

# 生まれた英雄、造られた英雄

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## 前書き:

英語の格言によると「英雄は造られるものではなく、生まれるものだ」  
「**Heroes are born, not made.**」とある。その意味は英雄がいくら努力してもその生まれながらの才能がなければ、英雄にはなれない。しかし、これは本当だろうか。英雄には2種類ある。ギリシア神話などのクラシックな英雄は普通の人間より強くて、時には賢い、時にはずるいなどの英雄と、目的を達するために自分を犠牲にして自爆する者や特攻隊のような英雄もある。どちらも英雄でありながら、根本的に違う現象からなる。クラシック英雄は自然からくる生物的な現象であり、自己犠牲による英雄は文化的な現象と言える。

クラシック英雄には神話からのアキレウスやスーパーマン、また孫悟空、またイチローや松井秀樹のような現在のスポーツ英雄もある。このような英雄は努力もあったが、遺伝子も関係して生まれながらの英雄だと言えるだろう。しかし特攻隊や自爆テロの英雄は遺伝からくる自然の志向を逆にする社会の文化によって作られたものである。

英雄は或る社会の代表的な存在でその社会の希望、理想や目的と同時に、その憎みや恨みを表現している。根本的に英雄は社会が高く評価する偉業を果たして群の中から大きく目立つ者である。その行為は力、頭脳、勇気によって出来るが、自己犠牲によって英雄になる人は、そのような特別な力がなくても、自分の文化からもらった非常に硬い意志によって自分の目的を成し遂げる。結果的に、クラシック英雄は社会に自分の強さなどの深い関心を残すが、自己犠牲によって出来た英雄は社会に失望と憎しみを与える。

## 英雄の種類

神話の英雄は超自然の力をもっていることが多い。アキレウスやヘラクレスは神の子孫であり、スーパーマンは他の惑星で生まれ超自然の力を持っている。神話の英雄の草分けギルガメシュも神の子孫になった。(ただ、ギルガメシュは神の血が3分の1とか数学的にあり得ないことを言われている。)

「クラシック英雄」と思われない英雄は、特別な力はないけれども、大きな功績をあげるには意志の力で果たす。いずれにしても自分の意思で英雄にならなければならない。ブッシュ大統領は世界貿易センターのテロで亡くなった人たちを“英雄”を呼んだが、それなら、英雄の意味がほとんどなくなるだろう。また、特に戦争の中の英雄は敵に英雄と見られない。特攻隊はアメリカ軍にとってかなり憎くまれたが、もちろん、日本から見て最高の英雄だった。アメリカ独立戦争のベネディクト・アーノルドはアメリカ人にとって裏切り者だったが、イギリス軍にとって英雄だった。現代の自爆者英雄は或る特定なイスラム宗派の人以外には最低のテロの実行者として憎まれている。

しかし、ここでこのような利他主義が問題になる。自爆者は自分の運命を無視して他人のために死ぬことが出来るであろうか。

## 英雄の英雄による英雄のための戦争

英雄は戦争の場で出来上がるのが普通である。戦争の中で英雄は敵より優れていることを証明する。命がけの格闘によって英雄が生まれるからこそ、戦争は英雄のためにもあると言える。英雄は戦争を求めているし、人民は英雄を求めているから、戦争はいつまでも終わらないだろう。

大抵戦争の原因は或る国の欲望、復讐、偏見、などからと思われるが、もう一つ、すなわち榮譽を得るためという事はあまり言われていない。イリアスのアキレウスがトロイと戦うたった一つの目的は榮譽だ。自分が死ぬ運命になると知りながら、榮譽を得るためにトロイにきた。アキレウスは榮譽のシンボルになる戦利品としてもらった女性のブルセイスをアガムノンに取り上げられたことで、怒って戦場を離れ、それがイ

リアスの話が始まる事になる。

どの戦争にも英雄の話は出てくるが、国などの為になっているかどうかが怪しい。アメリカ独立戦争の前にボストン市の港で起こった「ボストンティーパーティー」は、イギリスの船に乗りこみ積荷の紅茶を海に投げた事件。後世にイギリスの迫害に反抗した英雄と愛国者として現在でもアメリカで讃えられているが、その紅茶を海に投げた理由はイギリスの税金が高すぎるためで、まだ存在しないアメリカ合衆国を守ることはなかった。存在しない国の愛国者になるはずがないであろう。またアメリカ独立戦争で活躍したイーサン・アレンが愛国者として讃えられるが、実際、アメリカ合衆国に忠実な心はなく、自分のベルモント州をカナダに合併しようとした。それは失敗したが、そのことを無視してアメリカは今でも独立戦争の英雄として讃える。国は英雄が、あくまで国のもので、実情が違っても、それを伏せて英雄を国の必要とする目的に使う。宗教の英雄もそうなるであろう。

### 遺伝的な英雄

イリアスなどの中での戦いは一対一である。やはり一人に対する一人の戦いは英雄の証明である。英雄は戦争で戦うのが多いが、欲望や恨みや復讐であっても戦いは相手に勝って、自分が優れていることを証明することが目的である。それ以外、なぜ自分が優れていることを証明しなければならないかという、人間の遺伝の中で答えを発見できる。

