



FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND BUSINESS STUDIES
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FATE ACCORDING TO THE PROSE EDDA NARRATION OF RAGNAROK
A Theological contemplation, elaboration and insight to the Norse pagan concept of fate

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Abstract

The Prose Edda chapter, Ragnarok as recorded by Snorri, was taken as a pivotal point for exploring fate according to the Norse mythology. The eschatological concept of collapsing gods and destruction of the world was explored through the logical and theological fatalist theory, diverging the orientation from the standard textual exploration. The thesis examines the concept by employing the methodology of hermeneutics to scrutinise the text. The analysis derived results confirmed the existence of belief in fate embedded in the text; the logical fatalism that polarises statements by their truthfulness, even though it was not found or indicated textually, provided a strong contrast to theological fatalism, evidenced throughout the text. The weak theological fatalism (determinism) was suggested in the findings based on the Ragnarok text, by which the inexorable change of aeons as set-in motion by the Universal Force (predicted by the three Volvas), does not entirely compromise the Aesir's free will; such as the cosmic order includes the free will in its mechanism; while Aesir's voluntary choice was dependent on God's forescience, it was still free to operate within the remit of its emission, unperturbed within the cosmic design. The Nietzschean concept of Amor Fati (Love for Fate) in accepting the inevitable, through the cyclicity of time, and as it appears with a reason that is to keep one happy, additionally illuminated our understanding of fate in Ragnarok. To counterbalance this idea and bring it into equilibrium, I reflected upon the notion of "Designer of Destiny", whereby human beings are assumed to run the entirety of their destiny, soon to learn that this human urge clashes with their biology (over which they do not have complete control) and the cosmic power that has already predetermined the human path.

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Note on citations and spelling: The names of gods in Norse mythology are spelt differently in the master's thesis depending on the sources where they have been mentioned. The most frequent examples of this spelling variegation include r controlled syllables, shortened and extended such as Balder or Baldr, Hoder or Hodr, shortened r ending syllables such as Surtr or Heimdallr and the r omitted Surt or Heimdal) as well as the open syllable (ending with a vowel and having a long sound) in the name e.g. Loke or Loki, including the Edda's collector's name Snorre or Snorri. Depending on the historical exactness of the ancient text, some scholars of Norse mythology used only shortened r controlled syllables in the spelling of Norse gods' names while others allowed themselves to be facilitated with the extended r ending syllable or omitting it completely in their English translations; the same case goes with the open ending syllable whereby a modification has been made in replacing i with an English e without a change in pronunciation. In this thesis, I use both the extended and omitted version of the r syllable as well as the i ending open syllable where necessary, which seems to have become established in the popular modern English literature except in the citations where a quoted author used shortened/omitted/open ending syllable versions for Norse gods' names.

Introduction

The story of Ragnarok as mentioned in the Norse mythology is an intriguing topic which includes a transactional chain of events comprising the great battle, natural disasters, and submersion of the world in the water before the land re-emerges and regenerates again with a couple of humans who should repopulate the earth. It refers to the destruction of the world, including the gods. It powerfully makes images and colourfully portrays the battle between the Norse gods and giants which outwardly is the ultimate battle between the forces of good and evil. According to the story and on the first sight, this destruction appears to be a maleficent thing although the battle of Ragnarok as described in the Eddas, brings about the change and the necessary regeneration to the world. Observed from this perspective, Ragnarok is the event born out of necessity for it shows the time in a cyclical manner just as are the rotations in the natural world such as a repeated shift of day to night, emphasising endless recurrence of combat between the forces of good and evil generating a renewal of the world.

There are different stories about the Norse gods and their adventures described in the Eddas but none of them, it appears, attracts as much attention as Ragnarok. Thus in 2017, Marvel Cinematic Universe produced the film “Thor: Ragnarok” whereby the demon Surtr wishes to tether his crown with the Eternal Flame in the vault of Odin to initiate Ragnarok – the event that was imminent. Thor takes Surtr’s crown defeating him to prevent Ragnarok. However, later in a battle with Hela (goddess of death), Thor realises that the only way to win over her would be to initiate Ragnarok by placing Surtr’s crown in the Eternal Flame. Thor sends Loki to do this by which Surtr is recreated and reanimated, who then destroys Asgard, Hela and himself while Thor escapes on a spaceship with a new adventure forthcoming.

There is also a 2013 film in Norwegian under the name *Gåten Ragnarok* (The Riddle Ragnarok) in which the archaeologist Sigurd Swenson instead of finding the evidence of Vikings stumbles upon the place where Ragnarok occurred. We could have recently watched the fictional series “Ragnarok” blending up the Norse mythology with climate change, whereby the revived avatar of Thor confronts the Jutul family (Jotunn or giants) who control the town of Edda where they are living in the present time. The series could be found on Netflix for the enjoyment of those who admire the Norse mythology to imagine what happens sometime after the Norse apocalypse. Evidently, Ragnarok does not only bring the amount of excitement for people by tickling their imagination, but it prompts them to gleam beyond the narrative of the event in addition to stimulating one to ponder deeper on the notion where we are heading or even plummeting towards with our lives.

Edda's Ragnarok is a prophecy given to the major Norse deity, Odin. However, one immediately must note that the nature of prophecies is to be vague as much as possible although they provide some details on how they will occur in the future. The story of Ragnarok as narrated in the Eddas provides us indeed with details, although one is not certain whether the characters are real or metaphors as they describe the culmination of fights between the gods and giants. More significantly, Ragnarok is about Norse gods' fate, what happens to the world in the final part of its deceptive and elusive existence. (The actual story's plot will be presented in a separate a chapter of this thesis.)

As it is known, Ragnarok was a part of the Norse pagan belief system the fact which is not uncommon for a religion to have an eschatological account - many other polytheistic and monotheistic religions have their versions how the world will end up with accuracy which could be understood in several ways. The event of Ragnarok has been re-narrated many times; however, one feels that it has not been expounded and elaborated upon much for it offers a multitude of possibilities for erudite explorations. One of those could be to explore the historicity of the texts; then the message found in the text; one could even stretch further and explore how the neo-pagan Asatru religion (sometimes known as Odinism) experiences the Edda's predictions on the twilight of the gods within the modern and revived expression of the Norse religion. (This would particularly be relevant to Iceland where we nowadays find a lot or reverts to their old religion.)

In this master's thesis, occupying the subject position from the outside, as someone who is not related to old Norse religion by ancestry, and for scholarly exploration of this myth, out of fascination, I have decided to investigate what I could find in and around the text according to the Prose Edda, which was preserved and torn from oblivion by Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), the Icelandic poet, historian, and politician.

The topic of this master's thesis concerns the fate of gods and all those who are entangled with them within the story. We often hear the proverbs such as "there is no flying from fate" or phrases such as "the fate worse than death". The reality is that many nations and people have these concerns about fate which are often tied back to their underpinning religious beliefs. Of course, these religious encrustations diverge and differ from each other although they sometimes mirror each other's reflections too.

On a side note, it was not an immediate desire of mine to research the concept of fate within the Norse religion; it came to me later after I had acquainted myself better with the text when it became apparent to me that the concept of fate plays a significant part in this religion. The text about Ragnarok which I have chosen to elaborate upon as already mentioned is contained within the Prose Edda. There are other texts and references in the Poetic Edda which mention the same event - my choice was to select the 16th chapter "Ragnarok" coming immediately after the 15th chapter "The Death of Balder" and preceding the 17th chapter "Regeneration" (both chapters being equally

relevant as context to the research although only the chapter of Ragnarok will be analysed further down in the text) from the Prose Edda for the dramatic compactness of its eschatological narrative being presented in one coherent piece. Any deductions about fate in the old Norse religion will be textually established based on this chapter while “The Death of Balder” and “Regeneration” should also assist our understanding of the actual text. The possible differences which other texts may contain, and present would render their findings beside the point. Within the permutations of glossary fate is explained as “the development of events outside a person's control, regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power.” (Lexico, 2020) Similarly, the Prose Edda Ragnarok text overall indicates that the event which will befall the gods, giants and people is something that is outside of their power and prearranged i.e., there is nothing that could prevent it from happening, something that we shall closely check within the Ragnarok text.

However, in this master's thesis, the quest will be to explore the presence of fatalism (as philosophical doctrine) whether it is present there and about the way it demonstrates itself. For the present, it is worth to mention the existence of two types of fatalism: logical (based on presumed logical truths) and theological (god's foreknowledge being irreconcilable with free will) before their proper elaboration is being rendered in the theory chapter. This chapter will be necessary and instrumental for undertaking the hermeneutical analysis of our chosen text.

The fate of Ragnarok conspicuously appears bleak to an ordinary onlooker, however, because everything is supposed to happen for a reason, it looks as if the gods are flying in the face of destiny to be fulfilled more out of a sense of necessity to honour fate (Amor Fati) in spite of their prediction based knowledge about who will die and who will survive the event or it is an attempt to tempt their destiny and reshape it according their will and wishes. For life is just regardless of what happens, here one exceptionally significant concept becomes relevant whether the humans have the capacity of free will to shape their destiny or it is a higher power that determines what will happen to them excluding and over-riding their will, something that is evidently demonstrated in the major Christian prayer, Pater Noster where it is said: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” The phrase “your will be done” sounds as if we do not have any choice and free will, God predetermines all what will befall us and there is nothing that we could do about it; all that we do is to blindly fulfil our fate. Or, we do have that power to change the fate. The things are not that simple because of God's foreknowledge and our ignorance about the circumstances in which the future event will take place.

Rather than speculating on the Norse gods' possible attempt to avoid their fate, how to alter it and change their individual destiny, we shall concentrate on what the Prose Edda articulates about it. Like any text, it could be observed both generally and specifically, however, we shall endeavour to do our analysis on a micro and macro level to increase the reliability of results obtained from the analysis.

Regarding the hypothesis, whether the text demonstrates fatalism and whether it is more logical or theological based on the demonstrable textual discourse we should bear in mind it is not what it is, but it is where the text leads us in our research - that will be of greater significance. After the hermeneutical analysis that was looked through the prism of logical and theological theory about the fate in Ragnarok according to the Prose Edda - what follows is the discussion. In this chapter, we discuss results (our hermeneutical understanding) and how they relate to other studies. As a part of the analysis, I shall include the intertextuality to try finding the relationship between Ragnarok and other texts that could have affected and altered the meaning and subsequently the conveyance of fate in the story. The validity of the meaning will be of paramount importance for it will be essential to establish that the text not only conveys the meaning which is understood by ordinary readers but also its words syntagms and sentences mean exactly that without any ambivalences which would shake or stir the interpretation by permuting it. In discussion, I reflect on the Nietzschean idea of Amor Fati as well as the New Age concept that we are the creators of our own destiny. In conclusion, I should customarily reiterate the thesis, revisit the main points mentioned in the thesis and give the final judgement whether and how the hypotheses are correct.

Etymology and Meaning of Ragnarok

The levels to which the concept of Ragnarok was imprinted in the Scandinavian mind, could be seen in Helgakviða Hundingsbana ll, 40. In this story, the slave girl of Sigrún, Helgi's widow goes to the burial mound where Helgi is buried and witnesses the spectacle of the ghost of Helgi and a group of men on horseback. Stunned by the visualisation, while exclaiming the slave girl mentions the compound "ragna-rok":

Hvárt era þat svic ein, er ec síá þicciomz, eða ragna roç? ríða menn dauðir, er ioa yðra oddom keyrit, eða er hildingom heimfor gefin.

Is it a fraud (illusion), That I think I see, Or is it ragnarok? Do dead men ride, As you spur on, Your horses, Or is a return home, Granted to warriors? (Martin, 1972:3)

Regarding the immediate association between the vision and ragnarok, witnessed in the poem, Martin (1972) writes: "The influence of old eschatology had so impressed itself on men's minds that the girl's immediate reaction was to express her astonishment in terms of ragnarok." (3) Apart from the word being mentioned in the stanza above, the word also appears in Bafþruðnismál 55 as well as in Baldrs Draumar 14 to signify eschatological doom. The scholars give the impression to agree on the origin of the word. The first part of the compound, ragna, represents genitive of the neuter plural noun regin "which Cleasby and Vigfusson define as "the gods as makers and rulers of the universe"". Some lexicologists agree on the meaning of counsellors, associating the word with Gothic *ragin* to denote counsel or decision. Holthausen believed that the name related to the Gothic *rahnjan* "rechnen" to reckon. (3) The word could be found in the compounds such as *ginnregin* (the gods endowed with magic powers) and *uppregin* (the gods ruling in from the heights). (4) Apart from the

Eddic sources, the word has been found on two Swedish runestones although "in the *Gulafings log* the verb *ragna* is seen by Fritzner to mean "to bewitch, to damage with sorcery in an unnatural manner"" (4)

The word *røk* is a neuter noun and according to Cleasby and Vigfússon it primarily denotes reason, ground, and origin and secondly it signifies wonder, sign or marvel. (4) While most lexicologists consent with this, Fritzner is more liberal in his explanation saying that it is "that which belongs to a thing, stands in relationship to it as its origin, beginning, cause, ground, sign of or witness to it, connection, condition, circumstances connected with it, the end it attains." Etymologically the term is supposed to be connected with Old English *racu* meaning course, river bed, tale, Old Saxon *raka* and Old High German *rakka* (tale, speech)." (4) These old Germanic variations of the word *røk* could be found in the Proto Slavic word *reka* or *rekka* from which the word had probably been borrowed and from which even today through its derivatives, in the modern Slavic languages, *rijeka*, *reka*, *riječ* signify the course of the river, the current of what has been said such as explanation or tale. The Old Icelandic language used the word *røk* to mean "explanation, elucidation". (4)

On the basis what was said and in agreement with Hellquist who defines *ragnarøk* as divine powers of fate (4); I would be inclined to make the translation of the compound even closer by describing it as "those who rule over the course of fate". Fritzner explains the word *ragnarok* as "the darkness wherein the divine powers or beings find their collapse." (4)

The word darkness that Fritzner mentions is alluded from the context of *Lokasenna* 39, yielding a different meaning: the wolf is said to lie in the bonds until *ragnarøk*. In this instance, the compound could be justly translated as "twilight of gods", "Götterdämmerung" for *røkr* in Old Norse signify twilight. In regard to this notion, Martin writes the following: "Although an obvious misunderstanding of the original by substituting *røkr* (twilight) for *røk* (fate), this form expresses so well the emotional connotation of the collapse of the divine order that it became, the word which Snorri Sturluson used in the Prose Edda and which was popularized in the eighteen century by the French as "crépuscule des dieux" and passed into German." (5)

According to Anderson, the name *Ragnarok* probably means "the darkness of the gods", and it derives its etymology from *regin* meaning gods and *røkr* to signify darkness although a more plausible suggestion has been put forward whereby was the word *regn* means rain and *rok* denote smoke or dust and in that way the combination shows the aspects of rain and dust to give its precise meaning. (Sacred Texts, n.d.) McCoy (2016) translates *Ragnarok* as "Final Fate of the Gods" explaining it "...the Viking word used to refer to the cataclysm event that will bring about destruction of the cosmos." (280).

As it could be seen from the exposed etymology above, there are two similar compounds to distinguish the word *ragnarok* and *ragnarokr*, the first one with the meaning that could be approximated and reduced as "the fate of rulers", which is my

literal translation, while the meaning of the second word Ragnarøkkr could be said to denote "the twilight of Gods", "the darkness of gods" and even "the smoke of rulers". (Please, note that in this master's thesis, I shall use only the term Ragnarok to signify "the fate of rulers", which this thesis is about.)

On Snorri Sturluson and the Prose Edda

To understand the concept of fate through the prism of Snorri's Edda in the chapter of Ragnarok, it is first necessary to present the collector of this remarkable compilation of Norse poetry. After this presentation, we shall say a few words on the Eddas itself. Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) was orphaned at an early age, and he was brought up by Jon Loptsson, an influential chieftain in Iceland. After he married, he settled in Rejkaholt, where he gained the standing of a scholar, writer, and historian. Snorri was appointed as the "law speaker" twice in the Iceland High Court.

"He collected and wrote down as many of the old oral poems as he could find. He also added his own commentary and extensive writings into what became a kind of poetic handbook which has come down to us as the Prose Edda, with "edda" meaning great-grandmother." (Hourly History, 2016:1-2)

"One version of his Eddas, a collection of poems by Saemund Sigfusson, was found in 1643 in an old farmhouse in Oddi. This is now known as the Poetic (or *eder*) Edda, and it contains some tales from as early as 800 BCE; riddle contests between gods and giants and amazing story of creation of the world." (Hourly History, 2016:2)

"One of the reasons that the Eddas are such a trustworthy source is that we know from contemporary source is that, although Snorri was Christian, he did not hold the popular opinion that pagan gods were manifestations of Satan." (2)

The title of Edda was used for Snorri's work in the mediaeval times and its compilation if not authorship was attributed to him. The evidence about this comes from the oldest manuscript, the Uppsala Edda (Uppsala University Library, De la Guardie 11, U). At the beginning of this manuscript, there is a rubric which states the following:

"This book is called Edda. It is compiled by Snorri Sturluson in the manner in which it is arranged here. It is first about Aesir and Ymir; then Skaldaskaparmal ["the language of poetry"] and terms for many things, finally Hattatal ["list of verse forms"] which Snorri has composed about King Hakon and Duke Skuli." (Clunies Ross, 2005: 159-160)

The Eddas is the names given to two Medieval Icelandic literary works, the older corpus of poems known as the Poetic Edda and the Prose Eddas collected by Snorri. Sawyer and Sawyer (2000) write that "The Eddic verse is preserved in a thirteenth-century manuscript known as the Poetic or Elder Edda, to distinguish it from the Prose Edda, in which Snorri Sturluson surveyed and systematized Norse mythology and legend, with many quotations, mostly in short extracts." (24)

Clunies Ross (2005) enumerates three possible explanations of the meaning of the name Edda. The first is that the term edda which appears in the poem Rigsthula stanzas 2, 4 and 7 mean "great grandmother", the second explanation of the meaning is derived from the name Oddi meaning "the Book of Oddi" because Snorri lived in the same-named town of Oddi when he was young. The third explanation relies on the Latin verb edo "to compose poetry" being the Icelandic diminutive and it means "poetics". (Faulkes, 1977:160)

The Prose Edda is comprised of a Prologue and three separate books. The first book concerns creation and predicted the destruction of the world as well as the regeneration and rebirth of the Norse world; the second part is called Skaldskaparmal (The Language of Poetry) which represents a dialogue between Aegir (godly personification of the sea) and Bragi who is the god of poetry where both the Norse mythology and discourse on the nature of poetry are being shown – here Bragi gives a list of kennings (compound phrases such to designate a thing such as *ben-fúrr* "wound-fire is a kenning for "sword") and the nature of heiti (synonyms such as "jór" meaning steed instead of "hestr" for horse); and Hattatal presenting how the verse forms are utilised in the Norse mythology.

Norse Pantheon of Gods and Giants

In the Old Norse language, the word to designate a god is *ás*, and in plural the word is *æsir*. The corresponding feminine form in the singular is *ásina*, and in the plural it is *ásnjur*. When we refer to them collectively, the word *æsir* is used as we often find this word when referring to the Norse pantheon. The words are derived from Proto-Germanic roots, *ansaz* (pole, beam, rafter) or *ansuz* (life, vitality) which are the strange meanings; McCoy (2016) says that "the gods were metaphorical "poles" or "vital forces" that held together and sustained cosmos rather being who manipulated it from the outside. When the cosmos arose, they arose with it as part of the same process. And when the cosmos will fall, as the Norse prophecies of Ragnarok foretell, the gods will fall with it" (25-26) In this part of the thesis, I introduce us to the most important and relevant Norse gods and other mythical creatures, which are mentioned in the event of Ragnarok.

Odin is the chief of the gods, in Norse mythology. The Norse had over 200 names for him. He is also called All-father. He is depicted with a cloak, a staff, and a large, brimmed hat. The hat is pulled down to disguise the fact that he has only one eye as he sacrificed the other at the Well of Urd to gain inner wisdom which he prizes above all things. He married three times Fjorgyn, Frigga and Rind. His sons were Thor, Balder, Hoder, Tyr, Bragi Heimdall, Uil, Hermod, Vidar, and Vali. The latter two were destined to survive Raganrok. (Hourly History, 2016:16)

Frigg is Odin's wife and mother of his two sons, Balder and Hoder. Despite being in matrimony with her husband, she could be being flirtatious with other gods and giants. It was alleged that she had relations with her in-laws. In the southern regions of the Viking traditions, she was revered as the goddess of women. She had a role in

the story of the chaining of Loki, which showed how a goddess could fail morally. For she overlooked the mistletoe which killed Balder and Hoder, but it also showed how fallible the Viking pantheon could be. In one story, she was portrayed as a jealous goddess. When Odin received a golden statue from his mistress, she demanded that the statue was melted and turned into gold jewellery for her on which Odin conceded. (Hansen, 2017:25)

Thor was an impulsive and violent god, among the Vikings. He was revered and admired, the deity of thunder, lightning, and storms. In his appearance, he looked youthful - tall and handsome with a red beard. Apart from his violent temper, the Vikings knew him as someone who ate large quantities of food and drank a lot of beer. He was considered as the toughest of all the gods. Thor fought against the forces of chaos, struggling to preserve and defend the world from evil. He battled against the giants of the wilds with his magical hammer known as Mjöltnir and wore an enchanted belt, Megingjörð that doubled his already formidable strength. (Hansen, 2017:22-23; National Geographic, 2019:89)

Tyr is the bravest of the Norse gods. In the final fight, Ragnarok, Tyr fights Hel's terrifying dog, Garm; they kill each other in the end.

Mimir (Mimer) is Odin's great maternal uncle, according to Ewing (2014) as mentioned in Chapter 2, "Nine Worlds and Mimir's Wood". He writes: "...this is also consistent with the poem Hávamál (st.140) where Odin states that he gained drink and wisdom from 'Bolthor's famous son'; Bolthor is the father of Odin's mother, Bestla. In Snorri's version of this myth, Odin travels to meet Mimir and pay with his eye to drink the water from the Well of Wisdom." (2014:16)

Baldr (Balder or Baldur) is a deity and a son of Odin and Frigg. McCoy (2016) writes: "Balder was said to be the fairest of all of the Norse deities, both in appearance and in character, to the point that he actually radiated light...His hall in Asgard was called Breidablik (Old Norse Breidablik, "Broad Splendor"), where little to no malice could be found. Among the Norse, the ox-eye daisy was called "Balder's Eyelash" on account of its long, slender and pure white petals." (44) As seen from the narration, this was an elegant bright and much-loved deity among the Norse gods and people. The dream about his own death was a catalyst for unravelling a series of events and eventually Ragnarok (or it could be said that his dream was a part of the greater cosmic plan). Balder's worried mother, Frigg, went "to all the beings in creation and gather their oaths not to harm Baldr. "(Hansen, 2017: 24). Despite all the attempts to protect Balder by the Aesir, he was harmed by a cunning trick of Loki and gone to the underworld where he will remain at the end of Ragnarok when he reappears in the living world together with the lucky survivors after this devastating event. As he is the God of Sun and light, his comeback has a symbolic meaning in that it represents the victory of good over evil.

Heimdall (Heimdall or Heimdallr) is one of the greatest asar (gods). In a dialogue between the Ganglere and Har, mentioned within Snorre Edda, Har describes Heimdall

as follows: “Heimdal is the name of one. He is also called the white-asa. He is great and holy; born of nine maidens, all of whom were sisters. He hight also Hallinskide and Gullintanne, for his teeth were of gold. His horse hight Gulltop (Gold-top). He dwells in a place called Himinbjorg, near Bifrost. He is the ward of the gods, and sits at the end of heaven, guarding the bridge against the mountain-giants. He needs less sleep than a bird; sees a hundred miles around him, and as well by night as by day. He hears the grass grow and the wool on the backs of the sheep, and of course all things that sound louder than these. He has a trumpet called the Gjallarhorn, and when he blows it, it can be heard in all the worlds. “(Snorre, 2006:88). The Edda also states that Heimdal will blow the Gjallar-horn to signal the start of the battle of Ragnarok between the gods and giants.

