanization, and multiculturalism confused older traditions and simpler faiths. [...] In the late nineteenth century, when Europe entered a period of sustained urban and industrial growth simultaneous with a decline of organized religion in the face

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of the challenges of secularism and science [...], occultism and esoteric societies enjoyed a vogue, entering public discourse on a scale not seen since the sixteenth century. (Goodrick-Clarke 2008, 13)

It is probably not the esoteric per se that interests Ibsen in *Emperor and Galilean*, even if it became fashionable in the late nineteenth century. But as we can see in his journal from Egypt, Ibsen's imagination was nevertheless triggered by his encounter with the remains of ancient religion in the new world. *Emperor and Galilean* is permeated with reflection on the relationship between the human being and the divine, and on the difficult task of detaching oneself from the divine and be alone in a fragmented and unstable world.

### NOTES

1. See Moi (2006) and Walker (2014). It is important to stress the relative newness of the prose form in the context of Norwegian drama when *Emperor and Galilean* was published. The form was used for the first time in 1865 in Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's *De Nygifte* (*The Newlyweds*). I will not claim that *Emperor and Galilean* is modernist in the strict sense, even though Ibsen comments on modernity. Fulsås and Rem (2018) argue that Moi (2006) goes too far declaring *Emperor and Galilean* to be crucial for understanding Ibsen's modernism, when she writes: "for here Ibsen develops not just a full-scale analysis of modernity in Europe, but a new understanding of what theater is and what it can do" (Moi 2006, 188). She also claims that Ibsen's diagnosis of his own time can only be equaled by the work of Nietzsche and Marx (195).
2. The idea of the third empire is probably derived from Rydberg, even though he does not use the term. In *The last Athenian*, Rydberg suggests the possibility of a higher unity between Christianity and classical spirituality. Ibsen probably read this novel (Aarseth 2008, 233). He did not, according to himself, read *Julian Apostate* (letter to Hegel 1866, cited in Aarseth 2008, 233). Ibsen became familiar with Julian's history during his stay in Rome, where Lorentz Dietrichson read Ammianus Marcellinus' version to him in 1864 (Fulsås and Rem 2018, 58), and from letters written to Bjørnson in 1865, it is clear that he also increased his knowledge about the ancient world and Greek tragedy while in Rome (Aarseth 2008, 228).
3. The Syrian Iamblichus (ca. 240–325) was one of the most influential philosophers within Neoplatonism.
4. Strauss also published a study of Julian in 1847, *Der Romantiker auf dem Thron der Cäsaren*.

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5. Ibsen also writes that the city is mentioned by ancient authors as the most powerful in Egypt, next to Thebes. “Once excavated, it will be the Pompeii of Egypt” (Ibsen 1909, 199).
6. Translated by Dr. Lee M. Hollander. Original manuscript version: “Abydos synes, i lighed med andre egyptiske stæder, at have været en nekropolis, en gravstad lige saa vel som {< ... >} by for de levende. Her fandtes nemlig Osiriss grav, og fra syd og nord gennen årtusender lod derfor de rige Egyptere sine lig føre dig (sic.) hvor de kunde hvile sammen med deres gud og konge i den jord, som ved ham var helliget. Mange gravskrifter vidner derom den dag i dag, og flere af disse daterer sig lige fra det 16de dynastis tider, det vil sige omtrent 3700 år tilbage –.” Quoted from transcription at: [https://www.ibsen.uio.no/SAK\\_Pabydos.xhtml](https://www.ibsen.uio.no/SAK_Pabydos.xhtml).
7. Mariette Bey (François Auguste Ferdinand Mariette 1821–1881), a French national who was head Egyptologist of Khedive and in charge of the excavation Ibsen refers to (Ibsen 1909, 200); Lepsius (Karl Richard Lepsius 1810–1884), a German national who was leading the expedition Ibsen attended and who had stayed in Egypt for three years, and his Swiss colleague Naville (Édouard Naville 1844–1926) (197–198).
8. This is a tradition based on the collection *Hermetica* of which most writings are attributed to Hermes Trismegistus (the “Thrice-Great” Egyptian sage, identified with the Egyptian god of wisdom and magic, Thoth) (Goodrick-Clarke 2008, 15). Unity is central in hermetic teaching, which is a blend of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian culture and religion. The ultimate goal of Hermeticism is to contribute to a deification and rebirth of humankind through knowledge contained in the *Hermetica*, which consists of technical works on magic and a philosophical collection (18). The tradition is important in the development of science, as science was initially closely related to magic (alchemy and astrology). See for instance Yates *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1972).
9. All the references to and quotations from *Emperor and Galilean* are from William Archer’s 1890 translation, which was the first official English version of the play. Archer himself writes in the preface that his work is to a large extent founded on Catherine Ray’s unofficial translation (1876), even though the translations are utterly dissimilar (Archer in Ibsen 1890, ix). Catherine Ray’s *Emperor and Galilean* was the first complete English translation of an Ibsen play (Fulsås and Rem 2018, 144). Ibsen originally used the Latin ending -us in Maximus’ name, and Archer kept this in his translation.
10. Aarseth (2008) writes that Ibsen was attacked by theological critics for his focus on the psychological and alternative forces of religion after the publication of *Emperor and Galilean*. He refers to Olaf Holm, who in his review in *Tids-Tavler* (1874), claimed that Maximus’ version of atonement, represented in the idea of the third empire, must be rejected from a