ドーキンズ博士は「お利巧な遺伝子」の中で遺伝子は自分の存続を求めて、自分を繰り返し再生しようとする物である。だから、遺伝子を有する生物は自分にとって一番有利な存続の道をたどろうとする。戦いによって自分の遺伝子を残す資格を示す。大鹿やゴリラは雌と交尾する権利を得るために戦うが、人間の雄の場合は権利よりも、メス（女性）の注目になり、子孫を残す機会を増やすことになる。すなわち、戦いによって男は自分の強さを誇示し、「男」としての資格を見せ付ける。女性が、自分の相手として強い男を求めるのは、昔の社会では自分と子供を守ることが大きな条件だったし、生まれてくる子は強い子と期待が出来る。

その家庭の男（雄）が強ければ、家庭を守ることも、社会の中でも成功する期待があり永く円満に暮らす事になる。

注目になった英雄の男はたくさんの女性に求められていることで、選択範囲が広がるし、女性より、子供のために使うエネルギーは少ないからこそ、「一人」の女性に遺伝子を与えることはもったいないと感じる男「雄」は多い。

現在は文化的な制限がそれを抑えながらも、完全に無くした訳ではない。

### オリンピックの英雄

オリンピックの始まりはガイア神の相手を選ぶための競争だった。古代ヨーロッパや中近東では、地母神は中心的な神だったが、ギリシアでは「ガイア神」であった。地母神はあらゆる生き物の母であり、収穫の女神でもあったが、収穫のための一番良い「種」を求めて、男たちを競走させて、勝者が女神の相手になる。女神の相手になる事はある意味で「王」になり植物の冠もその印としてもらった。オリンピアではオリーブ、デルフォイでは月桂樹の葉、コリントではセロリの葉っぱで出来た冠だった。最初は競争しかなかったし、男だけの裸の参加で女神の女司祭以外に女性観衆はなかった。後でいろんな競技が加わったが、現在のように金、銀、銅はなかった。優勝以外には何も賞はなかった。まさに優勝者は英雄になった。

要するに、オリンピックでは求められたのが「種」であったが、その優れた種を持った人が英雄になった。オリンピア競技場の近くに「クオロス」と言われる裸の人間像を飾って優勝者を讃えた。

### スポーツの英雄

芸能界とつながるスポーツ界では英雄は豊富。ギリシア神話の中でも戦争以外に英雄はスポーツ的な競技に出てくる。イリアスの中でアキレウスはパトロクラスの死の弔いの競技会を開いて、各競技の優勝者に賞を与えた。しかし、遊びの感覚はあまりなく英雄たちは真剣にかなりの

熱上をげて、インチキなどしながら競技に参加した。ローマの剣闘士も一応「ゲーム」に参加して、賞というより殺されないことが大事だったが、勝利の剣闘士は必ずローマ人の英雄になった。古代オリンピックにはチームスポーツはなかったが、マヤ族では球技の試合をやって優勝したチームのキャプテンが生贄になった。これはおそらくオリンピック競技の始まりと同じ意味で一番強い男を神(女神)に送る事だっただろう。

現在のチームスポーツの優勝者は生贄にならないが、目立つ選手は必ず英雄と讃えられる。アメリカンフットボール選手は特に榮譽を求めている感じが強くて、優れたプレーを果たすと大得意になり相手チームを軽蔑する調子になる。それがあまり多くなったためにあからさまに表しすぎるとルール違反になり、罰が与えられる。

しかし、現代のスポーツ英雄も、昔と同じで性的活動は社会が許す線をよく超える。ただ、現代の社会はそんなに大目で見えていないから、元ボクシングチャンピオンのマイク・タイソンはそのような行動で刑務所まで入れられた。

### ミームの英雄

目的を果たすに自分の命をささげる英雄は、到底遺伝的な英雄とはいえないだろう。なぜならば、命がなければ、遺伝子は新しい生命に自分を残すことはない。その意味で、先に話したクラシック英雄ではないといえる。そうすると、自己犠牲の英雄になる原動力は遺伝ではないので、ほかの動機が有る筈である。人間は自分をまったく捨てることは遺伝子的には不可能である。同じ遺伝子をもつ人間（例えば、双子）やそれに近い兄弟とじ親戚には自分がある程度譲ることはあるが、まったく遺伝的に関係のない人のためには自分を犠牲にしない。そうすると、自爆によって英雄になる人は、遺伝子からのその行動はないだろう。その利他的な行動は別の原因がある。

これに対するドーキンス博士は生物界で自分を複製する遺伝子と同じようなものが文化の領域で人間の心、記憶や知性の中で自分を増やす「ミーム」を提案した。その後スーザン・ブラクモアー博士などによっ

てミーム研究が進められてきたが、或る社会の思想や理想がミームによって社会全体に伝わり守られる。特に国家主義や宗教のためにミームは活躍する。宗教の場合はミームが自分を守る為にそれに反するミームを排除しようとする活動までもして、この宗教の真実を疑うだけでも、永遠の罰を受けることになるミームも含む。国家主義のミームで、愛国主義が最高の美德とするミームや国のために死は最高の名誉というミームもある。

すなわち、人間は信じているミームに左右されるのが当然になるし、むしろ、人間はミームによって動くのが文化の成り行きだと言える。宗教的なミームはその信者に死後の世界を約束するし、その宗教で「ミーム」のために死ぬ人はその死後の世界で報いられると信じ込ませる。それによって、遺伝子により子孫を残すための英雄になる欲は自分の榮譽があつた世までに増える事に摩り替えられている。