Loki (Loke) is the son of a giant – he sired three monstrous beings Fenrir the wold, the Midgard Serpent, and the goddess, Hell. “The fate of these three offspring sealed the fate of the gods as Ragnarok in that Fenrir was chained, the Midgard Serpent was cast into the primordial sea, and Hel was banished to the Niflheim (literally “fog home” in the icy north) to become the goddess and the realm of the dead.”(Hansen, 2017:23) In one story, “Snorri Sturluson tells us of Loki’s banishment and chaining to a cliff until the “End of Times”” (24). During Ragnarok, “Loki would break free and reign destruction on the deities and humanity along with his offspring.” (24)

Fenrir (Fenris) is one-quarter god and three-quarters giant creature that threatens the stability of the world with its rage and threatens to swallow the sun and moon robbing the world of day and night, light, and darkness.

Jormungand (Jörmungandr) or the World Serpent, is a creature that lives in the oceans encircling the Earth, who will rise at a particular time in the future and slither onto the land. Her movements will cause the world water to spread across the world, causing big floods and destruction of the world.

Surt (Surtr) is a jötunn, a type of mythical being; according to Hansen (2017), he is a giant (43) although one cannot be certain about it because Odin was a descendent from jötnar (plural of jötunn). In the Younger (Snorri) Edda, within the chapter of The Creation of the World, we find out that he is from the south, the bright and hot place called Muspelheim. “Surt is the name of him who stands on its border guarding it. He has a flaming sword in his hand, and at the end of the world he will come and harry, conquer all the gods, and burn up the whole world with fire.” (Snorre, translation: Anderson, 2006:57) In Ragnarok, the role of this jötunn will be to fling the fire all over the world and burn it. (Snorre, 2006:143)

Hel is a custodian of the underworld who reminds us that all the living, including gods, have to die. (Clunies Ross, 2005:178)

Valkyrie is a female mythological creature, the word being derived from the Old Norse Valkyrja or “chooser of the slain”, who selects those in the battle who will die and who will be taken to Valhalla in their afterlife to live with Odin. The deceased warriors

become einherjar (single or once fighters) (Orchard, 1997 3:6) There they exercise their military skills for the event of Ragnarök, but in between those preparations while they are resting and for their respites, Valkyries bring the nectar of mead for the heroes' enjoyment.

Vala is the seeress who tells us about how the world will end; how the battle between gods and giants will unfold in Ragnarok.

The Universal Story of Ragnarok

In this chapter, I would like us to familiarise and prime ourselves with the story of Ragnarok. The story about this event has been narrated in The Prophecy of the Seers, The Song of Vafthrudnir, and the Prose Edda. According to McCoy, some of the details of the tale may be slightly "Christianized" although the underlying idea and the plot is undoubtedly ancient and pre-Christian". (McCoy, 2016:280) Bearing that in mind, we embark on recounting the synthesised story of Ragnarok as understood from the ancient sources.

After getting from his bonds being tied on three rocks, in which Loki was put by the Aesir for the punishment for causing Balder to go into the underworld and liberating oneself from the convulsions of dripping venom snake above his head – the things start moving on; Loki is angry and plans up to take revenge against the gods of Aesir. Hel and Fenrir also get free with the help of Loki, they are assisted by a group of fire giants against the Aesir in the final battle. (Clunies Ross, 2005:178) Then, Odin gathers the army of bravest Viking warriors who were congregated by Odin in Valhalla, and they will rush out from it to fulfil the purpose for which they were intended. The seething conflict between the gods and the giants will finally occur on the omen of Fimbulwinter, i.e. "Great Winter" with the three winters that follow each other in a row with no summer in between. There will be a time when darkness, ice and wind will clutch the earth tightly refusing to cease due to Sun's inability to shine brightly. The time of war will come when the sword and shield will not be spared from being used, and then there will be a great earthquake. (McCoy, 2016: 281)

At that moment, the chain called Gleipnir will break, and Fenrir will be free. "The wolf's jaws will gape so wide that his top jaw touches sky and his bottom jaw scrapes the ground, and fire shoots out from his eyes and his nostrils." (Ewing,2014: 185) Jormungand, the big serpent that encircles the world in the depths of the sea will finally raise up and slither upon the land causing big floods. The angry monster will also spew poison spurting it over sea and land. (186).

The big battle will unfold at Vigrid, the "Place of Surging Battle", a field where the Aesir gods will fight the forces of Surtr. All the giants, Fenrir Loki and Jorugad will stand on one side against the Aesir and Odin's army of dead heroes from Valhalla. (McCoy, 2016:282)

Heimdall will place the Yeller Horn to his lips; the horn which had never been blown before. Once blown, the sound will be heard across all Asgarth summoning the gods to

action. (Ewing, 2014:187) Odin then consults with Mimir's head (which was once severed from his body in a battle between gods) to see if there is anything to be done to prevent such events – the answer he receives from Mimir will not be satisfactory but a grim one. (McCoy, 2016:281)

With a shining golden helmet on his head and a spear called Flinch, Odin who will be riding Slider will be in the front. Storm Rider (Thor) will be next to him. Odin will ride against Fenrir, but he falls between the wolf's gaping jaws and gets swallowed. Thor could not help him because he was fighting the Great Serpent. However, Odin's son Vidar steps up and strikes with his foot in Fenrir's jaw –he tears up wolf's mouth with his bare hands thus revenging for his father's death at the same time. Hel's dog Garm will get set free and will fight against Tyr. Both will be killed there. Loki will fight with Heimdal killing each other too. Frey will fight without his sword – he fights long and hard against Surt with a stag's antler but eventually falls too. Then Surt will hurl his fire all over the world, causing everything to burn in flames.

Thor will stride out against the Great Serpent in a battle for the second time; this time he will strike serpent's head with his hammer killing it. The cloud of poison will rise above the snake, and as he was to escape it, it engulfed him, so he falls dead. (Ewing, 2014:197-199)

After this cosmic drama, new gods will arrive at Ida Field – Vidar and Vali, both the sons of Odin will be present there. Thor's sons Magni and Modi with their qualities of strength and bravery will be there too; however Balder (a god of the summer sun) will take up the throne – beside him will be his brother Hoder and his wife, Nanna. Two humans, Lif and Lifthrasir who were hiding in a tree trunk will come out, and they will repopulate the earth. (McCoy, 2016:283) In the grass of Ida Field, they will find the golden chess figurines with which they previously played in Aesir. With an air of nostalgia, they will talk about the old days – about Fenrir and Jorgumandr, Thor and Odin, Siff and Frigg, about Frey and Freya, all the gods from the past (Ewing, 2014:190)

Brief History of the Vikings (The Viking Age)

In this chapter, our attention will be concentrated on the origin of the word Viking, their raiding activities, political organisation, spiritual practices, and the consequences that emanated from these actions. This should additionally help us understand their character, ethics, and habits, but in the overall scheme, it should indicate the stance where they stood regarding fate.

The word Viking represents a slight mystery – it may be linked to the Old Norse word vík meaning bay or creek, in which sense a Viking would designate someone who kept his ship in a bay, either for trading or raiding. Others searched the origin of the term in the Old English word wic borrowed from Latin vicus to designate a camp or a trading-place which would have meant that a Viking was some sort of warrior or a trader or both. The word had a different meaning to different people – for Christians

in Western Europe, they were pagan barbarians while for the people in Scandinavia, they embodied the ideal of heroism and valour (Magnusson, 2003: loc 80)

Who indeed were the Vikings? They did not come just like that; there must have been a reason for their appearance on the historical stage that was not so abrupt as previously thought even though, in the history books, they introduced “suddenly” as the Viking attack which occurred in 789 at Portland in southern England or by a more infamous event of the Vikings when they attacked the monastery of Lindisfarne, in north-eastern England. When the history books portray the image of these people, they are usually shown as raiders, looters, or bloody murderers, which is not a pleasant mental image to have about someone. Nowadays, some scholars have a habit of delimiting the Viking age from 793 to 1066, being a period in the history of Scandinavia during which they built their settlements throughout Europe; however, I would move the time boundary to a slightly earlier period, 750 AD because of the recent archaeological discovery that we should see from the following account.

Namely, around 750 a group of Viking warriors hauled two wooden ships onto the shallow sandy headland on the island of Saaremaa, near the coast of Estonia. Far away from their homes in Scandinavia, these were the survivors of a foreign fighting campaign that had gone disastrously wrong. In the ships there were 40 dead and entangled bodies – one of them might even have been a king. They were young, tall, muscular, and burly men. Some of them had been stabbed, shot with arrows, or hacked to death; others had literally been cut to pieces. (National Geographic, 2019)

The survivors began the gruesome task to reassemble the severed body parts and preparing the dead. They laid out several bodies in the hull of the largest ship, then placed their leader and his fine sword in the centre. “Beside and above this man, they arranged the remaining corpses, along with their swords and fine antler combs.” Once done, the mourners covered the dead men with wooden shields or stones and placed sacrificed dogs and hunting falcons close to the bodies. After having held a ceremony, the surviving warriors left their deceased comrades. (National Geographic, 2019)

In 2008 a work crew laying an electrical cable near the town of Salme discovered human bones and a rusty sword on the promontory jutting out to sea. The workmen immediately alerted the local authorities who called in an archaeological team lead by Jüri Peets, a senior researcher at Tallinn University. Having examined these remains, Jüri Peets proclaimed this to be the earliest evidence of the beginning of the Viking raids. (National Geographic, 2019)

One of the frequently asked questions is to why the Vikings raided or what was it that abetted them to attack and exploit the surrounding neighbours. The answer could perhaps be seen in the following explanation. Today a view commonly held is that the volcanic eruptions which began in 536 in Chile, South America, produced a lot of ash in the upper atmosphere, blocking out the sun, leading to global cooling (akin to a nuclear winter) which triggered widespread famine and cold in Scandinavia, resulting in widespread crop failures. Consequently, the Scandinavians resorted to looting and raids against other people in foreign lands just to survive. (National Geographic, 2019)

However, to understand the Scandinavian society better, we should not solely focus on their raids and intrusions into other foreign territories; there were other aspects of life that were determining their identity – they would have their small plots of land where they cultivated vegetables in addition to having the cattle as well as hunting for meat in the wilderness. In that sense, we should concentrate more on Scandinavia itself hence the question: “What was the political situation in Scandinavia in the during the Viking Age?” Sawyer and Sawyer (2000) informs us that the recent countries as we know them Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, and Norway are relatively new concepts which were formed by clustering other small kingdoms in the 10th and 11th century. The only kingdoms that we know of and which existed in the 9th century were a small island Bornholm, the kingdoms of Danes and Svear. Other kingdoms may have existed too but the power would have been centralised in one ruler but divided between several lords with their own men. (49)

The same pattern was transplanted with the Norwegian immigrants to Iceland. Two centuries later (after the Initial Viking colonisation of Iceland), nothing has changed, we still could find the same model in Iceland whereby three dozen of lords of men called gothar (singular gothi) were ruling the country. The term gothi was originally used to signify a lord of men and not of territory; ordinarily he would represent his people in thing (the Viking assembly or parliament). The number of gothar was significantly reduced by the 13th century through either conquest or marriage, thus for example, by 1220, in Iceland there were only 5 families who dominated all the lordships, which in turn “led to a territorialisation of power”. The vast parcels of land, led by the chieftains, were called ríki or stor (large) ríki. While there might have been some unmentioned kingdom that have risen out of this system generally the apparatus of multiple lords survived until 13th century in Scandinavia (Sawyer and Sawyer, 2000:49-50)

How about the Viking religious practices? The Scandinavians were believers in a whole pantheon of gods, supernatural beings, and other mythical creatures. They thought of women being above all talented at magic. They used many types of magic such as incantatory, rune, death, divination, cursing destructive and other types of magic such as love, weather, projecting one’s soul into an animal for spying and lycanthropy (shapeshifting) magic. (Hansen, 2017: 32-37)

One of the essential beliefs that the Scandinavians held was their belief in Ragnarok. Both Prose and Poetic Edda contain references to this terrifying event. There are two versions of the event. The first account is based on the Poetic Edda whereby in the aftermath the world is reborn, the earth emerges from the sea with Hoder and Balder returning and resurrecting Thor and the other sons of Odin, man, and woman Líf and Lífthrasir appear to repopulate the earth under a new deity “All-Father”. (43-44) In the Prose Edda Snorri cites the Poetic Edda, but he sometimes contradicts what the Poetic Edda narrates us about Ragnarok. Here, we learn that Vidar and Vali, Odin’s son along with Balder and Hoder, will live in Idavollr on the place where once stood Asgard. (45)

Regarding the Viking religion on the general, it was decentralised for it is thought to be a folk religion meaning that the structure of it was not overly hierarchical and rigid; there were no official priests like in Christianity. While there was no a class of priests that would function on its own, “there were various social and political roles that doubled as religious leadership among the Vikings.” (53) In Iceland, they used the *godi* and *godya* words to mark a priest and a priestess, but these terms would have been used to denote a chieftain too. The kings and jarls were also tasked for the spiritual wellbeing of their people. “They led the aspects of public faith while the head of the household led the family in the private aspects of religious practice.” Other types of religious leaders included the *pulr* or *thul* who were supposed to recite song or speeches preserving the sacral knowledge. The *volva* (seeress) and *seidmadr*, practising the divination magic, were linked with a type of sorcery called the *seid*. (53-54)

In addition to this religious practice, Foote and Wilson (1970) write that there were three main religious festivals each year “one in the autumn after harvest, one in midwinter, sometime after the solstice, and one at the beginning of summer.” While the festivals were used to elevate security and fertility they were also connected to the sacrifice for victory in the intended campaigns or raids that would ensue after that in the coming months. (401)

To find out what the future brings them, the Vikings would use casting lots. Pieces of wood, *blótsþánn* (sacrificial chip) or *hlaut-tain* (lot-twig) would be marked, mixed up, drawn and thrown on the ground to be interpreted as positive or negative. (401) This last piece of information is particularly significant to bear in mind because it pertains to the notion of fate, that represents the central idea which I shall be exploring in connection to the Norse myth of Ragnarok throughout this master’s thesis.

Definitions of the Most Important Theological Concepts for the Norse Religion

In this subchapter, we get acquainted with the most significant concepts related to the ancient Norse religion. From the Elder and Younger Eddas reading, there are the concepts or beliefs that one can immediately notice without much difficulty. The beliefs of polytheism, fate, fatalism, determination, cosmic dualism sit in the Norse religion's core. They seem strange, yet they are familiar – the only difference is that a modern human has not emotionally experienced them. For that sake, I have decided to stride gingerly into the master's topic by first briefly defining each of these beliefs.

Polytheism

Polytheism, “the belief in or and worship of more than one god” (Lexico, 2020) as a term derives its lexical meaning from the Greek words *πολύ* *poly* (“many”) and *θεός* *theos* (“god”) was coined by the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (c.20 BCE – c. 50 CE). When Philo used the word, he referred to the Greek and other polytheists

who worshipped their gods. The term has been used ever since - nowadays we employ it for any other religion that held similar beliefs. The Norse religion would not be excluded for they too believed in a pantheon of different gods who had different personality traits and qualities. As with the ancient Greek gods, the Norse pantheon of gods had its own hierarchy with Odin on the top – the other gods followed him closely down the pyramid in the hierarchy.

The scholars of paganism have already theologically separated polytheism into two categories: soft polytheism and hard polytheism. Soft polytheism understands the many gods as aspects of one God/ess (Hoff Kraemer, 2012: loc 324) while hard polytheism "is the view that the gods are objectively existing, independent personalities with whom human being can have relationships." (loc 453).

Whether the Norse pantheon belongs to soft or hard polytheism is a matter of proper research, but at first glance, from reading the Eddas, one could easily infer that it was hard polytheism. This important concept required definition because whenever the term polytheism would be used in this master's thesis, the reader has already been advised, that there is a distinction between polytheisms and in this piece of written work, the term (as it is our belief) relates to and designate the position of hard polytheism.

Another term in literature is used interchangeably with polytheism as a substitute for it – pantheon meaning a temple full of gods. In terms of production, pantheons according to Lincoln (2012) could be divided into 1) explicit (the external observation and articulation of pagan practices without having or taking part in any sort of formal authoritative encoding), 2) implicit (being "a by-product of the ongoing religious activity of a polytheistic population") and 3) pantheons produced by indigenous theorist ("who are concerned to organise their own beliefs and those of their coreligionists, and worked out by scholars of a later era (or different culture), whose business to study it is to study the gods of others"); these pantheons are also termed as either indigenous or exogenous; Lincoln also puts them as a subdivision of explicit pantheons (18-19).

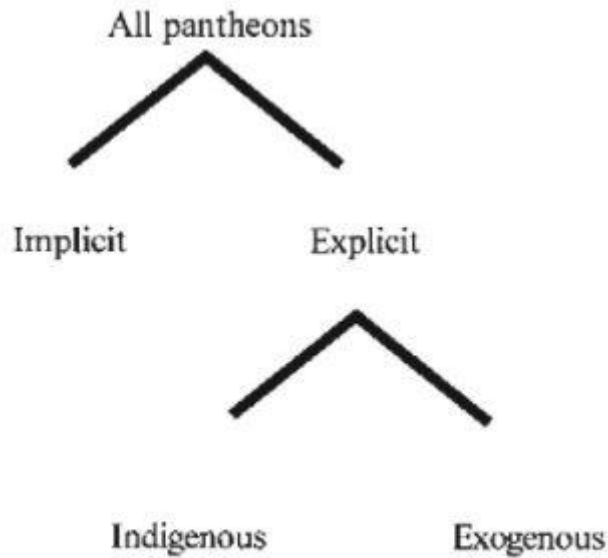


FIGURE 3.1 Subcategories of pantheons.

(Lincoln, 2012:19)

Fatalism Determinism and Pre-determinism

The following three concepts that are often used interchangeably that they might be considered synonymous at times, I shall define in brief for they will be significant for handling, treating, and managing our arguments further down in the thesis but for the moment to get the idea what they represent, their brief reference is necessary. A more elaborate explanation of the view of fatalism and its entanglement with the other two concepts will be rendered in the theory chapter. For now, we shall satisfy ourselves with the standard definitions of the three cousin concepts that many people still use inaccurately disregarding their subtle but essential finesses.

Fatalism is a view that certain occasions will occur “no matter what” or simply put, what will happen will happen irrespective of causes. (Taylor, 2015:42) Van Inwagen (2015) defines fatalism as “a logical or conceptual truth that no one is able to act otherwise that he in fact does; that the very idea of an agent to whom alternative courses of action are open is self-contradictory”. (*An Essay on Free Will*, p. 23.) (Maverick Philosopher, 2011)

He further elaborates that in philosophy, the word fatalism is used to designate two crucial factors – one that what happens is inevitable and that none could act otherwise that he can. (55) The best illustration of the inexorability of fate could be seen in the Athenian tragedy by Sophocles under the title of Oedipus Tyrannus, which was first performed in 429 BCE, whereby the oracle foretold Oedipus’s father that his own son would kill him, and he would marry his mother; the occurrence indeed happened according to the story, and the fate was fulfilled.

Determinism states that all events are rendered unavoidable (inevitable and inescapable) by their causes. (Taylor,2015:42) Determinism is a view that our decisions are a part of the unbreakable chain of cause and effect and that all events, including moral choices, are determined by previously existing causes. Determinism is at times understood to exclude free will because it entails that humans cannot act otherwise than they do.

“What the determinist says is that the actual past together with the actual laws of nature render nomologically possible only one future. The determinist must therefore deny that the future is open. But his claim is not that it is logically self-contradictory that the future be open, but only that it is not open given the facts of the past, which are logically contingent, together with the laws of nature, which are also logically contingent.” (Maverick Philosopher, 2011)

Pre-determinism is the concept positing that all happenings whether they are positioned in the past, present or future are decided and known in advance by mere fate, Supreme Being, or some other force - this also includes predetermined human actions.

“Pre-determinism implies that all the information in the universe today is implicit in the earliest moments of the universe. It is information conserving. It is consistent with the theological idea of God’s foreknowledge.” (Information Philosopher, 2021)

Dualism

All things are double one against another: and he hath made nothing imperfect. (Ecclesiasticus 42: 24) The Bible citation nicely captures that each idea has its opposite equivalent stating that such a phenomenon is expected, the way the world works, i.e., dualism. One does not need to be a philosopher to develop the concept of duality; people habitually think in binary patterns versing (opposing) good against evil, beautiful against ugly, light against darkness, clean against dirty etc. The Vikings were no exception, with their pantheon of gods and divine events, they also contrasted the noble and virtuous aspects of life against evil and corrupt ones. This also included cosmogenesis (the origin or evolution of the universe), which is not plainly stated in the Eddas. Still, it is immediately apparent to an onlooker from reading its text. There are many types of dualisms, one of the most mentioned is mind-body dualism, which is a philosophical stance that posits that mind relatable aspects concern non-physical phenomena while body relatable aspects represent materiality; both aspects are delineated and separated in some shape and form from each other, and their mutual causality has differing results. (Hart, 1996:265-267)

The Italian scholar, Ugo Bianchi, divides dualisms into three categories absolute/moderate (monarchic), dialectical/eschatological and cosmic/anti-cosmic. Absolute dualism accepts as accurate that there are two co-eternal principles whereas moderate/monarchic believe in one principle “along with an ultimately subordinate

second divine power”. Dialectical dualism posits that there is an eternal and perpetual interaction between two principles while eschatological dualism believes in the eventual resolution of the conflict between the two principles. Cosmic dualist believes that the material world is both good (positive) and bad (negative) or a mixture of them both. In contrast, anti-cosmic dualists hold the notion that the material world is the creation of an evil god/principle. (Dizdar, 2016:63)

Many sources contain references to dualism, mainly in ancient religions such as Egyptian, Indian, Zoroastrian and Orphic as well as in the mythologies of various peoples worldwide. (Dizdar, 2016:63) To determine the quality of dualism and its nature in Norse mythology, we obviously would have to consult the Norse Eddas. Through the textual exploration of the text, if an opportunity arises, I would use Ugo Bianchi’s division as a primary point of reference for discerning the types of dualism.

Fate and Destiny

These two terms are frequently used interchangeably, but they are not the same. The word fate comes from the Latin word *fatum*, and it literally means “that which has been spoken.” “Fate is based on the notion that there is a natural order in the Universe which cannot be changed, no matter how hard we try.” The ancient Greeks and Romans believed that three goddess or three fates Clothos, Lachesis and Atropos, were in charge of determining people’s life path. (Sol, 2019)

The word to designate fate used by the pagan Norse people was *Urðr* or *Örlög*, depending on where they lived and how they pronounced it; in the Old English, i.e., Saxon the word was *Wurd* that came from Proto-Germanic *Wurðiz*, and as such, it represented the major force that regulated the course of events in the universe. The only independent beings that were not affected by the *Urðr* were Norns, the beings that moulded the destiny itself. (These mysterious beings of the feminine gender, usually represented in three or more, lived at the base of *Yggdrasil* (the Norse Tree of Life or in the English translation “the awesome one’s horse, or mount”) where they sustain the tree to stay alive; they were also described as very wise.) The destiny of each person was etched into the twigs of *Yggdrasil* as runes. The old Norse people who used runes as the means to see what the future brings, subsequently inquired about their fate by reading them – thus in the Elder Edda, in the *Voluspa* (19, 20) we find the explanation of how the rune staves contained such knowledge – the rune staves were carved by the Norns who come out from the well of *Urd* and who water *Yggdrasil*. (Murphy, S.G., 2013: 6-8 and 166-167) Here is the mentioned poem:

I know that there stands an ash-tree
Called *Yggdrasil*,
A high tree, soaked with shining loam;
From there come the dews
That fall in the valley.
Ever greener, it stands over
The well of Fate.

...

From there come the maidens,
Knowing a great deal,
Three of them, out of the lake,
Which stands under the tree.
They call one Urd [“what happened”]
The second Verdandi [“what is happening”]
-they carved on a stave-
The third Skuld [“what shall happen”].
They established laws,
They chose lives
For the children of people,
Fates of men.

