

# The Seventh Seal: A Review

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Aurora Philosophy Institute

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# Perennial Questions of Life



Refugee boat sinks off the coast of Greece, June, 2023

The aftermath of the destruction  
Of Ukraine's Nova Kakhovka  
Dam, June, 2023



# Perennial Questions of Life



Flash floods hit earth quake affected areas of Turkey, March, 2023

## Honduras prison riot, June, 2023

**Armed people went into rival gang's cell block, opened fire and doused survivors in flammable liquid, officer says after 46 killed**



# Perennial Questions of Life

Forest fire smoke in Toronto, May, 2023



# The Seventh Seal: The Movie

Director and writer: Ingmar Bergman

Sweden, 1957

96 minutes in length

Studio: Svensk Filmindustri

Producer: Allan Ekelund

Music: Erik Nordgren



# The Seven Seals

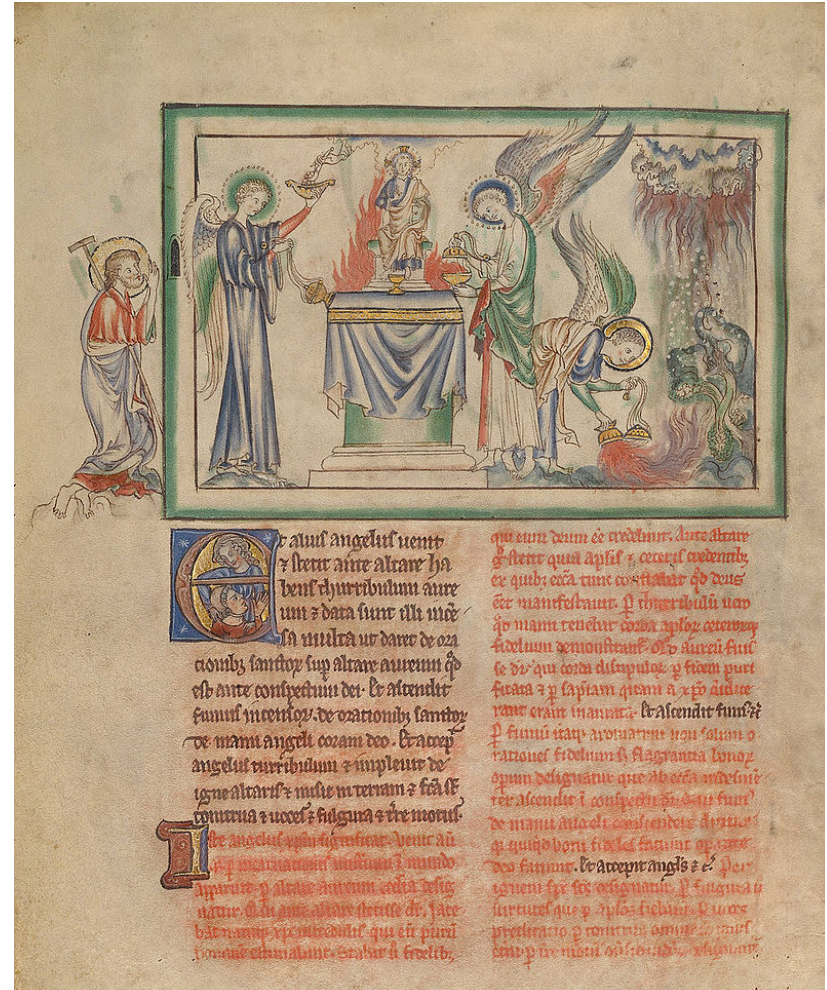
**The Seven Seals** are a set of symbolic seals found on a scroll and are a part of the Book of Revelation: (5, 6:1-17, and 8:1-6.1)

John of Patmos, who calls himself a “servant” of Jesus, sees the seven seals in a vision, wherein the slain Lamb of God opens each seal, bringing forth a different aspect of the end-time, the tribulation including the four horsemen of the apocalypse.



# The Last Seal, the Seventh Seal

“When he [the lamb] broke open the Seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw that the seven angels who stood before God were given seven trumpets.”  
(Revelation 8:1)



# The Knight Encounters the Angel of Death



**KNIGHT:** Who are you?

**ANGEL OF DEATH:** I am Death.  
Are you prepared?





# An Agreement with the Angel of Death

**DEATH:** Why do you want to play chess with me?

**KNIGHT:** I have my reasons.

**DEATH:** That is your privilege.

**KNIGHT:** The condition is that I may live as long as I hold out against you. If I win, you will release me. Is it agreed?



# The Crusaders' Journey Home: 14<sup>th</sup> Century Sweden



The Knight – Antonius Block

The Squire - Jons

# The Entertainer has a Vision



Jof: an actor, an entertainer, a clown



# The Pure Innocence of a Few: Jof and his wife, Mia

**MIA:** You have to keep your visions under control. Otherwise people will think you're a half-wit, which you are not.



**JOE:** I didn't ask to have visions. I can't help it if voices speak to me, if the Holy Virgin appears before me and angels and devils like my company.