また、ミームと遺伝子の違いには、時間の差が大きい。遺伝子は一世代の速さでしか進化できないが、現在の社会ではミームは人から人に伝わるのが瞬間的になってきたために、文化の中で変化が早く、流行が速いペースで現れ、消える。遺伝子と同じように、ミームは多い人の心にたどり着くことが目標であるが、或るミームを持つ一人の人間がいなくなるとミームはその分で減るが、その人間はミームのために死ぬことでミームそのものの力が大きくなるため、ミームにとってプラスになる。宗教や国家はこのように英雄の死を利用して愛国心や宗教心を深く市民や信者に植え付けようとする。

### 結論:

現在でも相変わらず英雄は多いが、スポーツ選手が社会に歓迎されることは多い。例えば、野球選手は英雄になっても、その技術などで自分のチームのファン以外の人にも褒め称えられるが、特攻隊のメンバーや中近東で盛んに自己犠牲で攻撃を加える人は自分の社会に最高の英雄といわれながら、同じミームに感化されていない人にとって、最低の人間と見られている。

人間は生まれた以上、多かれ少なかれ英雄になろうとする欲をもっているが、それに成功する人は「生まれながらの英雄」といえるだろうが、自分の命を或るミームのために捧げる人は、作られた英雄といえよう。

## Heroes Born and Made

Thomas Guerin

### Foreword:

There is a hero to fit any occasion, at least everyone longs for one who will overcome the opposing obstacles through strength, courage, cunning, and maybe luck. The obstacle may be a dragon, a villain, an army or an opponent in the boxing ring or on a football field. Heroes are needed by human society, and sometimes they are completely fictitious, but made real to meet the need.

But why does anyone become a hero? What is the motive? What is the source of the drive to become a hero and why do men seek glory? Can it simply be called a human trait, and left at that? It is certainly found in many humans, but there are deeper reasons even for seeking glory in becoming a hero.

### Introduction:

There are at least two types of hero, the classic hero of Greek and other myth; one who is superhumanly strong, clever, cunning, etc. and overcomes his enemy through these assets. And then there is the hero who selects self-sacrifice as a means, or at least as a necessary accompaniment in fighting an enemy. Both of these fit within the definition of hero, but are basically different in source. We shall show that the classic hero is a natural, that is to say, biological phenomenon. Classic heroes include very wide-ranging types such as Achilles, Superman, Joshua, and Goku, the Monkey man, as well as the football or baseball superstar. The self-sacrificing heroes include the Kamikaze pilot and the suicide bomber and their source is completely cultural, that is not from nature, but inimical to the biological

tendencies of nature.

The hero is often a representative of a particular society; it's hopes, desires, ideals, as well as its fears and animosities. The basic element of the idea of "hero" is that he stand out from the crowd, having done something evaluated extremely highly. That is to say that the deed must be highly evaluated by some sector of society. The deed may be a feat of strength, courage, physical or mental skill and it is usually thought to have created some good, or averted some evil for that sector of society. Still, while the classic hero generally offers an upbeat, sometimes inspiring story to society, the self-sacrificing hero by his act tends to enforce a sad, sometimes angry or vengeful reaction in the society he represents. I would like to elucidate both these types and show how they differ in how they contribute to human society today.

### **Categories of Hero**

The difference between most heroes of myth and other "real" heroes is that mythical heroes have extraordinary powers; Achilles had almost supernatural strength, as did Heracles, as they were both children of gods or goddesses. Superman is born on another planet and has superhuman powers, and even Spiderman has abilities that are beyond the normal human range. Gilgamesh, the first hero of a mythical epic, is stronger than any other human, due in part to having descended from a goddess, and described with somewhat illogical arithmetic as being "one-third" a god. His equal in strength is found only in Enkidu, who was a construct of the gods, but who, finally, was forced by them to give up the life they had given him.

Gilgamesh may have actually been a real king of Uruk around 2800 BC, but was mythologized later to lend his name to the epic widely known in the Middle East in the second millennium BC. Many heroes have been real people with their life and deeds becoming at least partly mythologized later. Favorites among these would be Davie Crockett or Jim Bowie for Americans, where it may be Yoshitsune, Prince Shoutoku, or even the first Emperor Jimmu, for the Japanese.

Opposed to classical heroes are those who have no particularly outstanding physical characteristic, but achieve some great deed by strength of will and/or sacrifice. Into this category we should put the Kamikaze pilots and the suicide bombers of today. We cannot include people who have no choice in their fate, such as the victims of the destruction of the World Trade Center buildings on September 11, 2001. They were labeled "heroes" by President Bush, in a memorial ceremony, but such a label would cause the word "hero" to lose all meaning of superiority in strength or will. Simply dying is not heroism unless the person has a choice. On the other hand, the men who flew those planes into the WTC buildings became super heroes to a very select group of Moslems; and though the Kamikaze pilots of World War II were certainly not considered heroic by the attacking American forces at Okinawa and elsewhere, they were, and are heroes to the Japanese. Nathan Hale in the War for Independence was a self-sacrificing hero to the Americans, announcing that he regretted he had only one life to give for his country. It reminds one of the Kamikaze pilot who wrote home that he only wished he had five lives so that he could die five times over for the Emperor. This brings up the problem of altruism. Is the hero selfless in outlook and are his deeds motivated by an altruism by which he denies his own fate in serving others? This especially is important in explaining the actions of the self-sacrificing hero.

