

Angel's Egg

This essay is a personal analysis of Angel's Egg. This essay will not go through every line of dialogue or scene in the movie, as doing so resulted in a far too clunky endeavor. I will be going in mostly chronological order, with the occasional backtracking when further information changes our perception of a scene. There are many ways to interpret this movie, and I do not claim to have the unequivocal 'correct' explanation. This essay is merely one interpretation of the movie, as the movie itself declines to give definitive answers as to its meaning. Deciding instead to remain ambiguous. Lastly, while I will describe scenes, this essay assumes you have already seen the movie.

The film, supposedly, was created when Mamoru Oshii, the creator, was having a crisis of faith. As such, it is not surprising that the movie has religious symbolism rampant throughout. Symbolism focusing on faith and God. The story also takes inspiration from the Bible, retelling the story of Noah and the flood, where in this version, the flood never subsided, and the dove sent out to check for land never returned. An untold amount of time passed, and the world known before the flood was long forgotten.

The film opens with two hands clasped in prayer, the hands of our protagonist. I will refer to her as the Girl. Her hands then transition into the hand of our antagonist. I will refer to him as the Man. His single hand closes into a fist while the sound of crushing is played to the audience. Foreshadowing his eventual crushing of the Egg later in the story. We have already been given a sign that the Girl is a character of faith and that the Man lacks this faith. We can even extend the metaphor as it is now and claim that the Man destroys faith.

Next, we see the Man on a beach staring up at an object in the sky: the object, a giant sphere floating above, appearing to be an eye. The eye gazed forward blankly, its eyelid half shut as if disinterested or tired. I will refer to the eye as God. God lazily floats down toward the water below like the sun, paying no direct attention to the Man and just going through the motions of the day. Necessary, but without agency or purpose. God isn't just a bald sphere. He is comprised of thousands of individual statues, their hands clasped in prayer just as the Girls were at the beginning. And like the Girl, these statues are that of the faithful. God, without these, would be comprised of nothing, an empty shell that would fall into the ocean of obscurity. But this God has his faithful. His devout followers, whose entire being now comprise the very God they put their faith into. This God continues his descent into the water as if to fully close his eyes to us, disappearing from view for the movie's duration. The Man watches and has now seen Proof of God, his indifference, and his leaving us. The shadows of the Man's face darken, and he, along with the world, grows darker without the light of God. But he is not yet consumed in darkness, which will develop further throughout the film.

The Girl wakes up to the sound of God lowering into the ocean. Upon awakening, the Girl already has the Egg in her possession. She goes to the door to find what's making the noise. But there is nothing except the red sky and sea. For better or worse, the Girl has no Proof

of God, only faith. Meanwhile, the Man, for better or worse, has seen Proof of God and his leaving.

The Girl grabs the Egg from her bed and gets dressed, stashing the Egg under her dress, creating the appearance that she is pregnant. Comparisons to the Virgin Mary are easy to make here—as there is currently no obvious origin for the Egg/pregnancy. One could say the Egg is an immaculate conception, an event that requires faith to believe. As such, I would claim that the Egg is the Girl's symbol of faith. So, now awake, the Girl armed with faith heads into the world with purpose.

She travels for a time before happening upon a body of water. The first of three times, she encounters a body of water. At this body of water, she first fills a clear glass container, drinking from it, before staring off into the water, mesmerized. The water seems to have called to her. She begins to daydream or perhaps have a vision. This vision sees her slowly descending into the water, allowing it to wash over her, foreshadowing her eventual full submersion into another body of water later in the film. More on her filling the glass container and her eventual submersion later. Water is a key symbol used throughout this film in various ways. But for now, her vision of submersion is interrupted. A mighty wind knocks her back to reality. It wasn't time yet.

After collecting water, she continues her journey and finds herself in a city teeming with water. In this city, the Girl meets the Man for the first time. He rides atop a tank among many other tanks. He carries what seems to be a weapon in the shape of a cross—this weapon, combined with the imagery of the tanks, paints the Man as a soldier and, in many ways, as a destructive force. Weapons such as tanks or the cross he carries are used to protect something precious or to destroy. We see which of these he uses his weapon for later in the movie. Other than being a symbol of destruction. The fact that he is portrayed as a soldier could be taken in another way simultaneously. Many soldiers returning from war have seen the dark side of humanity. Many see this dark side and return feeling less optimistic about the world. Many question their faith in a 'caring' God after seeing all the horrible travesties that God has chosen to ignore. Remember also that the Man has seen God with his own eyes. There is no question that God has ignored him.