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- Christian point of view, since it makes human beings too significant, and placed in too central a position (254).
11. Ibsen may be referring to the Hermit Caves in Bethany beyond the Jordan, which was an important place in the Old Testament as a baptism site and which later also became a dwelling place for monks (Waheeb, Bala'awi and Al-Shawabkeh 2011). Or he may be referring to the Cave of the Seven Sleepers outside Amman in Jordan.
  12. "FYRST JULIAN: [...] Sig mig, hvad skriver Makrina videre? Der var noget andet; jeg synes, du sagde –; hvad kaldte du de øvrige tidender? BASILIOS FRA CÆSARÆA: Sælsomme ting. FYRST JULIAN: Ja, ja; – hvad var det? BASILIOS FRA CÆSARÆA: Hun skriver om Maximos i Efesos – FYRST JULIAN *levende*: Mystikeren? BASILIOS FRA CÆSARÆA: Ja, den gådefulde mand. Nu er han dukket op igen; denne gang i Efesos. Alle de omliggende landskaber er i gæring. Maximos nævnes på alles læber. Enten er han en gøgler, eller han står i uhellsvanger pakt med visse ånder. Selv kristne drages underlig hen af hans bespottelige tegn og gerninger. FYRST JULIAN: Mere, mere; jeg beder dig! BASILIOS FRA CÆSARÆA: Det er ikke mere om ham. Makrina skriver kun at hun i Maximos's atterkomst ser et vidnesbyrd om at vi er under Herrens vrede" (Ibsen 2008, 342).
  13. "VISDOMSLÆREREN LIBANIOS: [...] Det var ravnsort nat omkring dem. Maximos talte sælsomme besværgelser; derpå afsang han en hymne, som ingen forstod. Da tændte marmorfakkelen sig i støttens hånd – [...] Og i det stærke blålige lys så de alle at støttens ansigt tog liv og smilte imod dem" (Ibsen 2008, 350).
  14. The Chaldean Oracles (named after Julian the Chaldean, living in Rome) are fragmentary texts from the second century, mostly a Hellenistic commentary on a (probably) Babylonian mystery poem, believed to have been uttered in or after a trance, very similar to what the archaic Greek oracles experienced, and in which they prophesied. Like Neoplatonism, the Chaldean Oracles postulate a metaphysical hierarchy of entities over and above the physical realm; the most important entity mentioned here is Hecate. Maximus' teacher Iamblichus accepted the Chaldean Oracles as a central source of divine revelation (Remes 2008, 15–16). Apart from Hecate, Helios and Apollo were important senders of messages, and they are also important deities in Julian's universe.
  15. "*Han er en mager middelhøj mand med et brunt høgagtigt ansigt; hans hår og skæg er stærkt gråsprængt med undtagelse af de tykke øjenbryn og skægget over munden, der endnu har sin begsorte farve. Han bærer en spids hue og en lang sort klædning; i hånden har han en hvid stav*" (Ibsen 2008, 366).
  16. There may be several explanations for this possible allusion. The simplest is that it serves as a way of visualizing the character's abilities for the reader/audience through well-known attributes, as the Norwegian nineteenth-century audience probably did not know much about the historical