### **The Classic Hero**

Heroes for the Greeks were those who showed supernatural strength in overcoming any adversary or obstacle. War was the most common vehicle, but any test of strength would serve as proof of heroism. Heracles is finally overcome by trickery, not strength. Achilles is likewise finally killed only by interference by an Olympian god combined with the mistake of his mother not having dipped his heel in the waters of life. Odysseus never does die, living "happily ever after" after destroying a vast number of enemies by strength and trickery.

Sport, as well as war, appears regularly in Greek mythology, although sports in mythology usually had a rather deadly earnest aspect. There is the story of the

princess Atalanta for whose hand in marriage any suitor had to compete with her father in a horse race. If they won, she was allowed to marry, but if they lost they were killed. Finally, Hippomenes won her hand by sabotaging her father's horse and her father was subsequently killed. In the Iliad Achilles holds funeral games for the dead Patroclus, in which several events are run and prizes awarded. There was, however much bickering, cheating and interference from the gods and goddesses, with several problems in awarding prizes. Odysseus disguised, challenges the suitors of his wife, Penelope, to a contest of bowmanship in the Odyssey. He shoots an arrow through twelve ax handles, winning the contest, and then slaughtering all the suitors. The run from the field of Marathon by Pheidippides is memorialized even today in the Olympic games and elsewhere. The aspect of being necessitated by war and a need to warn Athens of the approach of the Persians is now ignored, as is the fact that the same man previously ran from Marathon to Sparta, a considerably longer distance, to seek the aid of the Spartans. Sports were certainly a legitimate activity of the hero in ancient Greek myth, and it seems only natural to regard figures excelling in one sport or another as heroes.

### **War of the Hero, by the Hero and for the Hero**

War is the natural venue for the hero. It is war in which the hero demonstrates his prowess by his superiority over his enemies. It might be said that competition to the death exists as a means of creating heroes, and wars are the supreme competition. It might even be argued that in spite of the idealistic goals of most present-day societies, there will never be a total abolition of war. The hero may make war, but he is also made by war. And since there seems to be a need among men to have a means of becoming heroes, wars may indeed always be with us.

The sources of war are usually considered to be seeking wealth or power from another society, or attempting to avenge a wrong, or an imagined wrong by another society. There is one aspect of human society however, which is usually ignored in defining war. That is the human, especially male, appetite for glory. In the Iliad, Achilles professes that his only purpose in fighting the Trojans is to gain

glory. It was the fact that Agamemnon took from him his just spoils of war, the girl Briseis, that caused him to leave the battleground and prepare to return home, Agamemnon having taken from him the glory that was his due. He was so attached to this goal of glory that he had come to Troy having been warned by his mother, the goddess Thetis, that he would be killed, but also have an opportunity to gain great glory.

Historical wars are replete with heroes. In fact, most wars are remembered by their heroes, especially wars defining a nation such as the French Revolution, or the American War of Independence. Any war may give rise to many heroes, most are made the subject of propaganda by the related government or nation in their need to maintain and increase citizen support and are sometimes considerably suspect as to the actual facts of the heroic deed or motive. In the America's War of Independence, those who carried out the Boston Tea Party were hailed as heroes and patriots by the new nation, even though they could not possibly have been patriots of a country they did not know and did not yet exist. American children have always been taught about Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys, hailed as heroes of the Revolution. But while he fought the British, he was later so disgusted with the newly born United States that he tried to get the State of Vermont incorporated into Canada. For the national hero, the actual deed and the actual motive of the hero are not important. It is rather the ideals that the nation needs to have demonstrated that become the basis for the national propaganda. Heroes may be called the victims of Nationalism, their deeds used by the nation involved with little regard for the actual intentions, and sometimes even the actions of the hero.

Anyone can produce a long list of heroes from national wars, but the *caveat* is that such heroes are often created for the benefit of a particular culture, society or government, or sometimes religion.

### The Genetic Hero

The heroes of myth and history are most often seen fighting, sometimes in

war, but often in individual combat. It is a frequent observance in reading the Iliad that typical war tactics of the Greeks and Persians, massed manpower and phalanxes, do not appear. Only individual combat is described, singling out by name those killing and those being killed. War is indeed a contest between large groups, tribes, countries, nations; but any battle in a war, at least until modern times, is the sum of many individual combats. It is the individual contest from which heroes are most often born in war.

Personal combat, in war or in any other venue, is proof of the hero, and to find the basic source of heroism, it is necessary to answer the question why combat takes place. It seems to be a simple question and the answers can be myriad, from a difference in opinion to mutual hate. But, even more basically, behind any other motive, there is a need to prove supremacy on the part of the combatants. Belaboring the question, one might again ask why one needs to prove supremacy. Why is it necessary for one human, especially a male, to prove superiority? Could it be the same drive that creates conflict among animals of the same species?