I am trying to paint the picture that the Man is on a journey of Doubt, of losing faith, and the Girl is also on a journey of Faith, only her Faith is strengthening. Neither of them has completed their journey yet. But both of them have symbols of their journey. The Man and his Cross being that of Doubt. The Girl and her Egg are that of Faith. Another note about his symbol being a cross is that it is a burden, much like how Jesus carried it to bear man's sins. This cross of doubt is also a burden on the Man. A Burden that he never once gets rid of throughout the movie. His Doubt stays with him always.

When the Man and the Girl meet, the Girl is first afraid. In other words, Faith is fearful of Doubt. Faith knows in its core that doubt is its downfall. So, she runs further into the city. Ultimately, she finds a place to rest, ruins of some kind. Near these ruins is the second of the three bodies of water the Girl gravitates toward. She gazes over it and nothing more. She doesn't seem to hold

any specific importance to this water. But it is worth noting because a trend is forming. At the same time, she has spent time gazing over the water. The Man followed her to the ruins. She had left her Egg on some blankets, and the man had sheltered the Egg in her stead. He gives her the Egg back with words of wisdom or warning. "Keep precious things inside you, or you will lose them." The Girl trusts the man more after this scene but doesn't fully trust him. The man says, "What do you think is inside that egg?"

The Man consistently speaks with questions and doubts throughout the film. While the Girl consistently speaks confidently, with certainty, she responds to his questions, "I can't tell you things like that... besides, I don't even know who you are." She doesn't say she doesn't know. She speaks as though she knows exactly what is in that Egg, but she doesn't trust the Man enough to share that information. The man responds, "You have to break an egg if you are to know what's inside." She runs from him again as she yells back at him, "Don't follow me!" But you can't ask Doubt to leave. He continues to follow her.

They are back in the heart of the city, and at first, it was seemingly empty, but now we see many strange stone fishermen. They have been dormant up to this point in the story. But now they begin to move. "The fish have come out." Says the Girl. "Even though they aren't anywhere, they chase after them. Even though there aren't any fish anywhere." The fish hunt begins.

Water is symbolically dense in Angel's Egg. Its whole meaning symbolically is something I will go over closer to the end of this analysis, but I must bring it up briefly to discuss the fishermen and the fish. Water, fish, and fishermen all have apparent connections with one another. Fish live in water; fishermen catch fish—pretty simple stuff. The phrase "fishers of men" even has biblical importance, which I won't be getting into. Despite all these apparent connections, the meaning behind the fish and the fisherman is that they are missing the mark. They are close to water, so they are close to the conclusion of this film, but they are focused on the wrong thing. These fishermen whose job, livelihood, and purpose is to fish. Fishing is all they are and all they do. Fishermen are close to the water but not engulfed in it. They are those that made fish their life instead of the water. Water is what's important in this film. Hopefully, I will make that apparent by the end of this analysis.

Additionally, the fishermen represent those who require Proof to have faith. They fail to have faith without this concrete Proof in front of them. The Girl recognizes that there is no Proof, there is no Fish. But the fishermen have made it their sole goal to find that Proof—something many people strive for today, believers and nonbelievers alike. These fishermen destroy the world, breaking windows and streetlights, trying to grasp their Proof that cannot be grasped. The Girl heads into a nearby church to get away from the hunt. The Man stays outside, watching the masses squirm over shadows.

The Girl and the Man have different experiences during this hunt—the Girl inside a church. The Man can't bring himself to go into a place of worship. More easy representations of one being close to their Faith and the other straying away. The Girl walks down the aisle past rows of pews towards a stained glass window of a fish. This is further proof that the fishermen who built this church worship the symbol of fish rather than the symbol of water. As the Girl looks up at the

stained glass, a soft glow envelops her as if blessing her, and the music swells with angelic vocals. At the same time, the Man remains outside, watching the fisherman's aimless struggle. In this shared moment, the Girl's religious experience brings her one step closer to her Faith while the Man takes one step away from his, his dwindling Faith becoming a further burden. They both now leave the city. The bells ringing in the distance indicate that the fish hunt is not over. It may quiet at times, but it will never end. The Girl is heading home, and the Man is still following her. She turns to him and pleads, "Please... my egg... Don't do anything to it... promise." The Doubt never makes this promise.

At the Girls' home, we see the fruits of her labor. She has been collecting containers of water for a long time. This gives us a sense of how long she has been here. She feels some connection with water that she doesn't yet understand. This task has been calling out to her with no apparent practical reason. Yet she continues. The Man with His Doubt would never have achieved this. He would have stopped long before his collection reached her level.

After some time, the Man tells a story and a quote—the most dialogue-heavy part of the movie.