(Translation modified from John Lindow, *Norse Mythology*, p. 244.) (Murphy, S.G., 2013: 166-167)

From what it could be seen in the poem, the future (fate) was obscure and unknown, but it could be uncovered by reading the staves with runic inscriptions. The insertion “carved on a stave” is intriguing because it lies in between the Norn of the present and the Norn of the future. Regarding this Murphy S. G. (2013) writes the following: “The line clearly suggests that in poetic form that the origin of the runes’ power in the present to foretell the happenings of the future lies with the time knowledge of the three Norns.” (167) The Norse gods were not immune from this affection; to change one’s fate was not possible thus in an Old Norse poem, *Fáfnismál*, we find “that struggling against fate is as pointless as rowing a boat against a fierce wind.” (Norse-mythology, 2020)

What is Destiny? This term derives from the Latin word “destine” with a literal meaning “that which has been firmly established”. Although the definition referred to the predetermined events, “destiny is something we can actively shape and alter. Unlike fate, there is an element of choice in destiny. Qualities such as courage, compassion, willpower, and patience can all help to change your destiny.” There is a difference between fate and destiny in that one cannot change his fate, and destiny is something that one is meant to do. One does take responsibility for his fate, but destiny is what occurs when one commits to growing, learning, and taking chances. On the same note, fate is what happens when one lets other people and his environment dictate his life. (Sol, 2019)

What is important to mention here is that in this master’s, the given distinction between these two terms will be respected so we shall adhere to these given meanings when talking about other issues that lie ahead of us in connection with the topic. The key term that separates the two concepts is the aspect of free will about which we shall talk elaborately in the following chapters. For that sake, it was essential that we know the difference between the two so that one does not make a mistake about it as we do not intend to interchangeably use them, one being the synonym of the other.

Freedom and Free Will

Through my research, it dawned upon me that fatalism consists within itself of, or its essential and integral part of it, the notion of freedom and its subsequent derivative that delineates it – free will. Both have perplexed the minds of great philosophers and theologians in the past offering different and often contradictory opinions and definitions of the concepts depending on their set of ideological criteria. As they are essential operating tools for expounding fatalism within the Norse religion, I shall offer my personal and generalised definitions of the terms which I have not reached solely independently but through reading an array of philosophical literature. To fully explain these two critical concepts, would require much pondering space which we shall not do – firstly because we are dealing with another concept and the other reason is that following definitions will suffice for the exercise that we are undertaking.

To me, the challenging notion of freedom implies to be in the total possession of one own needs and sustenance without the necessity to draw on other resources. In the contemporary western context, conditioned by power, it could mean that a person does not have to work for material things so arduously and yet have everything if he chooses so or it may denote a position whereby one can express the conditions of self-worth independently without the influence of others including that one is not incumbent upon someone else. As mentioned, one should be able to decide for himself without being obliged to anyone else. By the process of extrapolation, the absolute freedom conditioned by full possession of everything and have free will at one's disposal presents becomes the luxury of the divine exclusively, hence the Aristotelian notion that the only free are gods and beasts (defining it only by having the free will). Other types of freedom are then dispersed to the humans by their opportunity, ability or skills among a plethora of other factors, so for that reason, it could be argued human freedom is far from being complete.

On the other hand, and ideally, the free will should designate a situation whereby one works and acts with others and oneself by making one's decisions independently without impediment. In that sense, he is not responsible for others (he does not have to be unless he wants) and he is entirely at liberty to make decisions that are necessary to meet and achieve his objectives. This type of free will belongs only to God in monotheistic religions, and it almost has the status of being unquestionable. This privilege is extended and reserved for gods in polytheistic religions, although they have greater power and a spectrum of choice to decide.

Before we could talk about free will, I would like to define the word *will* to know and understand its discursive meaning. There are two indicative meanings to the word will one being desire and the other action. Scott Peck (1990) writes that "Desire is not necessarily translated into action. Will is a desire of sufficient intensity that it is translated into action. The difference between the two is equal to the difference between saying 'I would like to go swimming tonight' and 'I will go swimming

tonight'. Everybody in our culture desires to some extent to be loving, yet many are not loving. I therefore conclude that the desire to love is not itself love. Love is as love does. Love is an act of will – namely, both an intention and action. Will also implies choice. We do not have to love. We choose to love. No matter how much we may think we are loving, if we are in fact not loving, it is because we have chosen not to love and therefore do not love despite our good intentions. (87)

Continuing with free will, it is commonly associated with judgements such as moral responsibility, praise, culpability, turpitude, and it also depends on advice persuasion, deliberation, and prohibition, rendering it ineffective in its endeavours. The willed actions could be positive, neutral, or negative. The ability to have free will is greatly diminished among the humans because of these factors; even with such a fine judgement as praise whereby one may choose to increase his actions and multiply them because of praise unlike demeaning whereby a person is discouraged from doing certain action – even though both judgements are opposite, what they have in common is the internal locus of evaluation which I would co-identify with free will, is disturbed by an external locus of evaluation (both praise of demeaning) or in other words it is troubled by having the power on another individual to unconsciously change and manipulate his mind, which essentially and ultimately is not the expression of free will.

In our human world, the ability to exercise free will is significantly decreased depending on the situational spectrum - for example at work, under a set of conditions, it does not mean a worker has free will is free from the employer, but he is free to make decisions. What types of decisions. That again is questionable. It is slightly different from the overarching notion of freedom, and yet it is pegged to the concept.

Are there different degrees of free will? This question can be answered with “probably” – it depends on whom you are working with – for instance, the CEO of an international conglomerate can do whatever he wants within the company, but he is not free in the sense you have obligations such as to your staff, supplies, business in general. His free will is also limited by external technicalities such as compliance with the local and international laws permitting him what he can will – in this instance, we could talk about relative free will. Situationally, one can be working within a division of a company where you have a manager who tells you to do as you see fit but as long as you achieve a desired aim in the company. So, here we see free will contained within a larger sea of dealings and human inter-relations.

If one is inclined, we could say that there are different tiers of free will, such as absolute, partial (qualified) and unqualified. As it stands, the spectrum of free will covers the equal parts if it expressed in percentages, but it is precisely this spectrum that is fascinating to us, so we can say that free will varies and depends on several variables, talking strictly in positivist terms.

Another important question which I would like to pose is whether humans collectively would desire the absolute free will? Theological stance says that this would clash with God's free will as he is a creator of everything; subsequently, he has the absolute free will despite human capability to express it too. The only situation, it then seems, when

a person could have absolute free will is when he would also absolute freedom. To achieve this, humanity would need to take God out of the equation.

To illuminate us additionally on this concept furthermore, we must refer back to determinism; this stance proposes that only one course of events is possible, which is not compatible inconsistent (contradictory) with free will. The position that regards free will irreconcilable with determinism is called incompatibilism; on the other hand, compatibilism theorises that determinism is companionable and reconcilable with free will.

For the end of this chapter, I would like to mention the position of neuroscientist, Sam Harris on free will; throughout his book “Free Will” he says that the concept does not exist for those who believe in free will, they are being deceived by their biology. So, he writes: “Freewill is an illusion. Our wills are simply not of our own making. Thoughts and intentions emerge from background causes of which we are unaware and over which we exert no conscious control. We do not have freedom we think we have.” (Harris,2012:5)

History of Fatalism

It would be highly speculative to assume when people first started to conceptualise and discuss fate and destiny, although this has likely occurred throughout the duration of human history. The Ajivaka sect of the ancient religion of Hinduism is an example of a group of people who believed in fatalism and determinism. (Hinduwebsite, 2019) However, these beliefs were generally overshadowed by other streams of Hinduism, allowing a more significant or more minor influx of free will to determine the increment and presence of determinism in the interpretation of fate.

However, in this chapter, I shall give my best attempt in presenting the history of thought on the crucial concept of fate and its derivative terms by which it operates, and it is made possible to function. I should cover or give us a glimpse into the Hellenistic Period, Post Antiquity, Muslim Theosophical Perception in the Middle Ages, and the modern Positivist outlook on the topic. Having said this, to cover the entire history would be a near to impossible task, so I shall only mention the most critical historical points on the concept of fatalism, enabling us to define our cogitation more clearly. It will also represent and be of an informative value for the respective reader in addition to being beneficent for our study of fatalism within the context of Ragnarok.

Greek and Roman Thoughts on Fate

We begin with Epicurus (341-271), one of the most influential philosophers of the Hellenistic period. He renewed Democritus' atomism, the theory which states that everything consists of atoms and empty space with a new and significant change – the

atoms spontaneously swerve from their path, and they unpredictably crash into each other and intertwine. (Kalin, 1996:108) This would produce new causal chains. "Epicurus argued that these swerves would allow us to be more responsible for our actions, something impossible if every action was deterministically caused." (Doyle, 2009)

Lucretius (c. 99- c. 55 BCE), a supporter of Epicurus, saw the randomness (from swerving atoms) as a tool that enables free will even though these random swerves would interrupt the causal chain of determinism. (Doyle, 2009)

As Epicurus was the first one who saw the conflict between the determinism/necessity and free will - the atomic swerve aided in becoming an obstacle tool to deny the fatalistic future implied by determinism (and necessity); Lucretius better explains the idea:

"Again, if all motion is always one long chain, and new motion arises out of the old in order invariable, and if the first-beginnings do not make by swerving a beginning of motion such as to break the decrees of fate, that cause may not follow cause from infinity, whence comes this freedom (libera) in living creatures all over the earth, whence I say is this will (voluntas) wrested from the fates by which we proceed whither pleasure leads each, swerving also our motions not at fixed times and fixed places, but just where our mind has taken us? For undoubtedly it is his own will in each that begins these things, and from the will movements go rippling through the limbs."

(De Rerum Natura, Book 2, lines 251-256 cited in Doyle, 2009; Information Philosopher)

As it could be seen from Lucretius's statement, in the part where the atomic swerve disconnects the links of fate and in the part where we shift to where our mind takes us, i.e. we, on our own accord, choose between a variety of options – it is the matter of free will that liberates us from restrictions of fate.

Aristotle was not keen on the atomists arguing against their explanation of necessity (Leucippus) and causal determinism (Democritus); he paid little attention to atomists' atheism, but he did endorse their teaching about "chance" breaking the paradigm of gods' foreknowledge which in turn would break the causal chain of determinism and necessity. (Information Philosopher, 2020)

He treated the problem which was of concern for Epicurus, the idea that the present truth or falsity in a statement demands the necessity of the future event so Aristotle, in *de Interpretatione*, ix, argued that the reports about future occurrences are not truthful until they occur; consequently, the future is unlatched allowing the passage to accidental chance. "Epicurus connected this logical necessity to causal determinism, because, he said, a future event could not be fated and logically necessitated unless the causes of that event are already present." It is also essential to note that both Aristotle and Epicurus endorse the principles of bivalence and non-contradiction – these principles will apply when the future happens. Aristotle does not seriously

acknowledge the problem of free will – he nonchalantly says that the actions which we do are up to us – the determinism and necessity of the atomists are impractical in that way in the world (Information Philosopher, 2020)

According to Aristotle, there are three causes for things to occur – necessity, chance and a third thing (a tertium quid) – this third thing represents the voluntary actions which are up to us. (Information Philosopher) He writes:

..some things happen of necessity (ἀνάγκη), others by chance (τύχη), others through our own agency (παρ' ἡμᾶς).

...necessity destroys responsibility and chance is uncertain; whereas our own actions are autonomous, and it is to them that praise and blame naturally attach. (Letter to Menoeceus §133)

”According to Stoics, the picture of the world is rather Heraclitean (the world is in accordance with Logos); whether it is God, providence, or fate, it governs everything; anything that happens occurs by the law; there is spermatic logos in the everything as a part of divine mind of the world. Subsequently and naturally human nature is likewise a part of that world as a whole. A wise person accepts the world's necessary order (the way it works) and lives according to it. Therefore, the ideal of a stoic is to live in accordance with the nature. Un-blurred human mind is accomplished by the virtue of autarchy or self-sufficiency.

The sense and limit of freedom, as understood by a stoic, consists of understanding and accepting the order and system in the world which is necessary and unchanged. The stoic ethics is the ethics of reconciling helplessness, fatalism and passivity.”(Kalin, 1996)

Chrysippus (280- 207 BCE) was one of the most prominent and prolific Stoic philosophers. He was of three Stoa (the founders of Stoicism) after the originator Zeno of Citium and Cleanthes, both being his teachers. Chrysippus may have synthesised earlier Stoic philosophy, but he also explained the understanding of Hellenistic physics and formal logic. He opposed the atomists' idea of irreducible chance within the universe. As we know, Stoic philosophy claimed that every event has a cause, and the effects are necessitated by their causes. The only problem which they had were the statements about the future. The mystery of future events happening by predetermined cause was something that Aristotle has explained, negating whether something is true or false at present about the future. Cicero describes Chrysippus' stance on this matter in the following:

”Chrysippus argues thus: If uncaused motion exists, it will not be the case that every proposition (termed by the logicians an axioma) is either true or false, for a thing not possessing efficient causes will be neither true nor false; but every proposition is either true or false; therefore, uncaused motion does not exist.” (Cicero De Fato X, 20)

Even though he did not like chance (as the opposite of necessity), he loosed the strictness of determinism in his later writings, he distinguished logical necessity from causal determinism and the idea of fate. "He argued that all things are fated, including

human decisions. But although the past is fixed and unchangeable, and all the antecedent events fated, future events are *not necessitated* logically unless the causes for the future event exist at the present time."

Chrysippus eliminated the non-causal and arbitrary fatalism (which states that an event in the future would happen no matter what we do in the intervening time). This enabled him to have a degree of compatibility between free will and determinism. As future events are not necessary (they are fated), our decisions are not coerced by antecedent events. "This lack of coercion, including one's heredity and environment, was critical for Chrysippus' idea that we have a freedom to assent (or not to assent) that made our decisions "depend on us." He called this *πάρ' ἡμᾶς* or *ἐξ ἡμῶν*, depending on us, similar to Aristotle's *ἐφ' ἡμῖν*. "This also makes the central idea of compatibilism at the present time. (Information Philosopher, 2020)

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE) was a Roman statesman, lawyer, orator, and philosopher, well-known for his writings, about 400 of them. In his dialogue, "On Fate" from 44 BCE Cicero carefully and logically examines the relationship between freedom and determinism of three leading schools in Antiquity: Stoicism, Scepticism and Epicureanism. The main question is whether everything is causally determined or whether freedom exists – if it exists, the question is why. The central tenets of these arguments are presented below:

No real freedom. According to Chrysippus (Stoic), all propositions are either true or false, human desires and choices are determined like everything else; surroundings and the stars cause differences in people which cause choices. Cicero criticises this by saying that even if our predispositions are caused by the environment, that does not mean our desires and choices are. Thus, he wants to say that going against our inclinations requires choice, discipline, and training.

Freedom for human choices. Mentioning Carneades (Sceptic), this school claims that future propositions are not yet true or false but will be, there is no antecedent and external cause for human choices, the mind is self-determining, i.e., a cause for its own motion. Cicero's criticism of this consists of the following "when we talk about choices being "uncaused", we mean more precisely, "not having antecedent and external causes" for choices.""

Freedom for atoms. Epicurus (epicurean school) states that "future propositions are neither true nor false, there is randomness and accident in the universe, caused by the "swerve" of atoms; human desires and choices (movements of mind) are caused by atoms." Cicero criticises this by saying how the "swerve" is improbable and there is no explanation as to why it would occur; this position gives us freedom at the atom level, but not in terms of human actions, desires, or choices. (Sadler, 2015)

Christian Position on Fate

The Bible is far from being a simple book; claiming that it encloses fatalism, it would be a mistake to reduce the Jewish and Christian holy book to a rigid concept such as fatalism. The Holy Scripture seems "point to both God's power and foreknowledge and the human capacity for free will." The examples for foreknowledge and power could be found in many biblical verses such as Psalm 139:4, Psalm 139:16, Jeremiah 1:5, Acts 2:23, Ephesians 1:5, Ephesian 2:10 as well on human free will in Genesis 2:16-17, Joshua 24:15, Ezekiel 18:30-32, John 7:17. Thus, for instance, to show God's foreknowledge and power, one could cite the Old Testament where it says: "Before a word in on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely" (Psalm 139:4) or "He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will (Ephesians 1:5). To illustrate free will, I would like to highlight the verse in John 7:17 where it states the following: "Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." (John 7:17) (Roat, 2020)

However, Christianity seems to have questions to answer regarding determinism (what happens is determined by foregoing causes). Thus Kyaser (2007), in his exploration of the Gospel, according to John, poses a few fundamental questions which are termed as "Johannine determinism". How do we make the transition from the realm of darkness to the world of light? How do we move from an inauthentic experience which is based on the assumption that humans are independent to an authentic experience which recognises our dependence on God? How is evil overtaken?

These essential and relevant questions guide us to the concept of faith in John's Gospel; so, we examine if God's predetermining affects the destiny of persons or the free will of people. "Is it free will alone that produces evil, or is it in part the work of God?" According to the Gospel by John, there are passages that are in favour of free will and those which suggest that God's will is accountable for our fate.

In the Gospel by John, many instances sound as determinism, for example, 1) God's will determines who should believe in Him (God delivers to Christ those who believe) (6:39; 17:2, 6, 9, 12, 24), 2) Jesus asserts that one must be attracted to God to believe (6:44), 3) Belief is granted (6:65), 4) "some are sheep of the Good Shephard and know his voice; other are not." (10:3, 26), 4) God make it impossible for some people to believe (12:37-40). (Kyasar, 2007:85)

The irresolvable question of determinism and free will needed urgent answers in Christianity, so one of the first Christian theologians to tackle this quandary was St. Augustine of Hippo. (354-430 AD) One of the questions that preoccupied St Augustine was why God created the world in such a state that the evil exists and at times prevails. Why does He allow evil to exist? The answer to that question, St Augustine found in the fact that humans are rational beings. He thought that for God to create humans as rational beings, he had to give them free will. Having free will, it meant that humans could choose between good and evil. Thus, the first Biblical man Adam

had chosen evil first in the paradise of Eden. Adam broke God's commandment, and he had eaten the fruit which God had forbidden. (DK, 2011:72)

Since humans can choose, they have responsibility. As we know in St Augustine's time, the commonest conception of fate was astrological fatalism, that is, the stars' position when one is born determining all things to happen. Based on empirical facts, the bishop of Hippo ultimately rejected this kind of fatalism in the first seven chapters of *De civitate Dei V*. He saw another conception of fate:

"There are those who use the term 'fate' to mean not the position of stars as it is when any creature is conceived or born or begin, but the whole chain and series of causes according to which everything happens" (*De civitate dei V*, 8) This the stoic view of fate which is looked in *V*, 8-11. Influenced by Stoics' position on fate, St Augustine believes – at least attribute fate to God, the difference between them is nothing other than a *verbi controversia*." *CD V*, 8 (Sun, 2012;35)

Boethius (c. 480–525) was a Roman philosopher who trained in the Platonist tradition. Like St Augustine, he too was a Christian. His fame came from his solution to a problem that predates Aristotle – if God already knows what we are going to do in future, how can we be said to have free will? (DK, 2011:74) Let us imagine a situation such as "I might go to the museum or I might spend time watching TV this afternoon". In the end, I decide to go to the museum. The statement became true after I have gone to the museum. However, if it is true at the moment, then I do not have the choice to stay indoors and watch TV. Aristotle was the first who attempted to define this problem although his solution to the problem is slightly vague because the statement "I shall go to the museum this afternoon" is both true and false but it is not the same as "I went to the museum yesterday".

As a believer in one Christian God, Boethius had a different solution to the difficulty. He believed that God knows everything, the past, present and future. Therefore, I am going to the museum this afternoon, God knows it presently. For that reason, it seems that I have no free will to decide to spend my afternoon watching TV because this would clash with what God knows.

Boethius explained the problem by saying that the same object can be known in different ways, and that depends on the nature of the knower.

"As we live in the flow of time, we can only know events as past (if they have occurred) present (if they are happening now, or future (if they will come to pass). God, by contrast, is not in the flow of time. He lives in an eternal present and knows what to us are past present and future in the same way that we know the present. And just as my knowledge that you are sitting now does not interfere with your freedom to stop, so too God's knowledge of our future actions, as if they were present, does not stop them from being free." (DW, 2011:75)

Molinist approach to understanding the concept of fate, got the name after a Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina (1535-1600). Keathley (2010) writes that: "Molinism holds strong notion of God's control and an equally firm affirmation of human freedom...Molinism teaches that God exercises His sovereignty through His

omniscience and that He infallibly knows what free creatures would do in any given situation. In this way God sovereignly controls all things, while humans are genuinely free." (5) Molinists show God's knowledge a sequence of three moments: 1) God's Natural Knowledge whereby God knows all possible which is contained in the modal verb "could", 2) God's Middle Knowledge contained in "would" whereby God knows which possibilities are feasible, 3) God's Free Knowledge expressed though the word "will" – God knows all things in detail and intimately. There is also a supplement to this between the second (would) and third (will) moment by which "God freely and sovereignly chooses this particular world from the infinite number of feasible possibilities." (17) The modus operandi of God's will work through free creatures could be understood using three concepts: 1) contingency (a truthful statement which occurs but it could have been false), 2) conditionality (statements of choice beginning with "if" followed by "then" in the logical structure), 3) counterfactual (a statement that opposes the fact yet it holds true content). (28-36).

Muslim Explanation of Fatalism

Muslims generally believe that God created all, but there is a crux within this statement that if God creates all, then that would entail creating human deeds. If human deeds are created, then there is a problem with free will, for it means that humans have no freedom, and with no freedom, humans are not responsible for what they do or in what they participate in unconsciously. Being someone's puppet was not an ideal resolution either hence we had a few elaborations on this problem, resolved according to the apologetic schools in Islam collectively and Muslim philosophers who treated the issue on their own. In the following, we present a short but significant outlay of Muslim thought on the question of fate.

Qaderi School – Indeterminism. These are the followers of Mabad Al- Guheyne and Geylani Al- Dimishqi, who were the followers of Wasil ibn Ataa and 'Amr ibn Ubeyd (The Mu'tezila School). Regarding the concept of fate, they taught that humans are free and capable of doing with their will as they please. They claim that Allah did not create human deeds but that humans create them independently; subsequently, the sins are not made by Allah's Will.

They find their evidence in the Qur'anic verses such as:

"... who wants – let him believe, and who wants – let him not believe" (Al- Kahf, 29)
(Minber, 2016)

The Mu'tazilites generally called themselves people of Unity and Justice – by justice, they meant that it is incumbent on God to requite the believers for their good actions and to castigate the sinners for their misdeeds, and by unity, they meant the denial of God's attributes (if the attributes were that significant then they would be of the same essence as God then plurality of eternals" would necessarily result and the belief in unity would have to be rejected). God's justice necessitates that a man is a creator of

his deeds – (the theory of indeterminism), so if a man is not a creator of his deeds, how could he then be responsible for them, so he should not be punished for the sins which he committed since he did not have free will. From the unity of God, the following beliefs result as corollaries: 1) Denial of the beatific vision, 2) belief that the Qur'an is a created speech of Allah, and 3) God's pleasure and satisfaction are not his attributes but states.

Among other beliefs, it is needed to emphasise one special belief that concerns fate – they deny the indications of the Day of Judgement, the Gog and Magog and the appearance of the Antichrist. (Sharif, 2018: 200-203) By denying these predictions documented in the Muslim tradition, the Mu'tazilites completely negated God's role in predetermination in which other Muslims believed clashing with them.