There is an answer from biology. In the thesis first put forward by Richard Dawkins in 1976 in "The Selfish Gene"<sup>1</sup> we see that, genes follow a Darwinian pattern in seeking to replicate themselves in offspring. The human is a vehicle for the replication of the gene, and therefore will seek the most advantageous means to reproduce, that is, to transmit their genes to future generations. Any appetite of any biological entity can be reduced finally to answering in some way the drive of the gene to replicate. Showing supremacy in combat indicates the fitness of the combatant to transmit his genes to offspring while eliminating rival. This is true for the elk, the gorilla and humans, all of who are basically fighting over access to females. In the case of humans, mating is the means of reproducing, and therefore replicating, genes. Chances to replicate are found in different conditions and by different strategies by males and females, but it is enough to say that for the male, being a hero is a major means of getting the admiring attention of members of the other sex. Even though it may be a surprise to many, even to the hero himself, becoming a hero and receiving the praises of society is innately tied

to sexual opportunity. Society itself hardly recognizes this facet of heroism directly, attributing the motives of the hero to patriotism, family loyalty, or other socially acceptable virtues. However, if there were not this genetic source of the appetite for glory, the classic hero would not exist.

It thus happens that the heroic male who is sought after by many females who are, in a sense, competing with one another for the seed of the hero, sometimes feels it unnecessary to limit his sexual activity to “the” one female. In Greek mythology, the hero is usually very active sexually: Heracles impregnated the fifty daughters of Thespieae in fifty nights, (some say one night), resulting in 51 sons, the extra son the result of twins. (The Greeks imagined this, too, as one of the attributes of the hero that a he was able to have an extraordinary number of liaisons in a short time, and these always resulted in male offspring.) He also has a three-year relationship with Queen Omphale<sup>ii</sup> and several others before finally marrying for the second time.<sup>iii</sup> Achilles is matter-of-factly described as sleeping with Briseis in his tent near the battleground of Troy, and Odysseus has a year-long liaison with Circe and dallies with several other beautiful maidens on his long journey back to his faithful wife Penelope. If you include the Greek gods among the heroes, Zeus is famous for his philandering, as is Ares. The only philandering female is Aphrodite, with few indiscretions found among other goddesses, many of whom were not only virgin goddesses, but vehemently so, such as Artemis, in spite of her origin as a mother goddess of the harvest.

We may conclude that the classical hero has super-human abilities and is outstanding within any group, and the motives that drive him to achieve this pinnacle are biological, that is to say, genetic.

Heroism is also, for that reason, the prerogative of the male. This is not to denigrate women. The female does not attempt to become attractive to a mate by showing off her strength, since physical strength in beating rivals is not particularly an advantageous strategy for reproduction of her genes, and thus for attracting males. While the woman might compete with other women for a mate, the competition is in attempting to be the most attractive to the male, not in

overcoming other females by strength.

On the other hand, the strategy to become eligible for selection by the female, and for as many females as possible, is the reason that the classic hero performs his heroic actions. There are many reasons biological and cultural why women are attracted to the hero. His strength, for example, indicates his ability to protect her and any children that they have together. It might also indicate that any children born by such a hero would be strong and attractive, and therefore likely to be successful in life in the future, again affording her stability. There is even the factor that he is sought by many other women, making him attractive to the female for the reason that any child born to him will have similar attraction and be able to make a wide selection when the child comes of age.

On the other hand, the hero sees displaying his prowess as the shortest route to becoming attractive to the other sex. As such he is able to choose what he considers a good mate, one that will be able to produce many quality children. The male, however, with the natural appetite to reproduce as his genes would dictate, is also aware that the immediate investment in reproduction for himself, is very little relative to the female, who must invest at least nine months of gestation energy and a great amount of care after birth to the offspring. The male therefore sees a wide range of opportunity if he is attractive to a large number of females. This particular idea is anathema to a large segment of today's society, but the drive is genetic and still creates a tendency in the male, which may, of course be limited by social *mores*, but is nevertheless present in the male genome. The male will continue to try to attract as many of the opposite sex as he is capable of. That is, the drive to be a hero will only be slightly diminished by the rules of society. This, as we will see, is has particularly difficult consequences today.

### The Olympic Hero

The beginning of the Olympics in early Greek and pre-Greek civilization was to choose the best of the heroes as the consort of Gaia, the Earth Mother. Gaia was the first goddess for the Greeks and represented the fertility of the earth

and its harvest. She was responsible for the production of all life. It was necessary, of course, that in the production of life, animal or vegetable, the best seed was needed. While life sprang from the Mother, the best seed of this life was necessary for the best harvest. The means of selection of this seed was, of course, competition among those candidates for supplying the seed.

This sort of competition was frequent in many parts of the world in what are now Europe and the Middle East where mother goddesses were legion. In some areas the competitions to find a consort for the goddess were held yearly and the resulting winner became king, who was then killed at the end of the year to supply the symbolic seed for the harvest. In Greece, the murder of the king has never been recorded, but, indeed, the contests were always held only among males, who competed naked, and no woman except the priestess of Gaia, or later Hera was allowed to view the combat. The priestess awarded the winner a kingly crown woven from olive leaves (at Olympia), laurel (at Delphi) or celery leaves (at Corinth) that signified the consort to the Great Mother, goddess of the harvest. There was only the need for one competition, winner take all, as there could only be one king-consort of the Goddess. (It was only later that other competitions were added, and much later, in 776 B.C. that records began to be kept.) This mate for Gaia was indeed a hero in the eyes of the Greeks, and later Greeks saw all their Olympic winners as heroes, and treated them as demigods, and rewarding them in kind, creating idealistic nude statues of them called Kouros (literally, "young man") that were displayed on the many pedestals leading to the stadium in Olympia. Even when the competitions increased, however, there was only one prize, no bronze or silver medals. If the competitor did not take first place, he was a loser.