# The Horror of the Plague

**SQUIRE:** You're only painting your Dance of Death

**PAINTER:** I'm only painting things as they are.



**PAINTER:** The remarkable thing is that the poor creatures think the pestilence is the Lord's punishment. Mobs of people who call themselves Slaves of Sin are swarming over the country, flagellating themselves and others, all for the glory of God.

# The Knight's Longing for Certainty: A Confession

**KNIGHT:** I want knowledge.

Is it so cruelly inconceivable to grasp God with the senses? Why should He hide Himself in a mist of half-spoken promises and unseen miracles?

How can we have faith in those who believe when we can't have faith in ourselves? What is going to happen to those of us who want to believe but aren't able to? And what is to become of those who neither want to nor are capable of believing?

Why can't I kill God within me? Why, in spite of everything, is He a baffling reality that I can't shake off?

I want knowledge, not faith, not suppositions, but knowledge. I want God to stretch out His hand towards me, reveal Himself and speak to me.



# A Quest for Meaning

**KNIGHT:** I call out to Him in the dark but no one seems to be there.

**DEATH** posing as a priest: Perhaps no one is there.

**KNIGHT:** Then life is an outrageous horror. No one can live in the face of death, knowing that all is nothingness.

My life has been a futile pursuit, a wandering, a great deal of talk without meaning. I feel no bitterness.... But I will use my reprieve for one meaningful deed.



I want knowledge!  
Not faith, not assumptions, but knowledge.

# The Squire Describes the Crusade

**SQUIRE:** For ten years we sat in the Holy Land and let snakes bite us, flies sting us, wild animals eat us, heathens butcher us, the wine poison us, the women give us lice, the lice devour us, the fevers rot us, all for the Glory of God. Our crusade was such madness that only a real idealist could have thought it up. But what you said about the plague was horrible.





# Tyan, the Witch



**KNIGHT:** Have you seen the Devil?

**MONK:** You must not talk to her.

**KNIGHT:** Can that be so dangerous?

**MONK:** I don't know, but she is believed to have caused the pestilence with which we are affected.

# The Entertainers and the Villagers



The Entertainers - Jof, Mia and Skat



Plog the blacksmith and his wife Lisa

# The Penitents have arrived, seized with madness



**MONK:** God has sentenced us to punishment.  
We shall all perish in the black death.

**SQUIRE** (looking on): This damned ranting about doom. Is that food for the minds of modern people? Do they really expect us to take them seriously?



God has sent  
his punishment over us.

# The Knight's Tortured Faith

**KNIGHT:** Faith is a torment, did you know that? Is like loving someone who is out there in the darkness but never appears, no matter how loudly you call.

**MIA:** I don't understand.

**KNIGHT:** Everything I've said seems meaningless and unreal while I sit here with you and your husband. How unimportant it all becomes suddenly.



But all of that seems unreal,  
when I sit here with you and your husband.

# The Knight finds Tranquility

**KNIGHT:** I shall remember this moment. The silence, the twilight, the bowls of strawberries and milk, your faces in the evening light. I'll carry this memory between my hands as carefully as if it were a bowl filled to the brim with fresh milk. And it will be an adequate sign – it will be enough for me.