Jabari School - Determinism. While the Qaderis rejected the fate, the Jabaris were promoting it, saying that a man, in essence, is not able to commit any deeds independently. All the deeds which are ascribed to a human are done so metaphorically, therefore when we say that a man stole or killed it is the same as when we say the Sun rose, the wind blows or it is raining. The Jabaris essentially believe that Allah is the one who commits human deeds. (Minber, 2016)

Other Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sina principally acknowledge that God has general knowledge about all the things and processes which are taking place in the cosmos although they do not believe that He is acquainted with the particulars of such occurrences. As everything is created or made up by details, it comes that eventually, God knows nothing or very little. (Minber, 2016)

Fate as a concept that depends on God's self-knowledge is ipso facto knowledge of other things for He knows Himself; God also knows the extents which proceed from Him. According to Ibn Sina (Avicenna), God can have the knowledge of essences or universals, but He does not know their particular existents for the particular existents could be known through sense-perception, which is situated in time but God himself who is supra-temporal, changeless and incorporeal does not hold these details (perceptual knowledge). However, God identifies all particulars "in a universal way" in a way that he does not need to rely on the perceptual knowledge which to him is unessential. (Rahman, 1963: 502)

To counteract and refute this argument, the Sunni Muslims cite the following verse from the Quran:

*"And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it. And no grain is there within the darkness of the earth and no moist or dry (thing), but that is (written) in a clear record."
"(Qur'an, Al- An'am:59)*

The Ash'arite School took an intermediary position between libertarian and fatalistic views which were held by the Mu'tazilites (with the Qaderis) and the Jabarites view developing the theory called "iktisab" or "earning/acquiring deeds". They thought

that human actions are predetermined and predestined by God. Humans have no power to produce any action. (The Mu'tezilites and the Qaderites, held that humans have full power to produce their actions and complete freedom in their choice thought the power was created in them by God) The Ash'arites distinguished between creation (khalq) and acquisition (kasb) action. According to them, Allah is the creator of human actions (Khaliq) and man is the acquirer (muktasib). Power (qudrah) according to Ash'arites could be original (qadimah) and derived (hadithah) and while the original power is effective, the derived power which humans have can create nothing. The power that humans have has been given to them, and for that reason, it is derived. (Hye, 1963: 229) Even though the Ash'arite school tried to reconcile the opposed view between the Qadaris and Jabrites, the orthodox Muslim scholars still believe that this theological stance on fate is nothing else but pure determinism. (Minber, 2016)

Another important scholar that touched upon the issue of fate in Islamic theology was al-Maturidi (died 944). In his book *Kitab-al Tauhid*, al-Maturidi gave his version of explanation of how he saw Islam's main postulates trying to harmonise the opposite views between the traditionalists and rationalists in the religion. According to him, there are three ways to acquire knowledge 1) sense-organs (al-a'yan), 2) reports (al-ahbar) and reason (al-nazar). He criticised those who thought that knowledge is not attainable at all, that senses are not enough, and that reason is enough to obtain knowledge. Reports as means of acquiring knowledge are divided into historical reports (khabr al -mutawatir) and reports of the prophets (khabr al-rusul). Although both are sources of knowledge, we should be aware of how those reports come to us (which we know as historical method nowadays). Al-Maturidi accepted many points of the Mu'tazilites, but he never accepted the Aristotelian philosophy as the basis for explain the Muslim faith as the Mu'tazilites did. He also rejected to take the Qur'an and Hadith (proverbs of the prophet Muhammad) quite literally because that would lead him into anthropomorphism. Al- Maturidi criticises the doctrine of divine justice and unity that the Mu'tazilites put forward. "Their interpretation of divine justice led them to deny the all-pervading will and power of God, His authorship of human action and made Him quite helpless and subject to external compulsion. Divine grace and mercy find no place in their system as is evident from their view on grave sins." (Ali, 1963: 262-265)

Al-Maturidi's system consists of two principles: freedom from similitude (tanzih) and divine wisdom (hikmah). Regarding the principle of freedom from similitude, he opposes similitude (tashbih) of humans and the world to God and anthropomorphism (tajsim) with the exception of denying divine attributes (because God also has attributes that are similar to humans such as good, just, beautiful.). "On the principle of divine wisdom (*hikmah*) al-Maturidi tried to reconcile the conflicting views of the Determinists (Jabrites) and the Mu'tazilites and prove for a man certain amount of freedom, without denying the all-pervading divine will, power, and decree." (Ali, 1963:265-266)

Maturidi refutes the absolute determinism of the Jabrites, explaining that the bond between God and humans is not of the same quality as between God and the physical world. Explaining Maturidi's stance from his *Kitab al-Tauhid*, Ali (1963) writes that:

"God has endowed man with reason, with the power of distinguishing between right and wrong, and with the faculties of thinking, feeling, willing, and judging, and has sent messengers and revealed books for his guidance. Man inclines and directs his mind towards something which he thinks may benefit him, restrains himself from what he thinks will harm him, chooses one of the alternative courses of action by the exercise of his own reason, and thinks himself responsible for the merits or demerits of his actions. Now, while he thinks, desires, inclines, chooses, and acts, he always considers himself quite free, and never thinks or feels that any outside agency compels him to do any of his actions. This consciousness of freedom, al-Maturidi asserts, is a reality, the denial of which will lead to the denial of all human knowledge and sciences. Quoting passages from the Qur'an he also shows that the actions enjoined or prohibited by God are ascribed to men and that they will be accountable for their "own" actions. All this clearly proves that God has granted men freedom of choice and necessary power to perform an action. The denial of this freedom will mean that God is wholly responsible for all human actions and is liable to blame or punishment for sins committed by men, yet on the Day of Judgment He will punish them for His own actions. This is quite absurd, as God has described Himself in the Qur'an as the most wise, just, and compassionate." (Ali, 1963:267)

With this insight into elaborate and divisive Muslim theology on fate and freedom to choose, we move onto the positivist stance on fate and free will. The tight grip of empiricism on the matter poses serious challenges how to understand fate.

Positivist Thought on Fate and Free Will

From the Middle Ages to the modern era, the span seems vast and insurmountable to explain fate and its counterpart free will. The reason for this is that this topic has been thought about any times considered by various theologians and other philosophers; however, the modern era science requires to measure statistically the workings states and functionality of objects density radioactivity, anything that could be measured and from which we can derive such results, which coaxed and made the scientists trust that if a thing could influence each other by the virtue that they interconnected - the things are not independent in cosmos as well as the humans who are not free by the mere sake of being determined and limited by those influences. These quantitative explorations produced positivism which could be defined as:

"a strong form of empiricism, especially as established in the philosophical system of Auguste Comte, that rejects metaphysics and theology as seeking knowledge beyond the scope of experience, and holds that experimental investigation and observation are the only sources of substantial knowledge" (The Free Dictionary, 2020)

Another and more relevant definition to what is being explored in this thesis states the following:

"An approach to philosophy frequently found in the twentieth century. Positivists usually hold that all meaningful statements must be either logical inferences of sense descriptions, and they usually argue that the statements found in metaphysics, such as "Human beings are free" or "Human beings are not free," are meaningless because they cannot possibly be verified by senses." (Dictionary, 2020)

Based on the theory of positivism, and in connection to understanding fate from this point of view, the American neuroscientist, Sam Harris and the author of the 2012 booklet "Free Will" denying the concept writes:

"Many people believe that human freedom consists in our ability to do what, upon reflection, we believe we should do – which often means overcoming our short-term desires and following our long-term goals or better judgement. This is certainly an ability that people possess, to a greater or lesser degree, and which other animals appear to lack, but it is nevertheless a capacity of our minds that has unconscious roots.

You have not built your mind. And in moments in which you *seem* to build it – when you make an effort to change yourself, to acquire knowledge, or to perfect a skill – the only tools at your disposal are those that you have inherited from past moments. Choices, efforts, intentions, and reasoning influence our behaviour – but they are themselves part of chain of causes that precede conscious awareness and over which we exert no control. My choices matter – and there are paths toward making wiser ones – but I cannot choose what I choose..." (Harris, 2012:38-39)

By denying the actual existence of human free will, Harris does not immediately say that fate exists, and everything is subordinated to God's will. As an empirical scientist, he says that the design is already predisposed towards some currents of events by which the order of things is predetermined - on the global plane. However, humans could consciously and with a greater power, try to change that current by which the development of effects happens.

Hermeneutics as a Methodology to Explore the Ragnarok Myth

To interpret the text of Ragnarok, I have decided to use hermeneutics. This methodology should be used because this branch of knowledge deals with the interpretation of holy and literary texts. The following section defines the term, explains its main characteristics of this approach to the texts, the relation of hermeneutics to other fields, and explains the necessity of hermeneutics.

The word hermeneutics is derived from Hermes's name, the Greek God who was delivering, transmitting, and interpreting messages and their meanings. In ancient times the verb hermeneuo was used to signify the meaning of explanation, interpretation, and translation. The word appears three times in the New Testament with the meaning of a translation. However, nowadays, hermeneutics is associated and characterised as "the science and art of biblical interpretation." (Virkler and Gerber Ayayo, 2007:15-16)

The theory of hermeneutics has two branches general and special hermeneutics; general hermeneutics studies the rules that govern the interpretation of the whole Biblical text, including the topics such as historical-cultural and contextual, lexical-syntactical, and theological analysis; special hermeneutics studies the rules "that apply to specific genres such as parables, allegories, types and prophecy." (16)

Virkler and Ayayo (2007) write: "Hermeneutics is not isolated from other fields of Biblical study. It is related to the study of canon (canonicity), textual criticism, historical criticism, exegesis, and biblical and practical theology." (16) Fortunately for us and in the case of Ragnarok, we do not need to find whether the text bears the stamp of divine inspiration although it could be valuable and beneficial to us to draw on the laws of the Vikings, we should not forget that they significantly differed from other parts of Christian Europe in the Viking Age; regarding the textual criticism, i.e. determining which words and utterances are original – this is a vital aspect to consider although our focus will be primarily directed to the meaning; regarding historical or higher criticism whereby one is concerned about "the authorship and audience, the date of composition, the historical circumstances surrounding its composition, the authenticity of its contents and the literary unity" (17) – here, it is not all these concerns that matter but it is what we find in the actual text which in turn should help us understand the Norse comprehension of fate.

After canonicity, textual and historical criticism, scholars are ready to do exegesis. As the prefix ex- indicates, the researcher is supposed to find the meaning from the text rather than putting meaning in the text. (17) It is important to note that many people cannot or do not consciously and deliberately distinguish between hermeneutics and exegesis; in short, exegesis extracts what the text says in terms of grammar, while hermeneutics finds the meaning of the text. Ethridge (2018) says that exegesis is "the discipline of extracting, grammatically, out of the text what it says". He further explains that: "Hermeneutics is the science of interpreting, based on what the text says, what it means; followed by validating that interpretation of what it means (e.g., "Scripture interprets Scripture), and then discerning the significance of that validated meaning. Broadly speaking, there are four steps to hermeneutics, defined by answering: 1) What does the text say? (Exegesis); 2) What does it mean? (Interpretation); 3) How do I know that is what it means (Validation); 4) Now that I know what it means, so what? (Significance / Application)." (Ethridge, 2018)

Although the two terms are indeed close or interrelated, some look at it in terms of the width of processing the text. Thus, Groseclose describes exegesis as the technical (narrower) process of determining what the words mean in their linguistic context: "*Hermeneutics is the broader process of determining what the sentences mean in their larger historical and literary context.*" (Groseclose, 2018)

Keeping these distinctions in mind and having the notion that hermeneutics could be synonymous with exegesis for some people, we shall also mention (as it is good for general knowledge) that there are two distinct branches that stem from hermeneutics:

the biblical and systematic theology forming practical theology. Biblical theology studies divine revelation as it was descended to people through the holy scriptures. Systematic theology logically puts the data (nature of God, the nature of the afterlife, the ministry of angels). Practical theology synthesises Biblical and systematic theology by developing an operative strategy for contemporary Christian life. It is used as an application of exegesis and theology to a lived religious experience. (Virkler and Ayayo, 2007:17-18)

We shall not dwell on this division because these branches are not a part of our concern, so we halt our attention at hermeneutics solely; nevertheless, one can view the location of hermeneutics in the development of proper theology underneath in diagram 1.

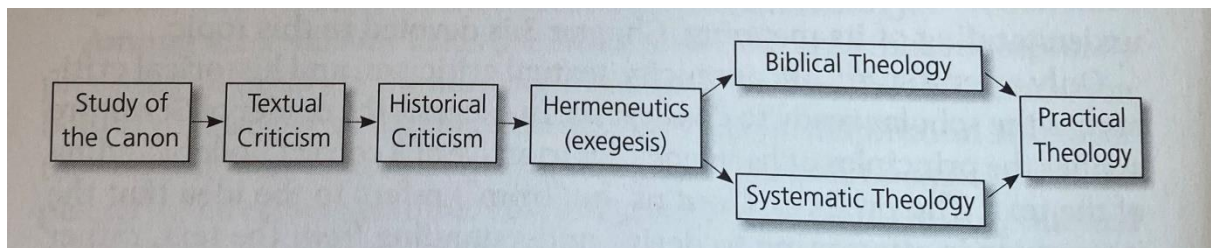


Diagram 1 (Virkler and Ayayo, 2007:18)

Virkler and Gerber Ayayo (2007) detect some issues which could affect our understanding of ancient texts such as 1) time gap that separates original writers and contemporary readers 2) cultural gap, for example, distinguishing between the Viking Age and our culture 3) philosophical gap, i.e. clashes between our worldview with the philosophy of the ancients (we need to be aware of the differences and similarities) and 4) linguistic gap – since the Bible was written in 3 languages Hebrew Aramaic and Greek – the structures of these three languages differ whereby possible distortions in translation from one language to another may occur. (18-19)

Apart from this and related to our study of fatalism within the Norse religion, we should know that there are some controversial issues in contemporary hermeneutics which we should consider. Some of these issues include validity in interpretation (what is the valid meaning of a text), double authorship (whether the text is confluent or if a few authors worked on the making of a script), *sensus plenior* (whether a text has a fuller sense), spiritual factors in the perceptual process (if the spiritual factors will affect our ability to precisely recognise the truths contained in a text) and the question of inerrancy (the issue which concerns whether the holy text is inerrant). (22-29) These issues will be tackled further down, in the text and within the discussion chapter. The aim is to provide the whole discussion chapter dedicated to these issues; this will be one of the priority tasks after the hermeneutical analysis of Ragnarok on the concept of fatalism.

The Theory for the Concept of Fate in Ragnarok

The word fatalism is usually used to address the attitude of resignation and expectation of a future event assumed to be inevitable. Philosophers typically use the term to denote that we are powerless to do anything other than what we could do. Regarding attitude, there is the appeal to logical laws and metaphysical necessities (logical fatalism) and the appeal to the existence and nature of God (theological fatalism), as well as the appeal to causal determinism (i.e., fatalism). (Rice, 2018) Most philosophers distinguish between logical and theological fatalism, so I shall present their central tenets below. It is also essential to mention here that the hermeneutical analysis of Ragnarok, according to the Prose Edda, will depend on and be elaborated in harmony with this philosophical theory. However, the elaboration of the results from the research will depend on what was found in the text and other factors that present themselves as necessary and relevant about the concept of fatalism.

Logical Fatalism

Logical fatalism is a worldview that no deeds are free because before those deeds were committed, the truth was already that those deeds would be done. (Anon, n.d.:1). Logical fatalism stance states that it impossible for a person to possess free will. Fischer and Todd(2015) write: "... the fatalist argues - in a particular way - that "prior truths" specifying what we will do in the future are **incompatible with our having free will**. According to this argument, if it was true already, 1,000 years (say), that you would purchase this book, then you could not have done otherwise than purchase the book. Second, the fatalists claim that as a matter of logic, or as a matter of common sense, or as a matter of something else, we will have to say that for anything that happens, **it always was the case that it would happen**. If it is happening, this implies that there was indeed a "prior truth" specifying that it was going to. The fatalist concludes that we are never able to do otherwise than what we, in fact, do. "(Fischer and Todd, 2015: 1-2)

Responses that stem from logical fatalism branch out depending on whether one rejects the fatalist's argument for the incompatibility of prior truths and free will, "or instead of the argument that there (or were) such truths in the first place. Fischer and Todd note: "Repudiations of the argument for "prior truths" are generally linked to the thesis of the "open future" which in fact are" propositions stating that undetermined events that they will happen - they systematically fail to be true." (2015:2)

Regarding logical fatalism, it is essential to underline that the operationalising of argument is not determined by causation or physical settings in which something is destined to happen but on supposed logical truths. These prior truths and free will are said to be incompatible.

Theological Fatalism

The simplest way to describe theological fatalism is that it is essentially a combination of religion and fatalism. Roat (2020) explains it in the following illustration:

"The basic premise of theological fatalism is that, since God knows what is going to happen, it follows that it *must* happen.

For example, perhaps God knows that tomorrow you are going to bake bread. God is omniscient, and His knowledge is infallible. Thus, He *must* be correct that you are going to bake bread. If you did not bake bread, then God's knowledge would be fallible, or imperfect.

However, we know that God is perfect. Thus, because God knows that you will bake bread, you *must* bake bread; you have no option but to do so. "(Christianity, 2020).

As seen from the illustration, it all revolves around God's foreknowledge but also around the determinedness of human free will.

Theological fatalism (sometimes termed theological determinism) is a category of pre-determinist teaching whereby a monotheistic God or a group of divine beings in polytheism decide in advance what series of events will happen and how they will happen to the creation, including the humans – this is also called predestination. Every event that happens will happen by God's will (being the dominant factor in the choice between the divine and human will whereby human will should occur only if it is concordant with God's will); this is also contingent with his omniscience. Almost all religions, polytheistic and monotheistic, confess and propagate theological determinism as well as the supporters of classical pantheism, i.e., the Stoics as well as Baruch Spinoza in the Age of Enlightenment.

According to Zagzebski (2004): "Theological fatalism is the thesis that human acts occur by necessity and hence are unfree. Theological fatalism is the thesis that infallible foreknowledge of a human act makes the act necessary and hence unfree. If there is a being who knows the entire future infallibly, then no human act is free" (Zagzebski, 2004)

Here we immediately see the problem; God's foreknowledge or omniscience of our next movements does not necessarily make it sound as if we have free will to act and choose the way we want it. Therefore, the theological fatalist argument creates an impasse, but some people thought that it was important to maintain that God is omniscient while at the same time, we retain having free will. (Zagzebski, 2004)

Some have identified two forms of theological fatalism that branch out: strong and weak theological determinism (if we take that theological determinism and theological fatalism are the same thing as I take it for in this thesis). The strong theological determinism entails the commandment and the execution of all events in history by the Creator this being in harmony with his omniscience and omnipotence. Regarding theological determinism and its weaker version, Iannone (2001) writes: "theological determinism, or the doctrine of predestination: the view that everything which happens has been predestined to happen by an omniscient, omnipotent divinity. A

weaker version holds that, though not predestined to happen, everything that happens has been eternally known by virtue of the divine foreknowledge of an omniscient divinity. If this divinity is also omnipotent, as in the case of the Judeo-Christian religions, this weaker version is hard to distinguish from the previous one because, though able to prevent what happens and knowing that it is going to happen, God lets it happen. To this, advocates of free will reply that God permits it to happen in order to make room for the free will of humans." (194)

The weak theological determinism is founded on the idea of divine foreknowledge; Van Huyssteen (2003) writes: "According to the second type of theological determinism, God has perfect knowledge of everything in the universe because God is omniscient. And, as some say, because God is outside of time, God has the capacity of knowing past, present, and future in one instance. This means that God knows what will happen in the future. And because God's omniscience is perfect, what God knows about the future will inevitably happen, which means that the future is already fixed." (Van Huyssteen, 2003: 217)

The Research Question Hypotheses

Does the Edda text about Ragnarok imply the presence of fatalism based on its discourse meaning and contingency that is bound with context? People who read Edda's Ragnarok might say that there is fatalism simply because the text makes predictions. In an attempt to determine this, either way, it is necessary to examine the following questions in the following procedure:

1. If the Prose Edda's chapter of Ragnarok does indeed indicate fatalism?
2. If it does contain fatalism – would this textually qualify as logical fatalism?
3. If the text shows fatalism – could it be theological fatalism?

Presuming that the answers to the above questions are affirmed, I propose applying the initial working hypothesis to these questions as follows:

1. Ragnarok text indicates the presence of fatalism.
2. The Ragnarok story, as foretold by Snorri, could be interpreted as logical fatalism.
3. For the underlying theme of the cosmic battle involving the Norse gods and semi-divinities portrayed in Ragnarok, the fatalism could be theological.

These preliminary hypotheses are mere suppositions, they are not the expected answers; however, it would be difficult to predict the analysis results with accuracy without prior insight into the text. The research's obtained outcomes should shed some more light on the presence of fatalism and the type of fatalism, solely from the story of Ragnarok. Following on from the analysis, in one of the discussion chapters, I will then reflect on and evaluate the outlined findings and suggest why the hypothesis should be considered plausible in addition to demonstrating the constraining factors within the research.

Analysis of the Ragnarok Text

<p style="text-align: center;">RAGNAROK.</p> <p>55. Then said Ganglere: What tidings are to be told of Ragnarok? Of this I have never heard before. Har answered: Great things are to be said thereof. First, there is a winter called the Fimbul-winter, when snow drives from all quarters, the frosts are so severe, the winds so keen and piercing, that there is no joy in the sun. There are three such winters in succession, without any intervening summer. But before these there are three other winters, during which great wars rage over all the world. Brothers slay each other for the sake of gain, and no one spares his father or mother in that manslaughter and adultery. Thus says the Vala's Prophecy:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Brothers will fight together And become each other's bane; Sisters' children Their sib shall spoil. Hard is the world, Sensual sins grow huge. There are ax-ages, sword-ages— Shields are cleft in twain,— There are wind-ages, wolf-ages, Ere the world falls dead.</p>	<p>51. Frá ragnarökum.</p> <p>Þá mælti Gangleri: "Hver tíðendi eru at segja frá um ragnarökr? Þess hef ek eigi fyrr heyrt getit."</p> <p>Hárr segir: "Mikil tíðendi eru þaðan at segja ok mörg, þau in fyrstu, at vetr sá kemr, er kallaðr er fimbulvetr. Þá drífr snær ór öllum áttum. Frost eru þá mikil ok vindar hvassir. Ekki nýtr sólar. Þeir vetr fara þrír saman ok ekki sumar milli, en áðr ganga svá aðrir þrír vetr, at þá er um alla veröld orrostur miklar. Þá drepast bræðr fyrir ágirni sakar, ok engi þyrmir föður eða syni í manndrápum eða sífjasliti. Svá segir í Völuspá:</p> <p>55. Bræðr munu berjask ok at bönum verðask, munu systrungar síðum spilla; hart er með höldum, hórdómr mikill, skeggjöld, skalmöld, skildir klofnir, vindöld, vargöld, áðr veröld steypisk</p>
<p>141 Then happens what will seem a great miracle, that the wolf devours the sun, and this will seem a great loss. The other wolf will devour the moon, and this too will cause great mischief. The stars shall be Hurlled from heaven. Then it shall come to pass that the earth and the mountains will shake so violently that trees will be torn up by the roots, the mountains will topple down, and all</p>	<p>Þá verðr þat, er mikil tíðendi þykkja, at úlfrinn gleypir sólna, ok þykkir mönnum þat mikit mein. Þá tekr annarr úlfrinn tunglit, ok gerir sá ok mikit ógagn. Stjörnurnar hverfa af himninum. Þá er ok þat til tíðenda, at svá skelfr jörð öll ok björg, at viðir losna ór jörðu upp, en björgin hrynja, en fjötrar allir ok bönd brotna ok slitna. Þá verðr Fenrisúlfr lauss. Þá geysist hafit á löndin, fyrir því</p>

bonds and fetters will be broken and snapped. The Fenris-wolf gets loose. The sea rushes over the earth, for the Midgard-serpent writhes in giant rage and seeks to gain the land. The ship that is called Naglfar also becomes loose. It is made of the nails of dead men; wherefore it is worth warning that, when a man dies with unpared nails, he supplies a large amount of materials for the building of this ship, which both gods and men wish may be finished as late as possible. But in this flood Naglfar gets afloat. The giant Hrym is its steersman. The Fenris-wolf advances with wide open mouth; the upper jaw reaches to heaven and the lower jaw is on the earth. He would open it still wider had he room. Fire flashes from his eyes and nostrils. The Midgard-serpent vomits forth venom, defiling all the air and the sea; he is very terrible, and places himself by the side of the wolf. In the midst of this clash and din the heavens are rent in twain, and the sons of Muspel come riding through the opening. Surt rides first, and before him and after him flames burning fire. He has a very good sword, which shines brighter than the sun. As they ride over Bifrost it breaks to pieces, as has before been stated. The sons of Muspel direct their course to the plain which is called Vigrid. Thither repair also the Fenris-wolf and the Midgard-serpent. To this place have also come Loke and Hrym, and with him all the frost-giants. In Loke's company are all the friends of Hel. The sons of Muspel have there effulgent bands alone by themselves. The plain Vigrid is one hundred miles (rasts) on each side.