It might be said that the hero was indeed, in today's slang, a stud. He was famous for his seed and for his offspring. And he worked very hard to achieve the status by which he would achieve this rank.

## Modernization of the Hero

While wars as a venue for creating heroes are still prevalent today, the need for heroism has spread far beyond the opportunities that are found in the military situation. Heroes are found in every area of human activity, especially entertainment, sports, literature and religion. The literature of the late Middle Ages in Europe is replete with heroes. El Cid is one whose fame has lasted to the present. And there were King Arthur, the knights of his round table. Lancelot and Galahad are still names that evoke visions of valor and heroism. Joseph Campbell uses some of these storied heroes in describing his meaning in "The Hero's Journey,"<sup>iv</sup> and "The Hero with a Thousand Faces."<sup>v</sup> Eric Neumann, in "The Great Mother"<sup>vi</sup> also refers to these same heroes in describing the struggle of everyone to free him- or herself from the grips of the Great Mother. The hero, for both Campbell and Neumann, is everyone who must fight to achieve independence from the Great Mother. In the case of Middle-Age literature, this "Great Mother" was often symbolized as a dragon, and the vanquishing of the dragon was the route to independence and freedom.

Goku-son, the Monkey King, is a hero from "Journey to the West,"<sup>vii</sup> in Chinese literature of the 16th century by Wu Cheng'en, which is very popular even today in Asia, and an especially delightful hero, whose cunning and special powers are brought to bear in an adventure to bring the Buddhist sutras from the West, presumably India. Goku-son is an unusual hero in that he is not really human but monkey. He still, however strikes a sympathetic note among the readers in his championing the cause of the common man against dragons and evil beasts and devils of all kinds. Strictly speaking, we might say that Goku-son is a religious hero, although sometimes very reluctant one, since most of his battles are related to religion in one form or other, Taoism and Confucianism in the forefront, while he himself is less than pious. In India, Hanuman is a monkey god much revered by the Hindus, and famous for helping Rama when his wife Sita was abducted by the wicked king Ravana.

Religion has no lack of heroes. It might be said, in fact, that religion has given rise to more heroes than any other genre. There are heroes that fight dragons such

as St. Michael, and those that bring the new religion such as Christianity to a new country, as St. Patrick to Ireland. And Joshua at Jericho is an ancient religious hero. However, religious heroes arise more from a cultural phenomenon and are biologically counter-intuitive. Women heroes such as Joan of Arc and Mother Theresa are plentiful, and such male heroes as Thomas More who was particularly honored by the Roman Catholic religion for his protest against the Anglicans, and the Dalai Lama, particularly honored for his continuing resistance to the Chinese persecution of his religion. Martyrs are a great proportion of religious heroes, and these are especially biologically counter-intuitive, since it is obviously impossible for most of them to transmit genes to offspring after becoming a hero by becoming a martyr, etc. I will return to these heroes below in discussing the memetic hero.

### **Sports Hero**

In entertainment there are many heroes or pseudo-heroes. Famous among the latter is John Wayne, a movie actor, who was awarded a medal by the United States Congress for his patriotism. Every heroic deed he ever accomplished, however, was on the movie screen. His heroism was an image established by cinema and had little substance in real life. The necessity of a national government for heroism to promote the national welfare is nowhere else so evident. That heroism is often a matter of advertising rather than simple fact is evident in the extent to which movie stars achieve a high social rank through their cinematic roles. Arnold Schwarzenegger became the governor of California only because he was known in the movies, and the people of California apparently made no difference between the movie personage and the real Schwarzenegger. Of course, Ronald Reagan ran the same route to become president of the United States.

Entertainment in the form of sport is probably one of the greatest sources of heroes. Sports competitions, which include physical contact, seem to be the biggest contributors of heroes to society. Boxing, perhaps the closest to war in terms of attempting to crush the opponent physically, has a great number of heroes as does American-style football, also a close approximation to a battle in war. Sports with

less physical contact do have many heroes, but there are fewer heroes as the contact lessens. Competitions that are simply a comparison of times or technique, such as swimming or skiing, are considerably less liable to produce heroes. Still, ever since the original Olympic games, the race has been central to sports. Contact sports such as wrestling and boxing were also part of the early Olympics, but team sports were not. It could be that team sports only developed out of the desire to make individual competition, as between gladiators in Roman times, grander and bloodier. In the late Middle Ages in Europe, a form of football (soccer) was played with a ball being kicked between two towns, the winner being the town able to force the ball into the other town's precincts. In Florence, Italy, as a kind of pageant, annual football matches are played between teams representing each quarter of the city. Called "Storico Calcio" (Historical Football) It is hard to call these contests "games" since they are more like knock-down, drag-out bar-room brawls.

On the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, the Mayans had a game similar to football at which, according to the carvings found there, the captain of the winning team was sacrificed to the gods. Mayan football was apparently the sport by which the best "seed" was selected, as in the beginning of the ancient Olympics.

Much of the terminology used in contact sports is military in inference. Teams "attack" and "retreat" and "bomb" the opponents. And onlookers yell for them to kill the other team, and recently, "nuke 'em" meaning to obliterate them thoroughly. The winners are heroes home from battle. Today a successful player in sports is able to earn monetary rewards far in excess of the average person, and these sums are often similar to Achilles' Briseis at Troy, booty due to extraordinary heroism in war, only the war is football or basketball or baseball.