# The Chess Game Resumes

**DEATH:** Why do you look so satisfied?

**KNIGHT:** That's my secret.



**DEATH:** It's your move. Hurry up. I'm pressed for time.

**KNIGHT:** I understand that you've a lot to do, but you can't get out of our game. It takes time.

# Knowledge is Still Needed

**KNIGHT:** They say that you have been in league with the Devil.

**TYAN:** Why do you ask?

**KNIGHT:** I want to ask him about God. He, if anyone, must know.



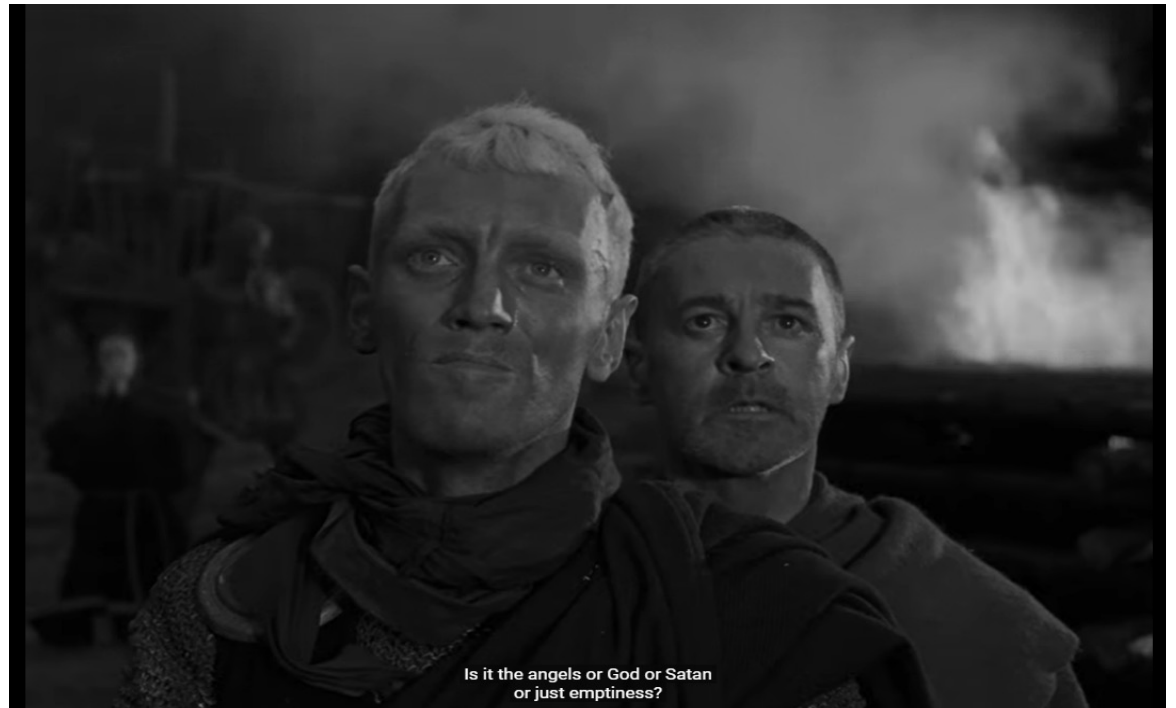
**TYAN:** Look into my eyes. What do you See? Do you see him?

**KNIGHT:** I see fear in your eyes, an empty, numb fear. But nothing else.

# The Death of the Witch

**SQUIRE:** Who watches over that child? Is it the angels, or God or the Devil, or only the emptiness? Emptiness, my lord!

**SQUIRE:** Look at her eyes, my lord. Her poor brain has just made a discovery. Emptiness under the moon.



**SQUIRE:** We stand powerless, our arms hanging at our sides, because we see what she sees, and our terror and hers are the same.



# A Terrible Vision



**JOF:** The knight is sitting over there playing chess. He is sitting there playing chess with Death himself.

**DEATH:** When we meet again, you and your companions' time will be up.

**KNIGHT:** And you will divulge your secrets.

**DEATH:** I have no secrets.

**KNIGHT:** So you know nothing.



# The Journey Ends



I heard from returning crusaders  
that you were on your way home.

The Knight is reunited with his wife Karin

# Three Knocks at the Door: The Angel of Death has Arrived



**KNIGHT:** From our darkness, we call out to Thee, Lord. Have mercy on us because we are small and frightened and ignorant.

**SQUIRE:** In the darkness where You are supposed to be, where all of us probably are...

**KNIGHT:** God, You who are somewhere, who must be somewhere, have mercy on us.

# Jof's final Vision: 'The Dance of Death'

**JOF:** I see them, Mia!,  
Over there against the dark  
stormy sky. They are all  
there. The smith and Lisa  
and the Knight and Raval  
and Jons and Skat. And  
Death, the severe master,  
invites them to dance. He  
tells them to hold each  
other's hands and they  
must tread the dance in a  
long row.



**JOF:** And first goes the master with his scythe and hourglass, but Skat dangles at the end with his lyre. They dance away from the dawn and it's a solemn dance towards the dark lands, while the rain washes their faces and cleans the salt of the tears from their cheeks.

# The Seventh Seal: An Analysis



**MIA** (smiling): You and your dreams and visions!



# Cast

Antonius Block, the knight

Jöns, the squire

Death

Jof , actor

Mia, Jof's wife, actress

The witch

Karin, Block's wife

The squire's girl

Raval, the seminarian

The monk

Plog, the smith

Lisa

Albertus Pictor, the church painter

Jonas Skat, actor

Max von Sydow

Gunnar Björnstrand

Bengt Ekerot

Nils Poppe

Bibi Andersson

Maud Hansson

Inga Landgre

Gunnel Lindblom

Bertil Anderberg

Anders Ek

Åke Fridell Plog

Inga Gill

Gunnar Olsson

Erik Strandmark

# Le Dance Macabre by Anonymous



# Albert Dürer's chalcography Knight, Death and the Devil

Bergman mentioned that Dürer's chalcography was one of the sources of artistic inspiration for *The Seventh Seal*.





# The Grim Reaper playing chess

Albertus Pictor's 15th century medieval painting *Death Playing Chess*