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Maximus. It may also be a way of underscoring that Maximus is a fictional character, an anti-realist element in the play (like, for instance, the trolls in *Peer Gynt*, that nevertheless are important characters in the play on the philosophical level). Merlin appears with these well-known features in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (completed in 1138), and they were passed on to the nineteenth-century public through Gustave Dore's famous illustrations for Alfred Tennyson's Arthurian poems (from 1834 and on). Merlin occurs in Norwegian literature on several occasions in the time before the publication of *Emperor and Galilean*, as in Johan Sebastian Welhaven's verse narration «Det runde bord og stenen» (1860) and in Peter Christen Asbjørnsen's 'Tommelidens Levnet og Hændelser i England (Engelsk Æventyr)' in *Eventyr fra fremmede lande* (1860). In 1870, he also appears in *Englands Historie for det norske Folk 1ste Bog 55 f. Kr. – 1066 e. Kr.* by Søren Jaabaek. The wizard was the young king's adviser, and he was a prophet and a visionary. It would be interesting to investigate this aspect of Ibsen's introduction of Maximus further.

17. Remes writes that in Iamblichus' school, in Apamea near Antioch, magical practices were common, and magical acts or miracles were performed at the gatherings. She also states that magic undoubtedly was more important within this branch of Neoplatonism than in the others (Remes 2008, 25).
18. 'FYRST JULIAN: Mine sanser bytter virksomhed; jeg hører klarhed og jeg ser toner. MYSTIKEREN MAXIMOS: Vinen er druens sjæl. Den frigiorte, frivillige fange. Logos i Pan!' (Ibsen 2008, 368).
19. "JULIAN: Hvad er min gerning? STEMMEN I LYSET: Du skal grundfæste riget. FYRST JULIAN: Hvilket rige? STEMMEN I LYSET: Riget. FYRST JULIAN: Og på hvilken vej? STEMMEN I LYSET: På frihedens. FYRST JULIAN: Tal fuldt du! Hvad er frihedens vej? STEMMEN I LYSET: Nødvendighedens vej. FYRST JULIAN: Og med hvilken magt? STEMMEN I LYSET: Ved at ville. FYRST JULIAN: *Hvad* skulle jeg ville? STEMMEN I LYSET: Hvad du *må*" (Ibsen 2008, 372–373).
20. "MYSTIKEREN MAXIMOS: Det tredje riket er den store hemmeligheds rige, det rige, som skal grundlægges på kundskabens og på korsets træ til sammen, fordi det hader og elsker dem begge, og fordi det har sine levende kilder under Adams lund og under Golgata" (Ibsen 2008, 374).
21. "MYSTIKEREN MAXIMOS: De tre hjørnestene under nødvendighedens vrede. [...] De tre store hjælpere i fornægtelse" (Ibsen 2008, 375).
22. "Tag skikkelse og lad dig tilsyne, du udvælgelsens første offerlam!" (Ibsen 2008, 375).
23. "Her frem og lad dig tilsyne, du villende slave, du, som hjalp ved den næste store verdens-vending!" (Ibsen 2008, 379).
24. "Den vej altså! Forsk ikke mere!" (Ibsen 2008, 379).
25. "FYRST JULIAN *skriger til ham*: Den tredje frem! MYSTIKEREN MAXIMOS: Han skal komme! (*svinger staven*) Her frem du tredje hjørneste!"