Sports heroes may not actually face death in their competition and therefore may seem somewhat more frivolous than heroes in war or other death-defying endeavors. But their rewards are much higher. And there is a huge difference in the attitude of the sports hero in that self-deprecation is rather rare and greeted by many fans as a relief from the braggadocio that is so common. American-

style football has reach the level where players are penalized or even fined for gloating too much after making an outstanding play. Still, the gestures proclaiming superiority seem part and parcel of American-style football. Even football teams in Japan raise index fingers in a triumphant “We are number one!” before they even take the field for a game, in imitation of the American sports heroes.

Heroism in sports may have very high monetary rewards attached to it, but the biological motives are not really lost. Today a major problem for sports is the use of such performance enhancing drugs as anabolic steroids, by which the athlete is able to increase his muscle mass and strength. Some women athletes have been accused of using such substances, but it is the male athlete who is most liable to use muscle-enhancing substances. More muscles mean more manliness, in effect. Becoming manlier is in line with the desire to become a hero, and definitely in line with the biological goal of the genes. And, to the extent that the male athlete is following his genes, he often runs afoul of the cultural sexual mores, at least in North America. In the last thirty years, awareness of sexual harassment and other crimes related to sex have made society much less tolerant of what used to be thought of as a kind of hero's prerogative that it has been since ancient Greece, where heroes such as Heracles or Achilles were expected to prove themselves through sexual activity. Today such sports heroes as Mike Tyson have found such activity to result in jail sentences, and many others in court cases. That a hero is biologically tuned to such sexual activity by his genes has probably never been used as defense in court, but *sub rosa*, society still tends to lighten the blame of such activity for the hero.

### The Memetic Hero

The hero is usually a hero to his own society, but a villain to the society of his enemies. Mythical heroes usually have no opposing societies and so they might be thought of as universal heroes. Heroes who fight dragons, of course would have few human enemies, but others, especially those who take part in wars between nations, etc. are naturally only thought of as a hero by one side, while he is a villain

or traitor to the other. This is true, as we have said, of Benedict Arnold, a dastardly traitor to the Americans, but a hero to the British. The opposite may be said of Nathan Hale, hero to the Americans and villain to the British. Today, suicide bombers are labeled “terrorists” and abominations by most, while those Islamic fundamentalists for whom they are dying, see them as the epitome of heroism. These heroes are not in the classic category of hero, having no special physical powers, but simply a determination to destroy the enemy, knowingly giving up their own life to achieve their purpose. Or they might be willing to accept the forfeit of their life rather than give up some ideal, be it patriotic or religious. These latter are usually labeled martyrs. The hero must have made some individual choice in carrying out whatever deed he does, even though it may be simply to refuse to do the bidding of the people threatening him. Such resistance does work to the good of the religion, philosophy or cultural ideal of the martyr. The early Christian martyrs have been glorified in Church history and were the subject of much idealistic art even into the Renaissance. St. Sebastian seems to have been a favorite subject, shot full of arrows standing bound to an upright pole.

Martyrs, Kamikaze pilots, suicide bombers and others who see the task at hand as demanding they forfeit their life can hardly be categorized as heroes motivated by their genes. The genes have only the purpose of replication, and self-immolation would certainly be inimical to such a purpose. Even though the drive to heroism is genetic, the hero who chooses death as a means is defeating the purpose of his genes in carrying out his endeavor. So there must be another force, which uses the genetic drive for purposes not related to physical replication. This is the “meme,” the basic unit of culture just as the gene is the basic building block of biology. The meme is basic to ideas and ideals, and ways of thinking. While not denying the genetic drive for glory, it may bend it to its own uses that help its own drive for replication. Religion and nationalism, for example, are two sets of memes, which frequently seek the hero to sacrifice him- or herself.<sup>viii</sup> These we call “memetic” heroes. Richard Dawkins again created the concept of “meme” in *The Selfish Gene*, and it was later expanded by other writers such as Susan Blackmore.<sup>ix</sup>

According to Dawkins there are other possible things whose tendency to replicate is similar to the gene. He labeled one possible factor a “meme,” working in culture in the same way that the gene works in biology.

The meme, by definition, is a replicator that reproduces by transmitting itself to minds other than the one in which it originates. Transmission to another mind is the replication, and through further transmission by imitation or other means it may become pervasive within a society or culture. It may not reproduce, of course, as it may not be attractive to other minds, or not be acceptable to the other mind and may thus die away. But if it can establish a large number of minds as a base, these minds, a small society perhaps, may then work to transmit the meme to an even larger society. Religious ideas, especially, tend to expand their cultural territory until they meet other memes that oppose them. Mutually exclusive memes will often create a conflict against those who hold opposite ideals, be they cultural, religious or political. It is then that the meme protects itself from weakening by deepening feelings of patriotism, religious faith, etc. and if these memes seem to be under attack, they seek active defense, that is, to attack and drive away the other meme. Here the memetic heroes are born who will sacrifice for the preservation and strengthening of the meme, be it religious, nationalistic, racial, or cultural.