56. While these things are happening, Heimdal stands up, blows with all his might in the Gjallar-horn and awakens all the gods, who thereupon hold

at þá snýst Miðgarðsormr í jötunmóð ok sækir upp á landit. Þá verðr ok þat, at Naglfar losnar, skip þat, er svá heitir. Þat er gert af nöglum dauðra manna, ok er þat fyrir því varnanar vert, ef maðr deyr með óskornum nöglum, at sá maðr eykr mikit efni til skipsins Naglfars, er goðin ok menn vildi seint, at gert yrði. En í þessum sævargang flýtr Naglfar. Hrymr heitir jötunn, er stýrir Naglfari, en Fenrisúlfr ferr með gapandi munn, ok er inn neðri kjöftr við jörðu, en in efri við himin. Gapa myndi hann meira, ef rúm væri til. Eldar brenna ór augum hans ok nösum. Miðgarðsormr blæss svá eitrunu, at hann dreifir loft öll ok lög, ok er hann allógurligr, ok er hann á aðra hlið úlfinum. Í þessum gný klofnar himinninn, ok ríða þaðan Múspellssynir. Surtr ríðr fyrst ok fyrir honum ok eftir eldr brennandi. Sverð hans er gott mjök. Af því skínn bjartara en af sólu. En er þeir ríða Bifröst, þá brotnar hon, sem fyrr er sagt. Múspellsmegir sækja fram á þann völl, er Vígríðr heitir. Þar kemr ok þá Fenrisúlfr ok Miðgarðsormr. Þar er ok þá Loki kominn ok Hrymr ok með honum allir hrímþursar, en Loka fylgja allir Heljarsinnar. En Múspellssynir hafa einir sér fylking, ok er sú björt mjök. Völlrinn Vígríðr er hundrað rasta víðr á hvern veg.

En er þessi tíðendi verða, þá stendr upp Heimdallr ok blæss ákafliga í Gjallarhorn ok vegr upp öll goðin, ok eiga þau þing saman. Þá ríðr Óðinn til Mímisbrunnis ok tekr ráð af Mími fyrir sér ok sínu liði. Þá skelfr askr Yggdrasils, ok engi hlutr er þá óttalauss á himni eða jörðu. Æsir hervæða sik ok allir Einherjar ok sækja fram á völlum. Ríðr fyrstr Óðinn með gullhjálminn ok fagra brynju ok geir sinn, er Gungnir heitir. Stefnir hann móti Fenrisúlfr, en Þórr fram á aðra hlið honum, ok má hann ekki duga honum, því at hann hefir

counsel. Odin rides to Mimer's well to ask advice of Mimer for himself and his folk. Then quivers the ash Ygdrasil, and all things in heaven and earth fear and tremble. The asas and the einherjes arm themselves and speed forth to the battle-field. Odin rides first; with his golden helmet, resplendent byrnie, and his spear Gungner, he advances against the Fenris-wolf. Thor stands by his side, but can give him no assistance, for he has his hands full in his struggle with the Midgard-serpent. Frey encounters Surt, and heavy blows are exchanged ere Frey falls. The cause of his death is that he has not that good sword which he gave to Skirner. Even the dog Garm, that was bound before the Gnipa-cave, gets loose. He is the greatest plague. He contends with Tyr, and they kill each other. Thor gets great renown by slaying the Midgard-serpent, but retreats only nine paces when he falls to the earth dead, poisoned by the venom that the serpent blows on him. The wolf swallows Odin, and thus causes his death; but Vidar immediately turns and rushes at the wolf, placing one foot on his nether jaw. On this foot he has the shoe for which materials have been gathering through all ages, namely, the strips of leather which men cut off for the toes and heels of shoes; wherefore he who wishes to render assistance to the asas must cast these strips away. With one hand Vidar seizes the upper jaw of the wolf, and thus rends asunder his mouth. Thus the wolf perishes. Loke fights with Heimdall, and they kill each other. Thereupon Surt flings fire over the earth and burns up all the world. Thus it is said in the Vala's Prophecy:

fullt fang at berjast við Miðgarðsorm. Freyr berst móti Surti, ok verðr harðr samgangr, áðr Freyr fellr. Þat verðr hans bani, er hann missir þess ins góða sverðs, er hann gaf Skírni. Þá er ok lauss orðinn hundrinn Garmr, er bundinn er fyrir Gnipahelli. Hann er it mesta forað. Hann á víg móti Tý, ok verðr hvárr öðrum at bana. Þórr berr banaorð af Miðgarðsormi ok stígr þaðan braut níu fet. Þá fellr hann dauðr til jarðar fyrir eitri því, er ormrinn blæss á hann. Úlfrinn gleypir Óðin. Verðr þat hans bani. En þegar eftir snýst fram Víðarr ok stígr öðrum fæti í neðra kjöft úlfsins. Á þeim fæti hefir hann þann skó, er allan aldr hefir verit til samnat. Þat eru bjórar þeir, er menn sníða ór skóm sínum fyrir tám eða hæli. Því skal þeim bjórum braut kasta sá maðr, er at því vill hyggja at koma ásunum at liði. Annarri hendi tekr hann inn efra kjöft úlfsins ok rífr sundr gin hans, ok verðr þat úlfsins bani. Loki á orrostu við Heimdall, ok verðr hvárr annars bani. Því næst slyngur Surtr eldi yfir jörðina ok brennir allan heim. Svá er sagt í Völuspá:

<p>Loud blows Heimdal His uplifted horn. Odin speaks With Mimer's head. The straight-standing ash Ygdrasil quivers,¹⁴⁴ The old tree groans, And the giant gets loose.</p>	<p>56. Hátt blæss Heimdallr, horn er á lofti, mælir Óðinn við Míms höfuð; skelfr Yggdrasils askr standandi, ymr it aldna tré, en jötunn losnar.</p>
<p>How fare the asas? How fare the elves? All Jotunheim roars. The asas hold counsel; Before their stone-doors Groan the dwarfs, The guides of the wedge-rock. Know you now more or not?</p>	<p>57. Hvat er með ásum? Hvat er með alfum? Ymr allr Jötunheimr, æsir ro á þingi, stynja dvergar fyrir steindurum, veggbergs vísir. Vituð ér enn eða hvat?</p>
<p>From the east drives Hrym, Bears his shield before him. Jormungand welters In giant rage And smites the waves. The eagle screams, And with pale beak tears corpses, Naglfar gets loose.</p>	<p>58. Hrymr ekr austan, hefisk lind fyrir, snýsk Jörmungandr í jötunmóði; ormr knýr unnir, örn mun hlakka, slítr nái niðfölr, Naglfar losnar.</p>
<p>A ship comes from the east, The hosts of Muspel Come o'er the main, And Loke is steersman. All the fell powers Are with the wolf; Along with them Is Byleist's brother.</p>	<p>59. Kjóll ferr austan, koma munu Múspells of lög lýðir, en Loki stýrir; þar eru fíflmegir með freka allir,</p>

	þeir er bróðir Býleists í för.
From the south comes Surt With blazing fire-brand,— The sun of the war-god Shines from his sword. Mountains dash together, Giant maids are frightened, Heroes go the way to Hel, And heaven is rent in twain.	60. Surtr ferr sunnan með sviga lævi, skínn af sverði sól valtíva; grjótbjörg gnata, en gífr rata, troða halir helveg, en himinn klofnar.
145 Then comes to Hlin Another woe, When Odin goes With the wolf to fight, And Bele's bright slayer To contend with Surt. There will fall Frigg's beloved.	61. Þá kemr Hlínar harmr annarr fram, er Óðinn ferr við ulf vega, en bani Belja bjartr at Surti; þar mun Friggjar falla angan.
Odin's son goes To fight with the wolf, And Vidar goes on his way To the wild beast. With his hand he thrusts His sword to the heart Of the giant's child, And avenges his father.	62. Gengr Óðins sonr við ulf vega, Vídarr of veg at valdýri; lætr hann megi Hveðrungs mund of standa hjör til hjarta; þá er heft föður.
Then goes the famous Son of Hlodyn To fight with the serpent. Though about to die, He fears not the contest; All men Abandon their homesteads	63. Gengr inn mæri mögr Hlöðynjar neppr af naðri níðs ókvíðnum; munu halir allir heimstöð ryðja,

When the warder of Midgard In wrath slays the serpent.	er af móði drepr Miðgarðs véurr.
The sun grows dark, The earth sinks into the sea, The bright stars From heaven vanish; Fire rages, Heat blazes, And high flames play 'Gainst heaven itself. 146And again it is said as follows:	64. Sól mun sortna, sökkr fold í mar, hverfa af himni heiðar stjörnur, geisar eimi ok aldrnari, leikr hár hiti, við himin sjalfan. Hér segir enn svá:
Vigríð is the name of the plain Where in fight shall meet Surt and the gentle god. A hundred miles It is every way. This field is marked out for them.	65. Vígríðr heitir völlr, er finnask vígi at Surtr ok in svásu goð; hundrað rasta hann er á hverjan veg; sá er þeim völlr vitaðr."

*Translation of the original text (Anderson 1901: 140-147)

*This Norse version of the Ragnarok text, Codex Trajectinus (T), penned about 1595 as a copy of an older manuscript, is nearly identical to the other two versions Codex Regius (R), the first half of the 14th century, and Codex Wormianus (W), the middle of the 14th century. (Faulkes, 2005: xxviii) The Ragnarok text could also be found on the web Voluspa, (2008) as well as in Faulkes's (2005) second edition under the title *Edda* (48-53).

Language and Translation

The Prose Edda by Snorri was preserved in three primary manuscripts: Codex Regius (early 14th century), Codex Wormianus (14th century), which was named after Ole Worm, who passed it to Arni Magnusson in 1706 and Codex Upsaliensis (c. 1300), which is possibly the direct copy of Snorri's private text. (Gilchrist Brodeur, 1916: xv) In addition to these, unknown to Brodeur, Clunies Ross (2005) mention Codex Trajectinus, a duplicate of a manuscript that was made in the second half of the 13th

century and which is preserved in the library of the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. (151)

The first translations of the Prose Edda, which appeared in Latin and Danish, occurred in Copenhagen in 1665 under the title "Edda islandorum an. Chr. 1215 islandice, danice, et latine ex antiquis codicibus in lucem prodit opera P. F. Ressenii". In 1885, R. Nyerup published the Edda in standard Danish language. (Gilchrist Brodeur, 1916: xix)

In Sweden, Upsala, J. Göransson had his Swedish version of the Prose Edda in Latin published in 1746. The original he used was the copy of Codex Upsaliensis. In 1859, Anders Uppström rendered an independent translation in Swedish. (xix) A noticeable scholar in the Scandinavian field and the translator of Njals Saga, G.W. Dasent published incomplete "Prose or Younger Edda" in Stockholm in 1842. (xx)

Gilchrist Brodeur further informs us that:

"A similarly incomplete English version was printed at Chicago, in 1880, by Rasmus B. Anderson. Professor Anderson also edited a combined translation of both Eddas, the Poetic Edda by Benjamin Thorpe, and the Prose Edda by I.A. Blackwell. Blackwell's translation, which stops with Bragaraedur, had first appeared at London in 1847, together with an abstract of Eyrbyggja Saga by Scott. Samuel Laing's translation is likewise incomplete." (1916: xx)

On the other hand, Gilchrist Brodeur claims:

"The best-known translation, and the only complete one which is at all trustworthy, is that in Latin, combined, with the Icelandic text, in the Arnamagnaen edition, Copenhagen, 1848-87." (xix-xx)

The endorsed translation from the Old Norse language to English, the Ragnarok text from the Prose Edda, that we shall officially use in this master's thesis is by Rasmus B. Anderson from 1901, which I have chosen for its eloquent and elegant expression (and despite Gilhurst Brodeur's notion that it is incomplete – the chapter of Ragnarok appears to be intact), however, the rendered translation by Benjamin Thorpe and I. A. Blackwell in 1906, by Brodeur Arthur Gilchrist from 1916, and Antony Faulkes from 1995 could be utilised in addition for comparison. Faulkes's 2012 translation is based on the script from Uppsala, which slightly differs with slight alterations of the text, therefore and in addition to comparison, we shall provide both original and the translation while sampling the various translations. These translations appear to be readily available to the Eddas readers, depending on scholarly preference in which domain it is being researched. As there are many instances where the translation differs, more or less meaningfully, I shall here point out a few text-critical variants of significance ranging across the four texts where the evocative meaning might have been lost in translation. This is courteously being done for the benefit of making the reader aware of the critical technicalities with which the field of translation studies has

to encounter on a regular basis as a matter of course. To give a simple illustration, we may begin with the introductory sentence in the Prose Edda's Ragnarok:

"Þá mælti Gangleri: "Hver tíðendi eru at segja frá um ragnarökr?", which Anderson translates in the stanza as: "What tidings are to be told of Ragnarok?" (140), Thorpe and Blackwell: "I have not heard before of Ragnarok," said Gangler: "What hast thou to tell me about it?" (209) (323), Gilchrist Brodeur: "What tidings are to be told concerning the Weird of Gods?" (77) and Faulkes: "Hvat segir þú frá fimbulvetri? segir Gangleri." (78) "What have you to say about mighty winter?" says Gangleri." (79)

As it could be observed, the two of the authors choose to translate the word "tíðendi" with the equivalent English word tidings in the plural, the singular of this term is the Old Norse word tíðr (tithr). When translating a text, the preference in choosing between the singular or plural words depends on how a concept is used nowadays i.e., there is the difficulty of translating the old language into a modern one to match its meanings. Eventually, it is left down to the translator to interpret the text as adequately as possible so that it is esthetically pleasing to hear by a reader. Coincidentally, in this example both the Old Norse and English used the word in plural.

Furthermore, the word Ragnarok as a proper name for the Norse Dooms Day has been used as it is without translation by Anderson and in Thorpe with Blackwell translation, while Gilchrist Brodeur interprets it as *"The Weird of Gods"* and Faulkes interprets the word as *"mighty winter"*. While there is no even a vague resemblance in the translated meaning of Ragnarok between Gilchrist Brodeur and Faulkes, each translation might cause a different emotional arousal in a reader.

The following sentence of the text in Norse is translated by the four interpreters grippingly shows differences in translation too:

"Þá verðr þat, er mikil tíðendi þykkja, at úlfrinn gleypir sólina, ok þykkir mönnum þat mikit mein - Úlfrinn gleypir sólina ok er mein sýnt mönnum."

"Then happens what will seem a great miracle, that the wolf devours the sun, and this will seem a great loss." (Anderson, 1901:141)

"Then shall happen such things as may truly be accounted great prodigies. The wolf shall devour the sun, and a severe loss will that be for mankind." (Thorpe and Blackwell, 1906:209)

"Then shall happen what seems great tidings: The Wolf shall swallow the sun; and this shall seem to men a great harm." (Gilchrist Brodeur, 1916:78)

"Úlfrinn gleypir sólina ok er mein sýnt mönnum." (Faulkes, 2012:80)

"The wolf will swallow the sun and injury is certain to men." (Faulkes, 2012: 81)

As it could be seen, all the translators use different styles of textual interpretation to describe and dramatise the situation; three of them use the future tense in the beginning of the sentence; the words have different intensity such as devour or swallow – each of them conveying its own meaning and emotional projection onto a reader.

Let us now have a look at how the whole strophe sounds in different translation from the original:

Hátt blæss Heimdallr,
horn er á lofti,
mælir Óðinn
við Míms höfuð;
skelfr Yggdrasils
askr standandi,
ymr it alna tré,
en jötunn losnar.

Loud blows Heimdal
His uplifted horn.
Odin speaks
With Mimer's head.
The straight-standing ash
Ygdrasil quivers,
The old tree groans,
And the giant gets loose. (Anderson, 1901:144)

High blows Heimdallr, the horn is aloft;
Odin communes with Mimir's head;
Trembles Yggdrasill's towering Ash;
The old tree wails when the Ettin is loosed. (Gilchrist Brodeur, 1916:80)

"Meanwhile Heimdall stands up, and with all his force sounds the Gjallar-horn to arouse the gods, who assemble without delay. Odin then rides to Mimir's well and consults how he and his warriors ought to enter into action. The ash of Yggdrassill begins to shake, nor there anything in heaven or earth exempt from fear at that terrible hour." (Thorpe and Blackwell, 1906:209)⁵⁴

54 (52) Hátt blæss Heimdallr, horn er á lofti. Mælir Óðinn við Mímis höfuð. Skelfr Yggdrasils askr standandi, ymr it alna tré; æsir eru á þingi. (Faulkes, 2012:82)

Loud blows Heimdallr, his horn is aloft. Óðinn speaks with Mímir's head. There shakes Yggdrasill's ash as it stands, the ancient tree groans; Æsir are in council. (Faulkes, 2012: 83)

There are several differences in this strophe, apart from having two variants of the exact text. While the Uppsala Edda text delivers approximately the same meaning, it also contains different word order. It looks as if it was written in various dialect examples: the words lofti/lopti, altina/alna. The original word and verb skelfr found in both variants is translated in four different versions quiver tremble shake groan by their respective interpreters - each of them giving a divergent meaning to the text; for example, even though we know that the Yggrasill tree shook we are still not certain about the manner of its shaking. However, we get the gist about what was meant to be expressed, the exact meaning of such a text is neither obtainable nor possible in English.

Historical Context

The Old Norse belief in Ragnarok's event was genuine to the Scandinavians, just as we believe in our socially constructed realities. However, it would be not easy to talk about the actual Ragnarok's location in history (although the event was assumed to happen in the future) since it was a prediction of an unrealised event in the Scandinavian space and time. Nevertheless, the belief in Ragnarok was an existential threat to the Vikings up till the end of the first millennium at least, and as such, it was embodied in the Norse poetry by recording it for preservation and posterity. (One cannot precisely pinpoint which verses are more authentic than the others – this would have depended on the influence of underlying social currents.) Concerning the historical context - of Ragnarok in the Prose Edda - what we can treat here is the **embeddedness** of the text in the historical context and the **lingering belief** or sentiment about Ragnarok around the time when Snorri lived and recorded it. Let us first begin with the embeddedness of Norse poetry (including Ragnarok) in the historical context (as well as in the Scandinavian psyche), which could be put in two stages – one through the ancient Norse religion and the other through Christianity. Regarding the first stage, Marold (1990) explains that:

"Although a good deal of conceptual world of traditional Old Norse poetry was based on observation of natural phenomena in their association with human life, a significant part of it was anchored in the world of Scandinavian and Germanic myths and legend, that is to say, in the world of traditional Scandinavian culture." (Clunies-Ross, 2005: 114-115)

For the second stage of historical embeddedness "through Christianity" as we know about Snorri and his background, he was a practising Christian (at least in the eyes of the public) and lived in such a society where the Christian norms became morally and legally regulatory and binding; we also know that he had to travel to Norway to gather and record the corpus of Norse poetry which he called Eddas. Even though Norway and Iceland at that time were Christian, Snorri decided to steal from oblivion this much-loved poetry by the Scandinavians perhaps because the old beliefs persisted in being etched in the collective memory, so there might have existed a pressure in the society to preserve all this literary heritage or Snorri on his own volition, felt that if

nobody recorded the oral tradition, it would be lost forever and they would not be able to recuperate it back in case they needed it again.

Clunies-Ross (2005) writes that there was an "impact of the conversion upon traditional Norse poetry when the political figures in Norway and Iceland adopted Christianity, the intellectual and religious foundation of this poetic art were called in question." (119) In other words, when the Eddas were recorded – the whole corpus of this poetry was already compromised and at peril to be distorted and adapted to the Christian discourse narrative, but we also need to keep in mind that Snorri's determination was firm in keeping it in some shape or form; otherwise, he would not bother recording it.

Regarding the lingering memories in the Scandinavian Christian society of the 12th and 13th centuries when the poetry was recorded, this was the time of transition from the old pagan beliefs to the new Christian era, but this was also the time of syncretism, trying to comprehend how the ancient pantheon of gods fits the new understanding of Christianity and not the vice-versa by merging them. The concepts from the old Norse religion which could be applied to the new ideology were given a new Christian interpretation; this could be seen from the instance when Snorri Sturluson in *Skáldskaparmál* to Eilífr Goðrúnarson writes the following:

"How shall Christ be referred to? By calling him creator of heaven and earth, of angels and the sun, ruler of the world and the kingdom of heaven and angels, king of the heavens and the sun and angels and Jerusalem and Jordan and Greece, master of apostles and saints. Early poets have referred to Him in terms of the well of Urðr and Rome, as Eilífr Guðrúnarson said: They say [he] sits south at the 'Urðr's well' of the rock - seat (CAPITOL HILL) of the gods of Rome – thus has the powerful king (CHRIST) increased his realm with lands." (122)

Clunies-Ross (2005) explains this with the following words: "The point of this apparently curious juxtaposition of the pagan notion of the well of Fate, *Urðar brunnr*, where the Norns presided in Norse mythology, and the idea of Christ ruling from the seat of Western Christendom, Rome, was to show that pagan concepts of numinous authority could be aligned with, and then appropriated by, comparable Christian ones, so that, in Eilífr's words, 'the powerful king (CHRIST) has strengthened himself with lands!'" (122-123)

Literary Context

The text of Ragnarok precedes the chapter "The death of Balder", which begins with Balder's prophesying dreams about his death which he relays to the *asas*. To know in what context the story is located or what happened afore Ragnarok, at least according to the sequence of the Prose Edda, we outline the main scenes that were portrayed in the following text in regard to Balder.

After Balder recounted the harrowing dreams to the asas, they discussed how best to resolve matters going forwards and concluded that they needed to make peace with the natural elements, plants, and animals so that Balder was protected against all sorts of injuries.

"So Frigg exacted an oath from fire, water, iron and all kinds of metal, stones, earth, trees, sicknesses, beasts, birds and creeping things, that they should not hurt Balder." (Anderson, 1901:132)

There was only one plant from which it was impossible to exact the oath, for it was far too young to understand the order of things, that being the mistletoe. Now that Balder was safe from many threats, it became a source of amusement for the asas at their assemblies to test Balder's levels of "protection" by throwing things at him only to see that he was unscathed.

Loki, full of dislike towards Balder, decided to harm him. Disguised as a woman, he went to Frigg, Balder's mother, in an attempt to determine what the one weakness of Balder might be. After determining that mistletoe was the one thing that would harm Balder, Loke picked up the mistletoe and proceeded to a meeting of the asas at which he knew Balder would be present. Loki then asked a blind god Hoder if he would shoot the mistletoe arrow at unassailable Balder. The arrow pierced Balder, and he fell dead to the ground. The asas were in disbelief about what happened to their beloved Balder; Frigg asked if anyone would go to Hel and attempt to find Balder offering Hel a ransom so Balder could return to Asgard. Hermod, Odin's swain, accepted the challenge, so he undertook this journey riding the steed of Odin, Sleipner. Once Hermod reached his destination, he asked Hel if Balder could come back home with him, explaining how sorrowful the asas were because of Balder's death. Hel replied that she would let him go back only if all things in the world cried for him; however, if something refused to weep over him, in that case, Balder would remain with Hel. (136)

Once the asas received the message, they sent their messengers worldwide, entreating if all the things would weep over Balder. Everything cried for him except a cave-residing giantess whose name was Thok (Snorri believed that the creature was Loki in disguise); when she was asked to weep Balder out of Hel, she answered:

"Thok will weep
With dry tears
For Balder's burial;
Neither in life nor in death
Gave he me gladness.
Let Hel keep what she has!"(137)

After this, curious Ganglere asked Har if Loki was punished for causing Balder's death, standing in his way out of Hel. Har answered that the gods made sure he was punished. Loki ran and hid inside a rock with four exits; there he was, making fish nets

out of flax and yarn. The fire was burning before him, and Odin saw from Hlidskjaf where Loki was in hiding. Loki threw the net of the fire and slipped into the river. The wisest of the gods, Kvaser entered Loke's house, and he found the remnants of the burning net nearby, then they remade the same net and cast it into the river to capture Loki. On the second cast of the net by the asas, Thor managed to capture Loki, who had transformed into a salmon. Taken without a truce, Loki was carried to a cave. The adequate punishment that Loki received after he was captured is described in the following text by Snorri:

"The gods took three rocks and set them up on edge, and bored a hole through each rock. Then they took Loke's sons, Vale and Nare or Narfe. Vale they changed into the likeness of a wolf, whereupon he tore his brother Narfe to pieces, with whose intestines the asas bound Loke over the three rocks. One stood under his shoulders, another under his loins, and the third under his hams, and the fetters became iron. Skade took a serpent and fastened up over him, so that the venom should drop from the serpent into his face. But Sigyn, his wife, stands by him, and holds a dish under the venom-drops. Whenever the dish becomes full, she goes and pours away the venom, and meanwhile, the venom drops onto Loke's face. Then he twists his body so violently that the whole earth shakes, and this you call earthquakes. There he will lie bound until Ragnarok." (140)

As astounding as the account about Balder's mishap appears, the event of Ragnarok could not be foreseen immediately as a part of this preceding section, although Balder's sense of impending doom in conjunction with other scenes, could be intuited from the text. There is an inevitable build-up before the narrative unravels itself fully.