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- Her frem, du tredje store frigivne under nødvendigheden! (*kaster sig atter ned på hyndet og vender sit ansigt bort*) Hvad se du? FYRST JULIAN: Jeg ser intet. MYSTIKEREN MAXIMOS: Og dog er han her.” (Ibsen 2008, 382–383).
26. “JULIAN: [...] jeg vil nævne Prometheus i gamle dage, hvilken fortrinlig helt skaffede menneskene endog større goder, end de udødelige syntes at unde dem, – hvorfor han også måtte lide meget, både smerte og hånlige medfart, indtil han endelig optoges i gudernes samkvem, – det han i grunden den hele tid havde tilhørt” (Ibsen 2008, 645).
27. “MYSTIKEREN MAXIMOS: Du ved, jeg har aldrig billiget, hvad du, som kejser, har foretaget dig. Du har villet skabe ynglingen om til barn igjen. Kødets rige er opslugt af åndens rige. Men åndens rige er ikke det afsluttende, ligeså lidt som ynglingen er det. Du har villet hindre ynglingens vækst, – hindre ham fra at vorde mand. O, du dåre, som har draget sværdet imod det vordende, – imod det tredje rige, hvor den tvesindige skal herske!”
28. “Kejser i åndens rige – og gud i kødets” (Ibsen 2008, 636).
29. “Han vorder i den sig selv villende” (Ibsen 2008, 637).
30. Closer attention to this character would probably contribute to a reading of the dialectics of *Emperor and Galilean* in line with the systematic ambition of Hegel’s philosophy. This ambition, Gjesdal claims, has been lacking in the Hegelian-dialectical readings of *Emperor and Galilean* so far (70).
31. “KEJSER JULIAN: Jeg var falden i søvn på mit leje i teltet. Da blev jeg vækket ved at et stærkt rødligt skin ligesom skar igennem mine lukkede øjenlåg. Jeg så ivejret og skimted en skikkelse, der stod i teltet. Den havde over issen et langt klæde, som faldt ned til begge siderne, så ansigtet var frit. MYSTIKEREN MAXIMOS: Kendte du denne skikkelsen? KEJSER JULIAN: Det var samme ansigt, jeg så i lyset hin nat i Efesos for mange år siden, – hin nat, da vi holdt symposion med de to andre. MYSTIKEREN MAXIMOS: Rigets ånd” (Ibsen 2008, 717).
32. Julian says that the spirit also appeared to him once in Gallia (Gaul), on an occasion he does not care to think of (Ibsen 1890, 335). It is difficult to interpret what this implies.
33. “dræbe dyret med de syv hoveder, og så får jeg min sjæl igjen. Kristus har selv lovet mig det” (Ibsen 2008, 713).
34. On each of its heads is printed a name which is a mockery of God. The second beast mentioned in verse 13 commands the humans to worship and make statues of the first beast (the Book of Revelation, 13:12–14).
35. “MYSTIKEREN MAXIMOS *rejses sig*: Verdensviljen skal stå til regnskab for Julian’s sjæl. MAKRIINA: Bespot ikke; skønt du visselig har elsket denne døde – MYSTIKEREN MAXIMOS: Elsket og forlokket ham. – Nei, ikke jeg! Forlokket som Kain. Forlokket som Judas. – Eders gud er en ødsel gud. Galilæere! Han bruger mange sjæle. Var du heller ikke denne gangen den rette, – du nødvendighedens slagtoffer? Hvad er det værd at leve? Alt er spil