M: "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man, and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them. I will send rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground. And after seven days, the waters of the flood came upon the earth. On that day, all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. The ark floated on the face of the waters, and all flesh died that moved upon the earth. Birds, cattle, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm upon the earth, and every man. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark. Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore."

M: "Where did the bird land? Or maybe it weakened and was swallowed by the waters; no one could know. So the people waited for her return and waited and grew tired of waiting. They forgot they had released the bird, even forgot there was a bird and a world sunken underwater. They forgot where they had come from, how long they had been there, and where they were going so long ago that the animals have turned to stone. The bird I saw, I cant even remember where or when, it was so long ago. Perhaps it was a dream. Maybe you and I and the fish exist only in the memory of a person who is gone. Maybe no one really exists, and it is only raining outside. Maybe the bird never existed at all."

I mentioned this briefly at the beginning. However, this is the alternate version of Noah's story, which this film takes place within. The dove never returned after the flood, and the water never abated. An untold amount of time has passed, and the movie begins sometime during that untold time passing.

The last few sentences encapsulate the Man's mindset concerning this story he just told. I'll let you reread those last few sentences and come to your conclusion. Again, the man

displays Doubt. Immediately after his story, the Girl again displays confidence and certainty. The Man, "Maybe the bird never existed at all." Countered with an "It exists." by the Girl.

G: "It exists. It's here. It's here. It's here. I found it, it's already turned to stone, it's in here. I'm going to hatch it and put it back. It's the bird I found."

The man continues to question, and the Girl continues to display certainty.

M: "Can you hear something?"

G: "I can hear it. The sound of soft breathing."

M: "That's your breathing."

G: "I can hear the sound of wings. It must be dreaming of flying in the sky."

M: "That's just the sound of the wind outside."

The night falls, and the Girl is put to bed. She holds onto the cloth of the Man, almost having fallen asleep. But he removes her hand from him. They are now going their separate ways, and he is initiating their separation. She sleeps, cradling the Egg, and he sits by the now dwindling fire. The light of the fire is his final contemplation over what he will do next. Will he leave? Or will he do something drastic? When the fire fades, his opportunity presents itself. The Egg is now left unguarded by the Girl. "Keep precious things inside you, or you will lose them." His Doubt has won. He must know if the bird will ever return and if the flood will ever end. Will God ever come back? He saw how long the Girl had been here. Hundreds, maybe thousands of days, thousands of filled bottles, and the Egg is no closer to hatching. The bird can't possibly still be alive. He knows it will never hatch. But he needs Proof—the same destructive search for Proof that the fishermen are on. Alone in the dark, just as God left him at the film's beginning, he grabs the Girl's egg with the very symbol of his doubt and his burden of faith. With his cross to bear, he breaks the egg.

Whether or not the egg was empty isn't relevant because breaking the egg establishes the man has broken away from any faith he had left. Even if a bird were inside, it would just be a bird. Nothing grand. Nothing with meaning. Just a dead animal in a world of endless rain. The man leaves.

When the Girl awakens, she is crushed. The symbol of her faith has been shattered. When her Faith was measured against Doubt, her faith cracked under pressure. She was right to fear the man at the beginning, to fear Doubt, as in the end, it was strong enough to destroy her. Upon seeing this, she screams. Then she runs after the man. But the deed is done. She runs and runs. Before she can catch him, she falls. She plummets into the water. The third and final time, she faces a body of water. But this time is different.

This time, she is fully submerged, and ultimately, she drowns. But she also discovers something in this moment. She matures, having finally realized something about her faith. It

wasn't the Egg that was important. But something within herself. Her symbol of faith had been destroyed, but the actual test of faith was passed. The test of fully submerging yourself into your beliefs. Without the need for Proof and with the strength to endure the hardship of Doubt. More symbols of her faith spew out of her stomach. Breathing her last breath, dying. But also proof of the strong faith within her up to the very end.

The Man is back on the beach, as he was at the beginning of the movie. The same place he saw God leave us in cold indifference. Barely keeping his eye open to the happenings of man. God rises out of the water. The man had seen "Proof" of God's abandonment. It is what started the Man on his journey of Doubt in the first place. But perhaps God had never left, was never ignoring us. Maybe he was asking us to have Faith, to submerge ourselves in Faith, showing us, and the Man, how, by submerging himself and asking us to accept his decision to flood the world. Something the Girl had been heading towards since the beginning and fully committed to by the end.

The Man, however, plagued by Doubt, did not. He denied his faith, turning to Doubt and the need for Proof. In the film's final scene, God rises out of the water, never really having left, and cries. He cries for the loss of the man—the man's faith. And the Girl is forever immortalized in the face of God as one of the devout and of saintly importance. Because,

Upon taking the plunge, God takes you into his arms.