The section is followed by "Regeneration", which acts as hope after all that destruction. Here Ganglere queries Har what will happen after all that turmoil on the earth and in the sky. Har begins by telling him that there are many abodes, and the best is in Gimle, i.e. heaven. The terrible residence or a hall is called Nastrand, whose doors are open to the north. Snorri describes it in the following manner:

"It is built of serpents wattled together, and all the heads of the serpents turn into the hall and vomit forth venom that flows in streams along the hall, and in these streams wade perjurers and murderers." (148)

After this, Ganglere poses a question about the existence of gods and their whereabouts dwellings:

"Har answered: The earth rises again from the sea, and is green and fair. The fields unsown produce their harvests. Vidar and Vale live. Neither the sea nor Surfs fire has harmed them, and they dwell on the plains of Ida, where Asgard was before. Thither come also the sons of Thor, Mode and Magne, and they have Mjolner. Then come Balder and Hoder from Hel. They all sit together and talk about the things that happened aforetime —about the Midgard-serpent and the Fenris-wolf." (149)

Har also informs Ganglere that two people hiding in Hodmimer's holt would survive the fire of Surt – their names were Líf and Lífthrasir. They stayed alive by feeding on the morning dew. These two would be the progenitors of numerous people who would fill up the world. (150)

This following chapter after Ragnarok neatly abridges and connects to the period of regeneration, which would naturally be expected after all that obliteration. What follows is the era of renewal, as revealed in the chapter. The text acts as an indication of hope for humanity and tells us that there is a gleaming new aeon that abets humanity's life where the balance in the world would be restored, and everything else consequently would improve and be complementarily enhanced.

Form, Structure, Movement

The genre of the text is a supernatural and apocalyptic story; there is an allusion to the moral deterioration at the end of the days just as we find the same in monotheistic religious texts, which prompts us to think if the function of Ragnarok may be to illustrate the battle between forces of evil and good, to show that even the gods are not invulnerable, that the fate does not favour anyone but those who are ready to sacrifice everything in order to succeed in their intention of preserving what is the most important.

The text's movement about Ragnarok in the Prose Edda corresponds to the typical structure of an ancient narrative about doomsday. Speaking in metaphors, the wolf devours the sun, the other wolf devours the moon, the stars hurl from heaven, the earth starts shaking, the Fenris-wolf is unleashed, the sea rushes all over the earth, the Midgard serpent writhes looking for the land, the mythical ship Naglfar becomes loose which gets afloat, the Fenris-wolf opens his mouth to swallow everything on the earth and in the sky projecting the fire from his eyes and nostrils, the Midgard-serpent pukes forth venom. Suppliant and worried Odin who rides to Mimir's well to ask guidance of Mimir for himself and his people, the ash of Yggdrasil quivers, the *asas* and *einherjas* get the arms and hurry up to the battle-field, Odin heads first to fight against the Fenris-wolf, Thor fights with the Midgard-serpent, Frey encounters Surt who kills Frey, even the dog called Garm gets loose, who fights Tyr and they kill each other, Thor becomes celebrated when he kills the Midgard-serpent but as he is retreating the blown venom of the serpent catches him and falls dead to the earth, the wolf swallows Odin which would be the end of him – to revenge his father Vidar he renders asunder the wolf's mouth upon which he perishes – at the same time Loki is in fight with Heimdal; they slay each other. After this, Surt throws fire all over the earth, scorching up the world.

As we could see from the illustration, the first half of the plot's movements are swift incessant and dramatic. In the second part, the movement is nonetheless dramatic; however, in the last part of the chapter, the plot begins slowing down. Here we read that the smoke occludes the sun, the earth disappears in the sea, the bright stars vanish, the fire continues to rage, and even though the whole world is destroyed in the battle, the things seem to be subsiding and slowing down.

Detailed Analysis

RAGNAROK

55. Then said Ganglere: What tidings are to be told of Ragnarok? Of this I have never heard before. Har answered: Great things are to be said thereof. First, there is a winter called the Fimbul-winter, when snow drives from all quarters, the frosts are so severe, the winds so keen and piercing, that there is no joy in the Sun. There are three such winters in succession, without any intervening summer. But before these there are three other winters, during which great wars rage over all the world. Brothers slay each other for the sake of gain, and no one spares his father or mother in that manslaughter and adultery. Thus says the Vala's Prophecy:

Brothers will fight together
And become each other's bane;
Sisters' children
Their sib shall spoil.
Hard is the world,
Sensual sins grow huge.
There are ax-ages, sword-ages—
Shields are cleft in twain, —
There are wind-ages, wolf-ages,
Ere the world falls dead.

Comment: The beginning of this narration starts inquisitively, whereby Ganglere inquiringly asks about the news of Ragnarök that he did know about before to apprise his knowledge and satisfy his curiosity about it. This would imply that the character believed in predestination unless it is a stylistic form in the Norse poetry to build up the intense feeling of expectation. Har is glad to share the news, prophecy, and information about it. As a narrator and a possessor of the knowledge, he also possibly believes in a predetermined outcome. As the Norse had the habit of naming things such as their swords, they were also calling the periods of time; in this case, Har names the dreaded winter, which was expected and should with certainty occur in the future. The word Fimbul has some connection with, or it could be named after the spirit of Fimbultyr, who was mentioned at the beginning of creation in the Norse mythology, he who is the God of gods, everlasting "the god whom the Edda skald dared not name" (Anderson, 1879:11).

Har describes the Fimbul-winter in a poetic manner "when snow drives from all quarters, the frost are so severe, the wind so keen and piercing." The phrase seems clichéd, for it commences with the adverb "when," which was used in so many poems and prophecies in the past, however it indicates the expectation how this weather disaster will look in reality; the element of definitiveness or predetermination is

present in his discourse. The disappearance of the Sun during the Fimbul-winter is something that, as the text shows, will happen with certainty. Then Har makes a small interjection talking about three winters before the Fimbul-winter telling us about their nature filled with warfare. He exemplifies (and pre-empts the telling of the prophecy which he is about to tell) describing some characteristics of such hostilities in the behaviour between relatives – the emphasis being on greed, manslaughter, and adultery. These are the factors which seem to be the cause of what awaits people, and as it was the case in many other religions, the corruption of moral was responsible for their downfall. With this statement, we have established the contingency or dependency of the future event whether the event should happen. What is unknown here is the precise moment in the future.

Har tells the Vala's Prophecy, which comes in the form of a proper poem. He repeats his statement about the brothers that make nuisance and irritation to each other; the poem additionally mentions sisters' children that "shall spoil". The stanza "Hard is the world", in the middle of the poem, emphasises the severity of the problems which will befall that future society, but it is also a declaration of the disbelief of how people will become. This, too, is forthcoming to happen. After this, the verse "Sensual sins grow huge" shows what arises next to the previous behaviour. This precondition is also necessary for what will come after.

The poem predicts the periods of ongoing fights, as reflected in verse: "There are axe-ages, sword-ages—"The metaphor description of these fights ensues in shields being split in two whereby people would kill each other. It is interesting to note that the verse "Shields are cleft in twain" in original language "skildir klofnir" literally means "shields cleft". This action appears to be reliant on the verse of "sensual sins", implying a cause again. After that, the poet uses a couple of kennings (metaphorical connotations) "wind-ages and wolf-ages", indicating the meaning of rainstorm and a sort of atmospheric uproar. Again, this action should be instigated by the previous action, i.e., it happens because of the fights.

The last verse - Ere the world falls dead (*áðr veröld steypisk*) may be archaic to the reader; there are two expressions in both English and the Old Norse that necessitate our attention: *áðr* translated as *ere* means before in the modern English and *steypisk* translated as *falls dead* which comes from the verb *steypa*, fall fling or cast down according to my reckoning and attempt to translate the word. So, rather than translating "Ere the world falls dead" which would indicate the total obliteration, the following interpretation of the verse would be more suitable *Ere the world falls down*. This might be the prediction about the event in the future; however, from the translation, it is unclear when it will happen and, more importantly, how because these are the factors that could determine the conditionality of the event. The conditionality again could be particularly important in how the event would unravel.

When the warder of Midgard
In wrath slays the serpent.
The Sun grows dark,

The Earth sinks into the sea,
The bright stars
From heaven vanish;
Fire rages,
Heat blazes,
And high flames play
' Gainst heaven itself.

Comment: The particle "when" in the first stanza has a more vigorous intensity than "if" in meaning expressing that the event will happen, presenting it as declarative truth while being convinced about it. By this, the text convinces us that the event will happen with certainty, i.e., God has already made a plan that something will happen.

"The sun grows dark." This stanza is expressed in the present tense, as are the following four stanzas. Collectively they drum up the drama of what happens next. The present tense in which they are expressed feel as if the plot is virtually happening right now but in some other parallel world. It seems that the cause of these events was the killing of the Midgard-serpent by Thor. This action by Thor started up the causal chain in nature. We also cannot see from the verses if Thor submits to fate - if we claim that this was determined a long time ago, then this would die to causality; however, while this killing of the Midgard-serpent was inevitable, it would be impossible to claim that it was due to causality. The latter view would be held by fatalist and predeterminists. From this part of the text, it is impossible to say whether determinists or fatalists win; however, I would be inclined, because this is an ordination, to understand the text as a fatalist and predeterminist with it or without causality - this would happen.

Also, if Thor knew that he would kill the serpent, his free will would be diminished due to the necessity of having to render the act. Without free will and do something because it was necessary, this would make it theological fatalism. Regarding logical fatalism, we need to assume that if it were true that Thor would kill the serpent and it happened in the future, it renders the first statement truthful. If the action did not occur, then the statement in the past would not be veritable.

It is also ingenious that the verses are told in the present tense since it makes their statements more real (i.e., there is no other way for those events but to happen) and truthful (i.e, there is no deviating from the fact that in relation manoeuvring towards the presumed past or future, the events are taking place now subsequently eliminating the necessity to question their happening.)

Then comes to Hlin
Another woe,
When Odin goes
With the wolf to fight,
And Bele's bright slayer
To contend with Surt.

There will fall
Frigg's beloved.

Comment: The words in this poem are exceptionally enigmatic. Many scholars think that the name Hlin is another name for Frigg, while others think that she is a separate goddess – I am more inclined to go with the first interpretation. The second less known mentioned name, Bele, here refers to Balder, and scholars are unanimous about this explanation. What is evident from the poem is that Odin fights with the wolf while Balder is battling with Surt. The one who falls is Frigg's beloved. So, who is he, Balder, her son or Odin, her husband? By the process of elimination, in the chapter of Regeneration, we find that Balder survives (he is the God of light or the personification of Sun itself, so he must reappear at the end of the temporal cycle)– therefore, the one who falls dead, Frigg's beloved is Odin.

The tragic of Odin's death is perhaps the most surprising news because he is the leader of the Aesir – since we know that when he went to see Mimer's head to ask for advice for himself and other deities – the text does not state whether (it seems that) he foreknew about how will he end up and how the plot would unfold - however despite the supposed grim prediction about his destiny, Odin submits to the fate fighting the forces of evil. He accepts the prearranged path of his fate, performing the duty which probably was inevitable. This has led us to speculate whether his act was necessary. There are a few possible answers on this question – one that this act will be in concordance with the supreme God's will making it necessary (an unfree) (theological fatalism). The other answer would be that Odin knew what was predicted about him, but he decided to fight because he thought that his death is unnecessary since he also has the right to determine his destiny (note that the concept of free will is present in this case). On another note, if Odin knew what would happen, he perhaps would not fight if everything was determined. He also might have known what will happen to him, but he has chosen freely by his own volition to fight. Had he not fought (a reference to the idle argument) because of what he knew about the future, his will would not matter, making him unfree - there also exists a possibility that he did not know. However, maybe he knew how to achieve his freedom even though his free will seemed limited through the exact action of following the predetermined and prescribed path by the superior force that he was to undertake. This situation could be best understood if we take into consideration the words of the Hindu deity Krishna to Arjuna who was hesitant to wage war against his relatives:” A man does not attain freedom from the results of action by abstaining from actions, and he does not approach perfection simply by renunciation.” (The Bhagavad Gita, 3.4, Knott, 1998:37) In the same vein Odin knew well that he could not attain real freedom without altruistically sacrificing his free will for the higher good; saving the collective self (the Aesir), was of greater importance than sacrificing personal self for Odin while at the same time he would be aligning with the inner vision which he obtained at Mimir's well.

The Sun grows dark,
The Earth sinks into the sea,
The bright stars

From heaven vanish;
Fire rages,
Heat blazes,
And high flames play
' Gainst heaven itself.

Comment: This poem of the chapter predicts the Sun will lose its brightness, the Earth will disappear under the waves of the sea, the shining stars in the sky will vanish. The world will be enveloped in an unbridled fire that will spread all over the place all the way into heaven. The verses again appear in the present tense, which is an indicator that Ragnarok will happen with certainty if it is not happening right now and simultaneously in some other temporality. For everything on the Earth is in flux, catastrophic events had happened on the Earth in the past, which the Vikings might have witnessed, they expected another similar event in the future, as demonstrated in the poem. The chance of this happening is highly likely and a constant threat, even for us with global warming, making it less of a prophetic prediction but a prediction based on the observations of nature. I have also mentioned earlier that the Viking society has experienced a mini global cooling in the second part of the first millennium, which even with the minimal effects caused the failure of the crops in the north and was the catalyst for their attacking and plundering of their European neighbours first in the east (Slavic territories) and then in the south (The British Isles and North France). Even though the poem was probably primed by the occurrence of the global cooling, the text on its own appears as a vision rather than visualisation, making it more of the prophecy, for a visualisation might imply that it might, or it might not happen. This makes me conclude that the text is a prediction, i.e., something that is fated. While it is possible to look for a cause for Ragnarok in the supposed perversion of humankind (that I consider being a part of the cosmic plan), the willingness of this happening is dependent on the supreme being (God), although it is entwined with the actions between the Aesir and the giants that are a part of that divine plan too. For that reason, we could say that neither free will (tied to God's power) of the humans or the gods is taken away from that, leaving it to the supreme being. This elimination of recognition of the connection between the influence of human/aesir/giants action on causing the havoc on the Earth parallels the view of Jabari School of apologetics in Islam, whereby the protagonists of the event with their deeds do not really possess their own will since their deeds are not their own either. Thus, the whole of Ragnarok and the committed actions in it would seem to be the will of the supreme being.

Vigrid is the name of the plain
Where in fight shall meet
Surt and the gentle God.
A hundred miles
It is every way.
This field is marked out for them

Comment: At first glance, this prediction seems to be straightforward enough. Reading through the text, the references strike one to three specific pieces of

information in the poem. The first being the location of where the clash will take place – in this case, the Plain of Vigrid; the second piece of information informs us as to whom the clash will take place between - in this case, the giant Surt and the gentle God. The third piece of information indicates the demarcation of the space in which all this will happen. In this case, "100 miles every way", so we could infer from this that it will be a significant battle over a large area. With this information, we must ask ourselves how it was possible to know in advance the location of the battle, who will clash and the size of the battle? We can deduce that all of this points to God's foreknowledge of Ragnarok. The observed phenomenon here constitutes theological fatalism whereby God's infallible knowledge has already predetermined the details of the event well in advance.

Nevertheless, two factors must be considered when talking about Ragnarok's predetermination: one is the infallible foreknowledge of God, and the other is free will. It depends on our interpretation of the poem; to reconcile these two factors, which would mean that **we** align with compatibilism, and to oppose and deny them would mean that we are incompatibilists.

Following Ockhamist's solution on the compatibility of these two principles, Adams argued that "that God's existence in the past and God's past beliefs about the future are not strictly past because they are facts that are in part about the future." (Zagzebski, 2017) ("In part" here means that these facts are not completely hard facts.) Adams tried to establish what are the hard facts, which made her giving more refined definitions of a hard fact and what it is necessary to become one - "the type of necessity such facts are said to have—what Ockham called "accidental necessity" (necessity *per accidens*)." (Zagzebski, 2017)

Byerly (2014) writes that reaction to the accidental necessity of the foreknowledge argument is usually not positive, so the author recommends that we take uncausability version of the foreknowledge argument instead. Contrasting the compatibilist solutions, which show that infallible foreknowledge and human freedom are compatible, "Molinism provides an account of how God knows the contingent future, along with a strong doctrine of divine providence." To do this, Molinism utilised the explanation of the Middle Knowledge (between God's knowledge of necessary truths and his knowledge of his own creative will), whose objects are called counterfactuals of freedom. (Zagzebski, 2017)

Zagzebski further writes: "Middle knowledge requires that there are true counterfactuals of this form corresponding to every possible free creature and every possible circumstance in which that creature can act freely. These propositions are intended to be contingent (a claim that some objectors have disputed), but they are prior to God's creative will. God uses them in deciding what to create. By combining his Middle Knowledge with what he decides to create, God knows the entire history of the world." (Zagzebski, 2017)

By this explanation, we could see that God's foreknowledge, as in the case of Ragnarok, could clash with the counterfactuals of freedom. I also think that a range or combination between his Middle Knowledge with what he wants to create is

unnecessary or logically possible, which jeopardises how he knows the entire history of the world.

Respecting the philosophical debate about the theological fatalism, which is present here, what it could be read from the poem is a lack of human or gods' input (will) first in the naming of this place (unless it already existed), knowing the protagonists of the event and the proportions of the field where it will happen. God's will here seem supreme in this instance. The Jabari School, which polemicised on God's will, argued that humans do not do any deed independently. Like all the things which occur, it happens under the Supreme's will – determinism.

Synthesis

The freedom of the Norse gods and humans in the whole story of Ragnarok appears to be restricted by the rules of fate. There seems extraordinarily little of manoeuvrability of gods in terms of what they could do, and even when they try to rescue themselves from the awaiting and assured fate – this evidently seems futile because the will of superior being must be done. With everything being pre-determined, this brings us to the Idle Argument by Aristotle, which uses the paradigm “either...or”; which in our case would sound like the following statement: “whether Ragnarok happens – or if it does not happen – the outcome of it could be that the world would regenerate, or it would not be the case. “

To further illustrate the Idle Argument, let us involve the situation, which genuinely occurs in Ragnarok using the succeeding statements:

-If it is fated that Odin and Thor to die in Ragnarok, then they would die regardless if they fight or they do not engage in the battle.

-If they are fated not to die, they will not die regardless of if they fight or not.

However, it is either fated that they would die in the battle or fated that they would not die.

-Therefore, it is futile that they fight.

So whatever humans or gods do, it will not make any impact on Ragnarok taking place. However, what about the death of Odin and Thor – **would it be necessary** – this becomes the question of importance. It may be futile whether they live or die, but even though the Aesir will be victorious, why is the prophecy saying that they have to die. Now we come to the necessity of them dying (something that is difficult to alter according to the rules of the Norse religion), and the necessity seems stronger here.

To sort this problem – I have allocated the conditional denominator (fight) into the futile and not futile groups – whereby we say that futile is futile to some degree and not futile is not futile to some degree. The questions which arise from these two statements is why (to and for what cause or reason). Why is the fight to some degree futile – the answer would be – there is truly little or nothing that they (the gods) could do to prevent it. Why is the fight, to some degree, not futile – the answer to this question would be to influence the already started course of action to go according to the plan.

So, if Odin and Thor did not fight because this action would be completely futile, but they did fight because they were the facilitators of this happening – which was not worthless after all. They perhaps saw themselves as part of a Divine plan despite that they would die out to protect their family in keeping them safe and making sure that they continue living. Regarding this notion, Chrysippus would say that fighting was also fated as dying, by which the two events are said to be co-fated.

Intertextuality of the Ragnarok

Next, we embark on a discussion of intertextuality, which could have affected and altered the meaning of Snorri's Edda's text of Ragnarok. Snorri's Prose Edda cites *Völuspá* with more or less accuracy; it is possible to match and connect certain Voluspa stanzas with those from Snorri's Edda. In that sense, we can talk about intertextuality. Gee (2014) writes: "When one text (...) quotes, refers to, or alludes to another text (that is, what someone else has said or written) we will call this "intertextuality." Quoting someone or something could be direct or indirect. (171) It is challenging to determine precisely how Snorri quotes Voluspa, but in Snorri's Prose Edda Ragnarok, the text looks like direct citation, although there is a degree of slight asymmetry conflicting with *Völuspá*. Therefore, we shall cite verse 45 and 46 from *Völuspá* that overlap with 62 and 63 stanzas from Ragnarok to make a comparison and to show the difference.

Völuspá (Poetic Edda)

<p><i>Bræðr muno beriaz ok at þǫnom verða</i>[z] <i>muno systrungar sífiom spilla.</i> Hart er í heimi, hórdómr mikill —<i>skeggǫld, skálmǫld</i> —<i>skildir ro klofnir</i>— <i>vindǫld, vargǫld</i>— <i>áðr verǫld steypiz.</i> Mun engi maðr ǫðrom þyrma.</p>	<p>Brothers will fight and kill each other, sisters' children will defile kinship. It is harsh in the world, whoredom rife —an axe age, a sword age —shields are riven— a wind age, a wolf age— before the world goes headlong. No man will have mercy on another.</p>
<p>—Normalized Old Norse[13]</p>	<p>—Ursula Dronke translation[13]</p>

45. Brothers shall fight, and slay each other; cousins shall kinship violate. The earth resounds, **the giantesses flee**; no man will another spare.

46. Hard is it in the world, great whoredom, an axe age, a sword age, shields shall be cloven, a wind age, a **wolf age**, ere the world sinks.

Ragnarok (Prose Edda)

<p>Bræðr munu berjask ok at bönum verðask, munu systrungar sifjum spilla; hart er með höldum, hórdómr mikill, skeggjöld, skalmöld, skildir klofnir, vindöld, vargöld, áðr veröld steypisk</p>	<p>Brothers will fight together And become each other's bane; Sisters' children Their sib shall spoil. Hard is the world, Sensual sins grow huge. There are ax-ages, sword-ages— Shields are cleft in twain,— There are wind-ages, wolf-ages, Ere the world falls dead.</p>
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As it could be seen, there are alterations in the pronunciation of words (berias was substituted with berjask - the same word might have been modified by Snorri to reflect the Icelandic pronunciation of the word), the verses that convey similar if not identical meaning, **Hart er i heimi** (It is harsh in the world), Snorri recorded it as **hart er með höldum** (**Hard is the world**) and in there is added *Mun engi maðr þðrom þyrma*. (No man will have mercy on another) in Voluspa whereas Snorri's last verse of this poem is **áðr veröld steypisk** (Ere the world falls dead.) Dronke's translation of this poem contains the verse, while Thorpe and Blackwell translation of the Elder Edda does not mention this last verse at all (the detected inconsistencies may have been due to the versions which the translators possessed).

The second type of intertextuality that Gee mentions “occurs when a text is written in one **style** (in one social language associated with one identity) **incorporates a style of language** (a social language) **associated with a different identity.**” (171). What we need to find here is whether Ragnarok uses the type of discourse that is associated with the identity of another genre of poetry to the greater or lesser degree of expression. To do this, we begin with Sawyer and Sawyer (2000), who notices that when looking at the Prose Edda generally one immediately spots a number or archaism, metrical irregularity, and dramatic episodes. (24) So, what happens when we compare Snorri's version of Ragnarok with the Germanic Christian poems of the time (8th to 10th century), also assuming that Ragnarok was available at the time too, whether Ragnarok incorporates Christian style of language.