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- og leg. – At *ville* er at *måtte ville*. O, min elskede, – alle tegn bedro mig, alle varsler talte med to tunger, så jeg i dig skinted forsoneren mellem de to riger. Det tredje rige skal komme! Menneskeånden skal tage sin arv igjen, – og da skal der tændes røgoffer for dig og for dine to gæster i symposiet” (Ibsen 2008, 743).
36. “FYRST JULIAN: [...] Og hvad frugt har din brøde båret? STEMMEN: Den herligste. FYRST JULIAN: Hvad kalder du den herligste? STEMMEN: Livet. FYRST JULIAN: Og livets grund? STEMMEN: Døden. FYRST JULIAN: Og dødens? STEMMEN *taber sig som i et suk*: Ja, *det er gåden!*” (Ibsen 2008, 377–378).
37. “[...] synke dybt ned i Verdens Hjerter” (Brandes cited in Wyller 1999, 200). Wyller argues that Brandes was wrong, and that Cain has been forgotten in contrast to Prometheus who is still considered to be a hero.
38. “FYRST JULIAN: Hvad var du i livet? EN STEMME *lige ved ham*: Verdensvognens tolvte hjul. FYRST JULIAN: Det femte regnes alt for unyttigt. STEMMEN: Hvor var vognen rullet hen uden mig? FYRST JULIAN: Hvor rullede den hen *ved* dig? STEMMEN: Inn i forherligelsen. FYRST JULIAN: Hvi hjalp du? STEMMEN: Fordi jeg var *villende*. FYRST JULIAN: Hvad vilde du? STEMMEN: Hvad jeg *måtte* ville. FYRST JULIAN: Hvem kåred dig? STEMMEN: Mesteren. FYRST JULIAN: Var mesteren forud-vidende da han kåred dig? STEMMEN: Ja, *det er gåden!*” (Ibsen 2008, 380–381).
39. *The Collected Poems of Henrik Ibsen (1902)*, translated by John Northam (n.d., 259). <https://www.hf.uio.no/is/tjenester/virtuelle-ibsen-senteret/ibsen-arkivet/tekstarkiv/oversettelser/34498.pdf>
40. It would be interesting to read the symposium scene together with August Strindberg’s “Efterspel” in *Mäster Olof* (1878). Here a theatre company is performing a play where God is the evil force, while Lucifer is the good force, trying to save human beings from a destiny as God’s entertainment.
41. “Et Rige, hvor alle Modsætninger skulde være løste og Gud og Verden smelte sammen, – nu, det kunde maaske passere som en apokalyptisk Drøm, et chiliastisk Sværmeri; – men et Fredens og Forsoningens Rige, hvor der skal ‘brændes Røgelse’ for karle som Kain og Judas, hvad er så det?” (Garborg 1873, 59). Garborg’s text was intended to be a review. It was originally published anonymously.
42. Fulsås and Rem read the presence of Maximus in Julian’s death scene as one of the most important factors contradicting a pro-Christian interpretation of the play (2018, 60). For Wyller, Julian’s death scene is a crucial argument for claiming that *Emperor and Galilean* is a play with a pro-Christian message, because Basilus and Makrina interpret Julian and his life as a tool in the Lord’s hands (1999, 188–189). But Wyller does not take Maximus’ presence and his words fully into consideration. In his essay on *Emperor and Galilean*, *Den filosofiske ape. Et essay om Henrik Ibsens Kejser og galilæer* (Kristiansen, 2019), Inge S. Kristiansen, also ignores Maximus’ lines



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- in the final scene in his eagerness to free Ibsen from a reputation as a spokesman for secularization.
43. “MAXIMUS: Se, Julian, – da Kaos væltede sig i det tomme forfærdelige øde, og Jehova var alene, – den dag, da han, efter de gamle jødiske skrifter, slog ud med sin hånd og delte mellem lys og mørke, mellem hav og land, – den dag stod den store skabende gud på sin magts tinde. Men med menneskene opstod viljer på jorden. Og mennesker og dyr og træer og urter skabte sine lige efter evige love; og efter evige love går alle stjerner i himmelrummet. Har Jehova angret? Alle folkeslags gamle sagn ved at fortælle om en angrende skaber” (Ibsen 2008, 656–657).
  44. “Vi finder jo ofte, at Digterne digter sig selv ind i sine Værker, for paa den Maade at faa udtale, hvad de har at sige sine Samtidige, – og det er gjennem Maximos, at Ibsen taler” [We often find, that authors write themselves into their work, and in that way, they are able to speak to their contemporaries, – and it is through Maximus that Ibsen talks] (Garborg 1873, 66).
  45. “[H]an var et levende Udtryk for sin Tids vildsomme Famlen og Gjæring’. Og hvis Henrik Ibsen er fornöiet med denne relative Stilling i Verden, saa har han naaet sin Hensigt” (Garborg 1873, 60).
  46. Letter to Frederik Hegel, July 12, 1871, referred to by Gjesdal (2021, 69).

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