That would be untrue for the reasons which Sawyer and Sawyer already mentioned (archaism, irregularity, and dramatic effect); I would single out the archaisms, e.g., when we read Ragnarok both in original and translation, there is also a sense that the

language of expression is ancient, natural and congenial with the Scandinavian linguistic roots (e.g., the usage of kennings is striking) – inimitable. Therefore, I would be inclined to take a stance that the incorporation of Christian discourse within Snorri’s version of Ragnarok is not apparent.

To be certain of this, we shall investigate the claim about Ragnarok’s supposed linkage by style to the 9th century Old German Christian poem Muspilli (Muspelli in Old German or Mudspelles in Old Saxon) as well as the Old Saxon poem Heliand. Muspilli derives its name after the Old Norse word Muspellr which was mentioned in both Eddas: Muspellr was the progenitor of the Surtr, the family of giants that fought against the Aesir gods during Ragnarok. The poem of Muspilli contains the word in the following verse: dar ni mac denne **mak** andremo helfan uora demo **muspille** (at that time, no kinsman there can help another before the *muspille*), while *Heliand* in a verse has the phrase: anttat mudspelles megin (until the Judgement Day) (verse 31:2591) using the word mudspelles as a relative of Muspellr as a substitute for judgement, doom, and destruction. While the etymology of the word Mudspilles is still unavailable, with its strong association with the Surtr, the word might have acted as a synonym or substitute for Ragnarok in the past, the farfetched idea that this poem might have been an inspiration is highly unlikely both in style and expression (for such intertextuality of both poems, Muspilli and Heliand, cannot be seen in the Eddas). What we can readily observe is that, if anything, the word Mudspelles in these Christian poems shows that their discourse was influenced by the previously used pagan terminology; henceforth, the term appears in them. If we are about to talk about borrowing not only style but words too, then the Muspilli phrase “at that time, no kinsman there can help another before the *muspille*” was borrowed by the Christian writers of Muspilli from the ancient Nordic pagan text and which would render it to be is a proof for the authenticity of Ragnarok and subsequently placing it a few centuries backwards on a timeline (which is an exciting notion to discover).

Also reading the Muspilli poem, one immediately notices its smoother and wider expression in comparison to information-packed (because of the kennings used in the Edda’s Ragnarok) and shorter stanzas that goes in favour of the Edda, which by its “crudeness and rawness” once again shows that it is an old Scandinavian poem composed by an ordinary and illiterate of poetic forms person aeons ago before a primed by his ancient pagan literary heritage Christian composer could smooth out Christian version of the Dooms Day.

The second candidate for Ragnarok’s inspiration (but not assuming the identity of Christian expression within Ragnarok), it has been proposed, was the Old Saxon poem Heliand (Saviour) that narrates about the life of Christ. In the verse “anttat **mudspelles** megin” (until the Judgement Day) (verse 31:2591) the poem uses the word “mudspelles” as a relative of Scandinavian Muspellr to insinuate judgement, doom, and destruction. The reason for this was possibly that the old Saxons did not have any other word to designate the Doom’s Day except “mudspelles”, however, what is evident that there was a reliance on the association with the old pantheon of deities. The Ragnarok’s synonym, which was used in the poem, could indicate that the

knowledge of Muspel causing the Doom's Day was already there, which would underpin the content of the actual Ragnarok poem. In that sense, it would be difficult to talk about Ragnarok imitating the Christian sources but rather them following Ragnarok closely also for the language's tight congeniality with pagan religion that gave birth to such words such as Muspel.

The third type of intertextuality that Gee mention is whereby “one text can allude to another text or style of language (social language) by using or mimicking the grammar or phrasing, but not necessarily the words, of another text or style of language.” (Gee, 2014:171) What is meant by this statement is, for example, if one can write a text that imitates the style of another genre, so we pose the question is whether the Edda Ragnarok mimics grammar or style of language from another source without explicit usage of the words or style of language. I am inclined to use the negative answer for the following reasons. When we compare the poem Heliand and the Edda's Ragnarok – beginning with the different topics, the metrics are mostly dissimilar (much shorter verses in Ragnarok although there are some shorter verses Heliand too), the stanzas of the Ragnarok appear to be in one tense while in Heliand are used different tenses. Also, when we hear each of the poems, they sound completely different – Heliand is more musical, narrating the story of Jesus, while the short stanzas of Ragnarok sound harsh and abrupt with powerful impact because it intends to deliver a prophetic message.

Our intertextual analysis shows that the wording in Christian sources was possibly primed by the texts such as Ragnarok despite the knowledge of Christian poets how to structure their verses metrically, which the Eddic poet did not know (even though Snorri tried to sort it out, i.e., edit it, but he did not do it in order to preserve the authenticity of the text – he merely recorded what he heard in this instance). Based on this, I believe that Ragnarok as a text is much older than what we are led to believe by some scholars. Due to the limitations and requirement of this thesis, a further and deeper analysis is needed to establish the degree of intertextuality to glimpse into the oldness of the text with certainty.

For the end of this section, a reader of this thesis might pose the question:” Why is intertextuality of the poem important for the concept of fate in the Ragnarok?” I trust it is because I would like to know if the text contained in the elaborated poem is authentic, and to what degree it is accurate. Once I acquired the knowledge about it (as we have discovered that it repeats Voluspa and that it does not imitate earlier Christians source), I could then thoughtfully proceed in determination to find out if we have theological or logical fatalism represented in the poem whose content was held true for those who believed in it around the time when it was relevant.

Reflection

In this part of the analysis, I would like to present my private thoughts and views that I gathered through contemplation on fate regarding Ragnarok. I reserve the right to the opinion that these reflections might not be the most accurate illuminations on the phenomenon; however, they are an earnest attempt on my part to understand it.

I shall commence with the initial poem in the chapter, whereby we read is several pre-conditions (immoral behaviour of people) that should activate and unfold the big event. The important aspect here, logics wise is that these circumstances represent necessary truths that will happen at some point in future.

This situation will unleash a chain of events such as the wolf devouring the sun and the moon; however, the wolf is not a real one, but it represents a metaphor, in which case, we need to find out what that metaphor means. I suspect that it might be some sort of natural cosmic event which happens occasionally or an anomaly by which the sun and moon will not be seen. The hurl of the stars to the earth could be interpreted as meteors that should cause substantial damage to the earth. These sorts of astronomic events had already happened in the past, and they are highly likely to happen in the future again. The question about fate (in this case) could be eliminated by the fact that everything in the cosmos is cyclical or bound to happen (again), which would not constitute this prediction as fate.

Fate is a mysterious word, for, in order that something is fate, it must have an element of the unknown, and yet it requires some certainty. The spoiling of morals in the poem represents a determinative factor in making it into fate, satisfying both of its variables of the unknown (no obvious knowledge about when it will happen) and certainty (that it will happen).

This is where the Theory of Iktisab (earning of the deeds) by the Ash'arites comes in its own - if the conditions (deeds) are met or created (the spoiling of moral), then the catastrophe will happen, unleashing the whole sorts of apocalyptic events and if it does not happen - by the reason applied it tells us that the event would not happen. However, there is a problem (obstruction to this, the rule of any pagan religion is that the time is cyclical, and the destruction of the earth at some point in the future is inevitable. This statement per se is truthful (as it is fixed by cosmic order of things) while the other (the spoiling of moral) could happen, or it does not have to happen (it does not have the necessity), making it ambivalent. The second statement is contingent on the possibility to what extent humans would be prone to engaging in such immoral behaviours, something that could or could not be controlled or manipulated by external forces into happening. If the humans go that direction of their own volition, then this would act as a trigger of the cataclysmic event. Would this have a cause-effect relation? At first sight, one might say that the influence of one variable causes the effect when it comes in close contact with another variable in the poem, so it is difficult to know anything about it; however, there is a correlation between these two.

Pertaining to the previously reflected upon - in logical fatalism, the claim is drawn from a series of statements that does not depend on causation but relies on logical truth. However, in Ragnarok story, it is about the belief of the Norse pagans, whether it was the truth for them - if it were the truth that Ragnarok would happen - when it happens only then it will be the truth. Thus, we could pose a question: "Is what Har

narrated truth today?" for it will be the truth when it happens. The text shows us that this is the case; it was the truth for both characters. Not happening is not the option.

Theological fatalism manifested itself here in the text that all is pre-determined by the supernatural beings (volvas); they are pre-ordered in accordance with their omniscience. From what it could be read in the text, Ragnarok seems pre-ordained (something that we know from a context), and I would say this stance is much stronger than relying on Divine Foreknowledge. (Reference on strong and weak theological determinism). The reason why I think so is that the Norse people believed in fate strongly. The Divine foreknowledge, on the other hand, would allow some wiggling out of that difficult predicament. However, based on the previous story about Balder, there is hope for gods who are destined to die, for we see that Balder was saved from a terrible destiny that awaited him (he had the dreadful dream which predicted his death, other deities tried to protect him from it, but Loki was the executor of his destiny); Balder (and Hoder) emerges triumphant after the Ragnarok from Hel returning from the land of the dead. In this way, fate was overcome. Although one could argue that this trajectory was predestined too!

Loud blows Heimdal
His uplifted horn.
Odin speaks
With Mimer's head.
The straight-standing ash
Yggdrasil quivers,
The old tree groans,
And the giant gets loose.
How fare the asar?
How fare the elves?
All Jotunheim roars.

The mental image of Heimdal blowing into the horn, is a scene that reminds us of many other apocalyptic narratives. An example of this can be shown in Islam in that there is an angel called Israfil whose main duty will be to herald the Doom's Day by blowing into the horn. The mental image of this idea is symbolic, marking the beginning of the end. In the same vein, the poem visualises Odin consulting with Mimer's head. This visitation to Mimer could be interpreted metaphorically because it seems that Mimer is a symbol in the Norse mythology for inner vision, in a way that allows Odin an insight into what will happen and prepares him for what is coming. One suspects that Odin contemplates his future and senses his own mortality, thereby predicting the end of his life which he would sacrifice for the welfare of his own family.

Subsequently, either the disturbing thoughts of Odin would shake the tree of life, Yggdrasil or it would be the tree's dread of terrifying unleashed giants. However, all this would be conditional - if and when it happened! To increase the plausability of its

happening, the plot is narrated in the present tense, so even if it has not happened yet, the truthfulness of it depends on its occurrence.

The asas hold counsel;
Before their stone-doors
Groan the dwarfs,
The guides of the wedge-rock.
Know you now more or not?
From the east drives Hrym,
Bears his shield before him.
Jormungand welters
In giant rage
And smites the waves.
The eagle screams,
And with pale beak tears corpses,
Naglfar gets loose.
A ship comes from the east,
The hosts of Muspel
Come o'er the main,
And Loke is steersman.
All the fell powers
Are with the wolf;
Along with them
Is Byleist's brother.

The line "the asas hold counsel" is a particular piece of information. How do we know that they hold counsel unless they have regular counsels when there is something important to discuss? I would qualify this as being a truthful statement; however, it is not confirmed yet. The following significant statements are that Jormungand (the giant serpent) welters beating the waves and that the ship called Naglfar gets loose sailing to Vigridhr carrying the forces of chaos with Loki being its steersman.

How certain is this vision? It is detailed, for it is the scene with Loki that makes it more believable – the teller of the story believed that this would happen so and so. Suddenly, we do not need anymore the condition "would" – all that remains is "will". Having the belief that something will happen in the future does not make it accurate because it depends on its happening, and even if it happens, it would be half true and half untrue until that moment.

The Summary of Results

The choice between the logical and theological fatalism that could be found in the stanzas of Ragnarok, as Snorri recorded it, puts me in a dilemma to find out what is in the text "unsuspended," i.e., it does not depend on something else and my personal view. Before I begin with the summary of results, it must be stated that neither the fatalism is positively and predominantly inclined towards free will; the logical fatalism saying that the prior truths are incompatible with a free will while it is the God who

predetermined the path for humans irrespective of what they thought about it or willed it by their actions.

In this section, we answer the three hypotheses' questions. The first one is whether Prose Edda's chapter of Ragnarok contains and enclose the concept of fate (fatalism). The idea could indeed be found, alluded to, or indicated in the text and concurred from the context in which it is embedded. I shall not dwell much on this hypothesis question, for it is self-evident that such an idea was not only present but prevalent in most ancient societies, the Norse people not being the exception from that phenomenon. Instead of that, Snorri's Ragnarok wording will be of the key and critical importance when discerning on presence, absence or mixed "feeling" of logical and theological fatalism in the text.

The presumed hypotheses were given in the upper text – the first and easy to determine hypothesis was already confirmed; however, for the second and third hypothesis stating the possibility to interpret the logical and theological fatalism, the results are ensuing in the following.

Regarding the logically interpreted fatalism, as found purely in the text's words and based on the findings of the analysis, it must be stated that I could not find such a stronghold to declare it as such. Although I tried to follow the text as close as possible, the reason for this decision lies in the fact that the text is too general and contextually spread to be able to reach any such conclusions. There were instances where I played with the binary assumptions, whether they would be true or untrue. Despite my fascination with the verses being told in the present time, which would make them sound more truthful, this was only the stylistic form used to convince us of the future's truthfulness. The statements about the future occurrences that were true in the past and told in the present tense about the future that will occur could equally be untrue, although stated now, they do not have to happen in the future. As it could be glimpsed from this, there is a potential to structure some arguments on these lines; however, to make it into logical fatalism, we need a piece of elaborate textual evidence to perform such an analysis. The text was not of philosophical nature either, but it was a mere myth with no interest in the rational statements as we are inclined to structure them from our timeline and positionality. Therefore, based on Snorri's record of Ragnarok and due to textual limitations, we cannot say it contains the indication of logical fatalism.

On the other hand, the text does allow to be treated theologically, at least to some extent, primarily because it was composed by a nascent, down to earth mind without the detailed knowledge of philosophical arguments, the inferences of theological fatalism could have been made. Theological fatalism could also be extracted through the presence of many allegories in the text, for they are not purely logical but apart from the didactical purpose, they appeal to faith.

The theological fatalism is woven in the analysed text of Ragnarok and evident for everything that happens seems to occur by some necessity rendering the Aesir's will unfree, but at the same time, they independently hold an amount of free will. The

necessity (for something to happen as it happens in the story) is manifestly due to the changing of aeons of time which cannot be stopped (this is the design of the time, so why would it be changed) (this cyclicity of time was set up a long time ago, and it cannot happen otherwise but through the cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil). The infallible knowledge of the Supreme Being has prostrated the path of destiny in front of the gods and humans that cannot be altered by the agency of a Norse god, although that same deity gladly executes the Supreme's will (or higher will) by their own volition. As it could be seen, the protagonists in the story are managing within the situation to the best of their abilities, obeying God's will (which was done, through the avatars of three volvas); the Aesir seem to be in cahoots with it for they recognise the necessity of following the rules of the predetermined cosmic order of things.

Although it could not be clearly understood distinguished or insinuated from the text, for instance, whether Thor knew or could decide about the fact that he would slaughter the large serpent and at the same time he would die as he was retreating nine steps back by the poison that the Midgard snake threw at him – there was the dependence on his knowledge about this happening which would impact his free will, i.e. whether he would decide to participate in the battle. I assume that the more likely probability is that he did not possess the knowledge about his destiny unless Odin volunteered and departed that information upon him after the consultation with Mimer, which would then activate his decision-making mechanism. Whether Thor knew or did not know how he would finish, the character of Thor as imagined, deep down because of his character, would have had the strong sense of obligation towards his family to protect them irrespectively; that was his role and his function, to save the world so he by his own volition embraced his role through the act of Amor Fati. This act of his entails theological fatalism, i.e. showing that it is possible to have something predetermined by the Supreme God and yet again choose something by free will.

Similarly, the meeting of Odin with Mimer was of paramount significance because of the effect that it would have on his will and the eventual outcome of the event, which represents theological fatalism. Despite the grim prediction of Mimer on the impossible to change and predetermined outcome, Odin as the leader of the Aesir, accepts the challenge that lies ahead of him by submitting himself to the destiny - Amor Fati. Even though it might look as if he follows the templates of the predestined path that unfolds in front of him, he exercised his free will – we see that through his devotion to the fight against the wolf which killed Odin in the end.

In the face of the presence of theological fatalism, the existence of weak theological determinism could be detected in the text of Snorri's Ragnarok. The reason for it being is that the free will of Odin and Thor is still incorporated in the overall God's plan in a relaxed way; thus, for instance, Odin is not without agency, but at the same time, he operates within the fixity of what is going to happen in accordance with the God's will. We even see that the asa (deities) want to alternate the destiny of Balder in saving him from death; they do everything in their power to protect him, but by doing that, they use their will to change that what was predetermined, once to make him immortal and second time trying to bring him back from the land of the dead. One important and

relevant observation from chapter xv, *The Death of Balder*, I would like to note here is that while the Asa were operationalising their freedom of will by opposing what they did not want to happen, it was that exact position that brought Ragnarok forward making compulsive Loki act the way he was behaving naturally. In the end, this was exactly what the Supreme wanted; their unconscious desire to keep him alive went against the will of God, causing the whole uproar, while Loki, in fact, was only the tool of that Divine Will. With the Aesir's will being manipulated, we are back to the beginning, God's perfect foreknowledge about what will happen and the deities' acceptance of the situation.

Forging ahead, one should also bear in mind that the pagan concept of time is cyclical, which in turn required the Aesir to transit from one aeon to another to evolve towards a possibly higher level of existence and conscienceness. Being subjugated to this cycle was the most likely reason as to why they could not be entrusted with having perfect free will such as the one of Supreme's Being as well as being inside of that wheel of life.

However, the Aesir have had limited free will to decide for themselves what suits them the best, in the way they would act in their immediate surroundings, but at the same time, none of these actions would compromise the plan of the Supreme. This situation could be treated as weak theological fatalism (determinism) if one considers Van Huyssteen's postulate that God's knowledge is perfect, that time is fixed and that he is outside of it. (2003:217) However, at this point, I am not looking at determining exactly what type of theological fatalism this belongs to but merely to identify it out for possible future research). Furthermore, as God's knowledge is perfect (about everything that happens on the temporal line – past, present, and future), this is also dependent on (works in conjunction with) his power – this combination of power and (perfect) knowledge make a flawless pair to explain how the theological fatalism works in Ragnarok.

Discussion

Firstly, let us summarize and review the results that emerged from this research on the concept of fate. The outcome of this study is not surprising. According to the Ragnarok text, it seems that the Norse peoples believed unquestionably in fate. Any suspicion that Ragnarok was written by a philosopher who would know Greek logic is banished by the very fact that the poem is a myth. There was nothing within the text that would lead us to think that there was logical fatalism. Aside from the belief in fate, the analysis of the text contained a multitude of allegories showing us the presence of theological fatalism, the theory that human actions are obligatory and subsequently unfree. This hard to accept stance, however, was mitigated by the fact that it could be a weak theological fatalism (determinism).

In the next subchapter of this master's thesis and as a part of the discussion, I discuss the reliability and validity of the analyzed Ragnarok. Here we shall pay special attention to the meaning of the text which is subsumed under validity. After that, we shall talk about the concept of Amor Fati and where we shall explain its true meaning

as Nietzsche imagines it - this of course refers to the analyzed Ragnarok.

This is followed by a subchapter "Designer of Destiny" in which we talk about the human attempt to dominate his happiness i.e., destiny in the narrow sense and fate in the broad sense. All this will refer to Aesir's attempt to do something on their own, even though their actions are only part of a comprehensive divine plan.

Reliability and Validity of the Analysed Ragnarok

"...Mythical stories are, or seem, arbitrary, meaningless, absurd, yet nevertheless, they seem to reappear all over the world. A 'fanciful' creation of the mind in one place would be unique – you would not find the same creation in a completely different place. My problem was trying to find out if there was some kind of order behind this apparent disorder – that's all. And I do not claim that there are conclusions to be drawn. " (Levi-Strauss, 1979:11-12)

The problem with mythical stories, as stressed by Levi-Strauss, is that they appear incoherent; they are expressed in a confusing manner, for which I immediately must add that they are not supposed to be clear either. (There must be functionality and rationality behind such a narrative, or they expressed in such a manner that where the subconscious world imagination touches the reality superficially.) However, mythical stories are relentless archetypes that keep appearing in the minds of people. Although I would disagree with Levi-Strauss about the uniqueness of the stories because of the priming which they socio-cultural minds emulated from others, I fully endorse his notion and attempt that it is possible to find some order behind the apparent disorder and explain it logically.

It is suspected of being difficult to give a judgement on reliability and validity on the content of a myth; thereupon for my analysis, in the hindsight of Levi-Strauss's saying about the absurdity of myth, it would be especially protracted to talk but not impossible to talk about the aforementioned concepts. It is also not common to talk about reliability and validity in qualitative research because these are the terms that are mostly used in quantitative studies; however, I shall make an exception by making a slight digression and question whether the source (Snorri's Edda Ragnarok) is reliable or valid not because we are creatures of habit but because there is a hope that I will find something there that will make clearer my results by putting them in a more favourable light.

We start with the reliability of a source, whereby Tosh (2010) writes that: "Once historians have become immersed in the sources of their period and have mastered its characteristic turns of phrase and appropriate technical vocabulary, questions of meaning tend to worry them less often." (127) However, the document's content prompts them to ask a further question of whether it is reliable. So, Tosh further states: "No source can be used for historical reconstruction until some estimate of its standing as historical evidence has been made." (127) Fortunately, in the case of the analysed Ragnarok text, we do not have to concern ourselves with this sort of reliability. The whole exercise was about what meaning I could find within the

existing text with the possibility that the text could oscillate from the original, that was composed centuries before Snorri's recording of Ragnarok. For that reason, I have used hermeneutics; I dealt with what I found within the text based on its grammatical structures and what was implied before I could give my subjective opinion on what I found within the text concerning the concept of fatalism.

Therefore, is the Snorri's version of Ragnarok reliable? Evidently, it could not be considered as reliable as a historical source because it is a mythical narrative. Myths usually are, as Levi- Strauss suggests, a fanciful creation of the mind. However, regarding the reliability of results, Leung (2015) writes the following:

"In quantitative research, reliability refers to exact replicability of the processes and the results. In qualitative research with diverse paradigms, such definition of reliability is challenging and epistemologically counter-intuitive. Hence the essence of reliability lies with consistency."
(Leung, 2015:326)

Whether the above hermeneutical analysis of the text is reliable, that is another query. Before tackling this issue, we must ask ourselves a question: "How or where is Snorri's Ragnarok positioned into the overall pattern of what was revealed or inspired before its recording?" In answer to this, one could effortlessly note that Snorri's version of Ragnarok fits perfectly into the pagan pattern of visions of the world in that the story of Ragnarok shows that time is cyclical, i.e., it has a tendency to recur in much the same way as many other pagan traditions. There is also a cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil – similar parallels could be found in Zoroastrianism and Hinduism as well as in the old Slavic pagan religion, all of them inferring cosmic dualism.

On another note, concerning the rendered hermeneutical analysis, my subject position as someone from outside of the Nordic pagan tradition has led me to logically attempt to understand and comprehend to the best possible extent what the content of the Eddic text was telling us about fatalism within the old Norse religion. The beauty of hermeneutics lies in that all subjective opinions and observations matter if they have been done in accordance with hermeneutical rules. The unique and personal perspective of an individual researcher represents a cornerstone of hermeneutical methodology. The differing opinions of other hermeneutical researchers would be equally viable and taken on board to better understand the topic generally. Taking this into consideration, I would be surprised if the same conclusions could be drawn by another researcher even if he used the same methodology. Thus, the question of reliability in hermeneutics is perhaps not appropriate; I trust that my hermeneutical analysis is as reliable as that of anyone else, even if the conclusions drawn differ considerably despite that Leung insists of replicability and consistency of results. In addition to this, I have not yet found a similar study on fatalism within the Old Norse religion, so my study appears to be a standalone exercise.

Hermeneutical approach does not depend on how sure we can be if the same approach could be taken again; the same data would be discovered. Regarding the validity of the

research, we need to ask ourselves two important questions; the first is whether we have the correct data (Ragnarok within the Prose Edda), and the second is whether we have proceeded in the right way with the analysis. Before I address these issues, let us see the definition of validity by Leung (2015):

"Validity in qualitative research means "appropriateness" of the tools, processes and data. Whether the research question is valid for the desired outcome, the choice of methodology, the sampling and data analysis is appropriate, and finally, the results are valid for the sample and context. In accessing the validity of qualitative research, the challenge can start from ontology and epistemology of the issue being studied..." (Leung, 2015, 325)

It is also worth considering the words of Levi-Strauss (1979) when thinking about validity of the results which were extracted from the Ragnarok whereby he states the following:

"Science has only two ways of proceeding: it is either reductionist or structuralist. It is reductionist when it is possible to find out very complex phenomena on one level can be reduced to simpler phenomena on other levels. Or instance, there is a lot of life which can be reduced to physicochemical processes, which explain a part but not all. And when we are confronted with phenomena too complex to be reduced to phenomena of a lower order, then we can only approach them by looking to their relationships, that is, by trying to understand what kind of original system they make up. This is exactly what we have been trying to do in linguistics, in anthropology, and in different fields." (Levi-Strauss, 1979: 9-10)

Now I am turning to the two burning questions whether we have the correct data and the second one whether our research was appropriate by the tools, process, and data. On the material that I have used, the best description of what Snorri collected is perhaps embodied in the elaboration of Lincoln (2012), who writes the following:

"Like Hesiod, whom he resembles in many ways, Snorri drew together all manner of fragmentary and inconsistent testimonies of the earlier implicit pantheon, conferring on them a definitive shape and structure, then embedded the results in a text destined to exercise enormous influence for many centuries thereafter. Often, his treatment of source material was meticulous and reverent, but he also remodelled the older traditions, and he could be extremely inventive..." (23)

On my part, I can only reiterate that I have used the translation by Rasmus B. Anderson from 1901, which I have chosen out of few other translations for what adorns this translation is the ease of expression bringing the text closer to the reader as well as the accuracy of the translation – I have also brought the original version of the text in the old Norse language so that the reader can make a comparison for himself which contributes to the authenticity of the translation. Regarding the authenticity of the text, I have already elaborated on that question within subchapter of the analysis under the title of "Historical Context".

Moving forward to the question of appropriateness by the tools, process, and data in validity – I posit that the hermeneutical methodology is the best tool for research because it is a standard method for researching apocalyptic events in the Bible and the Qur'an as well. The process of analysing took some time to find details from other sources. Even though the text was indicating the predetermined outcome, as an impartial researcher (that is what I would like to think about myself regarding this research), I tried not to allow the global meaning take the precedence over local meaning exegetically following the meaning of individual word, stanza and strophe – what it was grammatically conveying by looking for if the text genuinely means what it portrays or there is something else that would compromise the overall meaning (basically I was trying carefully to looking for the loops in the text which would change our perception and what is immediately understood).

For Ragnarok is a prophetic text, I would hope that the theoretical and practical issues were satisfied sufficiently; these issues, according to Virkeler and Ayayo (2007) are as follows: 1) **hermeneutical principles** (whether the text could be interpreted using the same hermeneutical principles that apply to other genres or whether some particular hermeneutical method was required) 2) **deeper sense** – if *sensus plenior* could be found in the prophecy i.e. if there is a meaning intended by a Supreme Being but not necessarily by humans 3) **literal versus symbolic interpretation** – the extent to which the prophecy could be understood literally and the degree to which it could be comprehended symbolically or analogically, 4) **universality** – whether a symbol means the same each times when it is used or that symbolism could change its meaning, 5) **conditionality** – how to differentiate between conditional and unconditional prophecy, and 6) **Single versus multiple meaning** – whether certain passages have one or more meanings; in place of various meanings we can talk about prophetic telescoping, progressive prediction ("refers the fact that although each prophetic passage has a single intended fulfilment, often a series of passages exhibit a pattern of chronological progress in the prophetic enactment") and developmental fulfilment (the achievement of generalised prophesies in a several progressive phases) (Virkler and Ayayo, 2007: 171-175)

Of these theoretical and practical difficulties, while elucidating on the Ragnarok text, I would like to extract a few of them which I considered especially significant in doing the analysis:

Sensus plenior (deeper meaning) – was present in the analysis and sought in instances such as consulting with Mimir's head. The story is highly allegorical; while it is evident that Odin went to consult with Mimir, I suspected that there was a symbolic meaning. For what it might have meant, it could have meant that Odin withdrew, looking inside himself, thinking what was necessary to do next.

Concerning conditionality – I was looking at whether the Vala prophecies could have an alternative meaning (i.e., a condition which forks, either way, giving the agents in question free will) or whether there was no alternative (no agency or free will). This

was the task of paramount importance for me in which I invested a fair amount of effort to scrutinise (something that could be seen in the analysis).

Regarding the point "single versus multiple meaning" – in the interest of my research hypothesis, among few possible meanings in some stanza, I was attempting to pin down the only meaning to find what type of fatalism suits better each stanza and each strophe, the whole narrative. This effort proved to be a hard task but nevertheless valuable in extracting the information from the source.

Amor Fati and Ragnarok

In this section, I shall reflect on the concept of Amor Fati, that is manifestly connected to the weak theological fatalism - the main find of this thesis. In that sense, Amor Fati or Love for Fate could be said, epitomises the heroic qualities of the Aesir gods in confronting the inevitable. However, to understand this notion better and connect with the thesis' discovery, I shall provide more details about the concept extolling its values and its functions.

As it is known, Friedrich Nietzsche was the first to elaborate on the concept of Amor Fati (sometimes translated as Enthusiasm for Fate) whereby one is supposed to lovingly accept all that the fate brings him. Nowadays, the idea is used to depict the human tendency that whatever happens, good or bad, should be embraced and accepted as it is (necessary). Irrespective how it is understood today, we would be better to refer to the Nietzschean original words:

"My formula for greatness in a human being is amor fati: That one wants nothing other than it is, not in the future, not in the past, not in all eternities. Not merely to endure that which happens of necessity, still less to dissemble it – all idealism in untruthfulness in face of necessities – but to love it." (Nietzsche, 1911:54)

According to the statement, Nietzsche advocates that humans should only live in the present moment while recommending that our contemplation of the future is futile as well as whatever happened in the past is irrelevant as we cannot do change it – even if there is a possibility to do something about it, instead we should surrender to the course of our fate.

This train of thought, i.e. thinking in the present moment transports or links us to notice that the chapter of Ragnarok was written in the present tense unless the ancient Norse language required it so, although I trust that it was so to show us the current course of events being unfolded in the exact moment of our reading or listening to the story of Ragnarok for which the present tense is the most adequate tense to present such an elaborate prediction while at the same time it kept us in an anxious suspension. Hence, the future event of Ragnarok might be an illusion for Ragnarok is happening right now - if we are thinking about it in either modality the past or future unless it is experienced right now. In this way, the poem of Ragnarok has a didactical purpose on

the one hand, but at the same time, it denies the essence of what fate represents - a passed or expected event – only that this time the chapter places fate amid the temporal scale.

In either case, Nietzsche does not recommend humans to merely undergo and endure whatever happens to them nor should they attempt to undo what fate has in store for them – what he advises us is to embrace that fate gracefully since some outcomes must have a further logical explanation (unknown to us) to why they should happen and possibly for the best and work within it. As the Aesir gods submitted themselves, under the leadership of Odin, to the orders of fate while cooperating with it that the Will is done (even though they did not like it initially).

Having seen the Aesir's inability to change anything of the situation while Ragnarok was raging out but to accept it, I move to the question of application of this model (Amor Fati), what is the real meaning of this concept, that should be sought throughout the Ragnarok story and the question of core reason for accepting Amor Fati in such adverse situations.

To answer the question of application of Amor Fati in Ragnarok, one should first note that to love one's fate accepting it gracefully was not only a suggestion but a conclusion by Nietzsche that he reached after much suffering that he experienced in life, learning that the best course of action, would probably be but to surrender to the helm of fate. Thus in "The Gay Science", Nietzsche writes the illustration on how to apply this concept as a way of moving forward:

"I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who makes things beautiful. Amor fati: let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. Looking away shall be my only negation. And all in all, and on the whole: someday I wish to be only a Yes-sayer." (Nietzsche, 2001:157)

Regarding the real meaning of Amor Fati in Ragnarok on whose essence we have previously elaborated in the upper text, in addition to that, it could be said that the actual meaning might be that the Aesir did not have absolute power or choice to change anything but to accept the situation for what it stood. As for the chief reason, among other explanations, for loving one's fate in difficult situations such as Ragnarok conditions, to find it out, it is perhaps necessary to know that Amor Fati is linked to another idea of Nietzsche called the Eternal Recurrence which says that every aspect, circumstance, or situation reappears cyclically and on a regular basis through the infinity of time. The cyclical notion of time, as it is known, is the established matter of fact. In connection to the notion of fate in Ragnarok, this is a significant feature, for as what I believe we found weak theological fatalism in the version of Ragnarok that I analysed – it means that there is a certain law which does not deviate from its course, but it stays on its track – the cyclicity of time is an unchanged variable. From here, we arrive at an overlooked truth about Ragnarok which the Aesir knew, as it lies in the

heart of their pagan theology, which is that it must happen, and it is implied that it repeats.

From the Eternal Recurrence, Nietzsche developed a desire to be willing to live precisely the same life over and over for all eternity ("*...long for nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal"). Here it would appear that Nietzsche took the notion of Amor Fati from the Stoics and we find this evidenced in Epictetus's words:

"Do not seek for things to happen the way you want them to, rather wish that what happens happen the way it happens then you will be happy." (Daily Stoic, 2019)

We now come to the actual reason as to why the Aesir accepted their fate. Every moment no matter how challenging is something that should be taken, embraced, and not circumvented. It should not merely be tolerated but should be loved and ultimately be seen in a more positive light than before - "So that like oxygen to a fire, obstacles and adversity become fuel for your potential." (Daily Stoic, 2019) Robert Greene also writes that we need to "accept the fact that all events occur for a reason, and that it is within your capacity to see this reason as positive." (Daily Stoic, 2019)

From the intricate notion of Amor Fati, we move onto a seemingly diametrically opposite viewpoint, which I titled "Designer of Destiny" to challenge the Nietzschean perspective and to balance out the power of Free Will between the Supreme and the created that could at times be interpreted as being either subservient or craving power. The pursuit of finding out how much of Free Will, the created has in possession, emerges a genuine desire and curiosity to know to which level we can stretch Free Will.

Designer of Destiny

Man, let alone the gods of Aesir, is not an independent being to exist by himself. Therefore, he is subordinate to fate's actions for the simple reason and fact that he is not self-created but is determined by external influences or God. The fact that he exists, i.e., that his life is dependent on God is through a combination of circumstances that sustain life that ultimately protects man from himself and over which he has no ultimate control. In this chapter, I reflect on the possibility and claim put forward by some representatives of the New Age movement that humans are independently creating their own force to generate their own deeds and subsequent fate.

To begin with the reflection, I shall first mention the famous Bible/Qur'an story in which the devil in paradise offered the "power" to the first couple through the act of tasting the forbidden fruit. By this, the devil led them to think that God had expressly prohibited them from eating the apple so that they would not become as he is – all-powerful and all knowledgeable.

Power and knowledge are two notable features discussed at length by philosophers in the past, and they also serve as preconditions for the human free will. I touched upon them while analysing Ragnarok when I wrote on how power and foreknowledge affect both the will of God and mankind and on the innumerable interactions between them. Indeed, it is difficult to determine the extent to which Divine power and knowledge are all-encompassing and omnipresent in connection to fate.

From the strict and general standpoint of monotheistic or polytheistic faiths, God(s) give and determine everything. Ragnarok is a good example where we discover what the detailed sequence of occurrences will follow during this cosmic event, leaving no space for the Aesir to decide about anything other than that in their immediate vicinity.

In the following, I reflect on the statement that seemingly excludes the predetermination by the Supreme but focuses on human creative powers and possessing one's own destiny (fate):

You are the designer of your destiny. You are the author. You write the story. The pen is in your hand, and the outcome is whatever you choose.

(Lisa Nichols) (Byrne, 2006: 166)

The first observation of the above statement is that it is ungodly from a theological perspective. By advocating that man is the only author of his story, the need for the existence of God is instantly eliminated, thereby essentially placing a man on a par with the creator. As a determined being, man here is being convinced that he can do as he pleases, i.e., that he can plough through life as he likes. Whilst man can do what he wants up to an extent, the positivist sciences inform us that we are subject to the influence of our genetic makeup and our overall biology meaning that we are not necessarily as free-willed as we would like to believe.

Such a man who is predetermined by his biology, would be known to God for he created the man, and consequently, he would know his design, his intention, his inclinations and what that man would choose in given circumstances. To align me with the positivist school of thinking, this positionality does not yield a man of free will. On the face of it, man can choose to do whatever he desires; however, his nature (biology) at times restrains him, directing him to do something else. Still, it may be possible for a man to overcome this but only if he has a strong motivation to oppose his nature (unless it is built in him as a matter of God's inbuilt mechanisation of that man) and God as his creator. Even with strong motivation to overcome his own nature and act against harmful biological impulses, there is the man's situatedness in the world on which he cannot influence or control it unless he (humankind collectively) has a great power to overcome it.

Correspondingly in the Ragnarok story, we see that the gods accept their fate. The sea bursts and the earth is engulfed in flames, a total chaos in the world and for the Aesir is something that cannot be changed by their will – so we talk about the absence of

their power and lack of knowledge as to why it is happening. The only way to overcome the difficult situation is to submit oneself to the Will of Supreme. Nevertheless, we should not think that their individual free will, within the perimeters of their reality, is annulled for they had enough knowledge and understanding to recognise and to be satisfied with their place in the world.

As for the statement that we create our own fate, the possibility, and a scenario where humans and gods (the Aesir) would decide that Ragnarok would not happen, shows us this is not possible. It is obvious that the Aesir are subordinate to the Higher Force and Knowledge – the time is ticking for when Loki will be set free and the inferno will begin. However, within that grand scenario of unfolding events by divine decree, people can choose for themselves and plan ahead up to some point for themselves. In addition to the above, I would also like us to consider the following quote from the book *A New Earth* by Eckhart Tolle, which says:

"...nothing happens that is not meant to happen...nothing happens that is not part of the greater whole and its purpose." (Tolle, 2005:286)

Thus, everything happens because it is predetermined to happen – there is no divergence from happening for God is supposed to be perfect. The second part of the statement, the greater whole and its purpose, which Deepak Chopra calls The Law of Dharma. He first tells that every person has a purpose in life, that purpose is a talent so further states: *"When we blend this unique talent with service to others, we experience the ecstasy and exultation of our spirit. This is the goal of all goals."* (Chopra, 2007:83-84)

There are three components to the Law of Dharma; the first one is *"to discover our true Self, to find out that we are spiritual beings, or divinity in disguise"*, the second one states that each of us has a unique talent and our purpose here is to express it which makes us happy, the third constituent of the Law of Dharma orders us to serve other human beings with our talents. By combining these three purposes in life, we utilise the Law of Dharma in totality. (Chopra, 2007:84-85)

Because of this, rather than being a designer of one's own destiny, humans should express their intrinsic need to fulfil their purpose in life irrespective of how difficult circumstances become and befall them. This is what the Aesir has done by fulfilling their purpose and accepting their fate. They did not protest about not having any power but conceded to the cosmic outcome. The struggle through Ragnarok perchance purified the gods from what did not serve them and brought out the best out in them. On that note and under what the Law of Dharma suggests, Chopra writes:

"The Law of Dharma implies more than seeking work we love, it implies our unique destiny, our place in the cosmic plan. It implies a shift in consciousness that begins when we align ourselves with our highest vision. That force that serves as a bridge to such a transformation is also known as dharma." (86)

The prominent part of the statement, which is of interest to us, says "it implies our unique destiny, our place in the cosmic plan". Remarkably, it does not say fate because it would suggest the overall fate of the world but individual destiny in that we all have a unique part to play in the overall cosmic design.

To finalise, it is essential to reiterate whilst I was researching the fate of Raganarok, the destiny of gods as a different concept was not overlooked. Furthermore, it should be said that our individual destinies to fulfil our purpose contribute to the fate of the overall cosmic plan.

Conclusion

In this part of the thesis, I recap what has been explained, analysed and reflected upon. Immediately after the elaborate introduction, I have delved into finding the meaning of the word Ragnarok where we discovered that there is another variation of the term Ragnarokr. We found that the word Ragnarok was translatable as "divine powers of fate" or "those who rule over the course of fate" while the word Ragnarokr could be translated as "twilight of gods". The focus was then directed at Snorri Sturluson, snippets of his biography and his collection of the Norse poetry nowadays known as Prose Edda that consists of three books – the first book is about the destruction of the world, the second book being called Sladskaparmal (The Language of Poetry), the dialogue between Aegir (the God of the sea) and Bragi (the God of poetry) and the third book Hattatal showing the verse forms in the Norse mythological poetry. Then we embarked onto the Norse Pantheon of Gods to acquaint ourselves with the Norse deities, Odin, Frigg, Thor, Mimir, Balder, Heimdal, including the giants Loki, Fenrir, Jormungand, Surt and other characters mentioned in connection with Raganrork such as Hel, Valkyrie and Vala.

I then presented the general story of Ragnarok, how it began with Loki's desire to revenge, the course of action (the war between gods and giants) and the victorious ending of the Aesir having been regrouped with a new hierarchy of gods with Balder (the God of Sun) being standing on the top of this pyramid. The next chapter gave a brief insight into the Viking Age to help us understand their character, ethics, habits and what was their attitude towards fate – this chapter was a mishmash of everything history, religion, and politics, but I still hold that it was necessary to have it in order to meet this society. What followed this was a procession of definitions of the most significant theological concepts that are related to the Old Norse Religion. Here we sufficiently had explained the basic concepts such as polytheism, fatalism, determinism and pre-determinism, dualism, fate and destiny, freedom and free will. The history of fatalism proved to be challenging as the many philosophers and theologians spent their time and efforts to explain their opinions about fate, so I had to choose the most important representatives who wrote on the topic beginning with the ancient Greek philosophers, early Christian perspective, the middle ages Muslim scholars and the modern thinkers on the topic of fate. I have then explained hermeneutics as a chosen methodology to interpret the text of Ragnarok. For the theory to explain fatalism contained in the text, we have taken two stances logical and theological explanation of

the concept, the logical that favours the view that there is no free will while everything depends on prior truths excepting causation as a prerequisite to making something happen; the theological explanation of the future generally interprets God's foreknowledge as infallible (in addition to being omnipotent) while humans retain their free will to choose for themselves – the obstacle to that is that their choice is already known to God, and subsequently their actions taking away the true meaning of human agency.

After setting up the hypotheses on the existence of fatalism and the likelihood to have the logical or theological type of fatalism is found in the chosen text of Ragnarok, I could embark on the analysis of it. Here, I have first presented the text in the English translation and the ancient Norse original text. Then I have given perhaps the over-elaborate information about the history of the text, and its translations – the translation which I have chosen was that one by Rasmus B. Anderson translated in 1901; even though it is an old translation – it was my preference because it was well-expressed for fit for use in this thesis. Then ensued the part of the analysis where I talked about the historical context of this text, the way it was embedded in the time when it was recorded where I put the emphasis on its rootedness in the old Scandinavian and Germanic mythological narratives firstly and then in Christianity; it was in danger to be distorted by strong Christian opinion and even changed which thankfully to Snorri it did not happen, making sure that it was not forgotten thus preserving it for posterity. In the literary context, customarily, I have explained what happened prior to the event of Ragnarok and after that. To do this, I have used the chapter "The Death of Balder" as a preceding chapter describing how the deity was trapped in the underworld, the cause of it being Loki, and its consequence being chained to the rocks by the Aesir gods. Following Ragnarok in the Prose Edda, using chapter "Regeneration", I have then described what happened after the big battle. Here we learn that Thor's sons survived, Mode and Magne with their father's powerful hammer Mjolner; Balder and Hoder were set free from Hel, but we also learn that a couple of people survived Lif and Lifthraser. Literary context-wise, the chapter of Ragnarok is situated between the chapters The Death of Balder and Regeneration. Regarding the form of the text, we have learned that the genre is supernatural and apocalyptic; the structure is typical for the narrative about doomsday using the metaphors and movement of the text is dramatic, not easy to see fine-grained details.

The detailed analysis ensued after this in which I had explained a stanza by stanza, certain words in the Edda chapter and relations of paragraphs to each other. I have emphasised here the part in the Ragnarok poem where it says that the sun will become dark and so on, which I elaborated as the climate occurrence that the Vikings have witnessed during the mini global cooling in the second part of the first millennium (this was the reason to why such a description was found in the text being primed by a similar climate change that happened in the past and inspired the poem's words); at the same time the text was presented as a prophetic vision rather than a visualisation – being a prophecy would indicate that something is fated to happen. Unchaining human action on what will happen and leaving it to God's will, I mentioned the Jabari school of apologetics whereby the doers of certain deeds do not own those deeds, but God

manages everything making it as if humans have no free will. Here it looked as if I was paving the road for the proclamation of having the presence of theological fatalism.

In the synthesis part of the analysis, I have used the Idle Argument by Aristotle and the necessity of something happening because it was predicted so, and the higher forces do not tell stories about the death of Odin and Thor. In synthesising the two opposing arguments, I have reached the decision that even it would be futile to fight in the knowledge that Odin and Thor would die; it had a value ascribed to it in that they had a good reason to fight for, such as their family who would survive Ragnarok.

I have also put the section about intertextuality in the analysis to find out what alterations have been done by Snorri compared to Voluspa if Ragnarok text assumed the social identity associated with the discourse of Christianity and to find out if Ragnarok mimics grammar or phrasing but not words of another text without using the same words. Here I have shown that while Snorri's Ragnarok contains some changed or added words in comparison to Voluspa, it did not imitate the language associated with Christianity, nor did it mimic the grammar and style of it. In the reflection part of the analysis, I mentioned the conditions that would have to be met to activate or coincide with Ragnarok, and I had mentioned the Theory of Iktisab (earning of the deeds) by the Asha'rites whereby if the conditions are fulfilled for something to happen then it will happen.

The summary of the results section gives us the answers obtained from the analysis; here, we indeed found that the text portrays the fatalism both in the explored Ragnarok text and from the context, which was not immediately apparent, but it would have been implied and understood from the rest of the Eddic text. Regarding the logical fatalism – evidently, because it was not a philosophical text, but it was a myth, it would have seemed absurd to make such a hypothesis from the outer set. However, I trust that it was not fatuous because it was necessary to have this hypothesis to approach theological fatalism, and in a way, it is concomitant to it. It would not be easy to understand the theological fatalism so easily without this sort of fatalism, even if we had to entertain the idea of its supposed presence in the text. As it would be expected from a myth, the theological fatalism was found in the examined Prose Eddic text of Ragnarok – the Supreme Being had already unfolded the path before the Aesir which they were supposed to follow, the path which is difficult to alter; in the case of Ragnarok, it looked as if the Aesir did not have free will. However, the closer analysis indicated a presence of the weak theological fatalism, because of the instances where Odin and Thor had a chance to decide, they took that decisive step, which was part of God's divine plan and will.

My discussion was divided into three chapters: reliability and validity of the analysed Ragnarok, Amor Fati and Designer of destiny. Regarding the reliability of the text, fortunately, I did not have to concern myself much with that because I was analysing a given text - I had to bear in mind the correctness of data and the procedure – for Snorri's version of Ragnarok is correct in the main. My subject positionality (someone from the outside of the Nordic traditions) used hermeneutics to explain the text

whereby I could give my frank subjective opinions makes the research more reliable. However, it would be acceptable to have other opinions even if they differ.

The concept of Amor Fati that Nietzsche used to explain Love for Fate came about at a convenient time to further explain the weak theological fatalism. On the practical level, Amor Fati does not recommend us to expect something in the future, nor does it endorse to be determined by the past, but it commands us to live in the present tense while offering it love and appreciation. The final chapter, Designer of Destiny, denies the possibility that man can design and rule over his destiny because he is determined by a multitude of factors that are out of his control. Instead of that futile desire, man is advised to fulfil his purpose in life and align with the highest vision.

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