The important difference between a meme and a gene is that genes only replicate as the vehicle, that is to say the organism that contains these genes, reproduces. This means that for humans, evolutionary change is tied to, and can only proceed at the speed of one generation at a time. The meme, however, is not limited by biological timing, and is communicated quickly. In today's world it is almost instantaneous with worldwide news and TV coverage, and thus evolution in the cultural world is extremely rapid by comparison. Another difference is that the meme does not necessarily need the individual human in order to continue to replicate. That is to say it can be that the meme may benefit from an event that is disadvantageous to the human in whose mind it resides. An idea becomes a meme when it is transmitted, and it becomes established in a large number of minds it begins to form what is called a memplex, a complex set of many memes, which

contribute to the support of the central idea. For example, the awareness of being the citizen of a particular nation will be supported by the meme of patriotism, duty toward country, and blame or dislike of people of other countries, races, etc. Religion is a good example of a meme, which has protected itself with many taboos branding certain actions not conducive to the maintenance of the meme such as doubts of the truth of the stated facts of the religion, etc. having dire consequences for the doubter, even to eternal damnation.

Religions usually maintain a vision of the afterworld for the believers and promise rewards to the faithful who die for the faith. With these assurances, the believer, (one who totally accepts the import of the meme), is capable of forfeiting his life without fear of a final death and with confidence in a great reward in the afterlife. The meme also, through the heroic example of the martyr, deepens its attachment to the other minds within the society. As mentioned above, nationalism especially seizes the “martyr for the cause” as means of instilling a deeper patriotism among its citizens. It may even be advantageous to this purpose that the hero is dead so that he cannot contradict the propaganda.

With the assurance of a reward in the afterlife, or at least in the “hearts of one’s countrymen,” the problem of altruism is also met. Richard Dawkins and others deny that an organism can sacrifice its own genes for those of others. Thus, what seems to be altruism in the animal and insect world, where ants or bees often seem to commit suicide in protecting their nest, is easily explained by the fact that the all the members of the nest or hive are closely related and have common genes. The organism that carries these genes is not so important as maintaining the welfare of the gene pattern of the hive or nest.

This also works for humans. It has been found by experiment, that humans act favorably for people to whom they are related, and the closer the relationship, the more they favor them. The classic hero, thus, acts for his own genes or for those closely related. The self-sacrificing hero, however, acts for his own *memes* and others holding the same *memes*. Since the vital point is not physical reproduction for a meme, self-immolation, which would render a person incapable of replicating

genes, does not basically injure the meme's existence, and may in fact increase its power within a society.

Heroes are important because they are the representatives of society's ideals and help it to maintain a sense of righteousness. The classic hero fights in society's wars, or fights against society's criminals, or fulfills its dreams by performing great deeds in exploration, sports, etc. The classic hero helps his society to strive for perfection, a society in which everyone lives by the rules and sees the deeds of the hero as almost a guide to its highest values. The classic hero such as Achilles or Superman might kill enemies and cause mayhem, but they do so within the bounds of the sense of values of the society. The football hero may boast of his prowess and demand a huge salary, but his deeds are welcomed by society and he is allowed a certainly moral leeway in his everyday actions because of the satisfaction he is able to give society with his heroic actions. These heroes supply ideals and goals to society and help enliven it. Most are motivated by a drive for personal glory. Glory, however, is a thing awarded by society, which honors those that are outstanding within it or working for it. It is, in the final analysis, recognition of greatness, or strength, or brilliance, etc. Genetically, this is advantageous for replication, and the drive to become a hero might be called a human phenotype. The phenotype is the observable characteristics of an individual resulting from the interaction of the genes and the environment. For a dog, the phenotype might be befriending humans as an evolutionary survival strategy, while living and hunting in packs may be the strategy of the wolf. The search for glory is genetic in most humans, and while most men are only partly successful at achieving hero status for a limited group and for a limited time, the one proclaimed a hero is the man who has succeeded most in completing this genetic ambition.

Memetic heroes, however, will necessarily have a limited amount of glory since they are almost always in the minority in any conflict. Kamikaze pilots are heroes only for the Japanese, and even they are given more sympathy than glory. The Moslem fanatics who flew planes into the World Trade Center buildings are heroes to a very limited group, while the vast majority of society execrates them.

The same is true of the many suicide bombers in Iraq and Palestine.

Today there is some discussion as to how many of the Kamikaze pilots chose their own fate, but a sufficient number were convinced of rightness of the national cause and in the divine will of the emperor to attempt thousands of attacks on American shipping. Over 700 of them succeeded in their purpose. They were roundly hated by the American military personnel who had to undergo those attacks, and the rest of America was aghast at what only seemed unnatural fanaticism. And today it is hard for most to conceive of the reasons that so many young men in the Middle East choose self-annihilation as their means of achieving hero status. It is hard to believe for most who do not feel the need that their particular form of Islam has imprinted on them.

### Conclusion:

The saying that “heroes are born, not made” is only partly true. Mythical heroes like Gilgamesh, Heracles and Achilles were said to have divine heritage because heroes were thought to be born super-human and therefore capable of heroic deeds. Still, it might be said that all human males are born with genes that make them potential heroes. On the other hand, the kamikaze pilot, Christian martyr or suicide bomber is “made” into a hero under the influence of a meme. So it may be said heroes are both born and made. Many times even enemies may admire “Born” heroes for their deeds, “Made” heroes are admired by only a lonely few and envied by none.

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- i Dawkins, Richard (1976) *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
  - ii “Omphale” is Greek for “navel” and is certainly a reference to the Great Mother, whose navel is displayed at what had been her shrine at Delphos.
  - iii He had given his first wife, Megara, to his nephew Iolaus, whose children he had murdered when under the influence of madness put on him by Hera. He

goes to seek another, younger wife, saying the marriage with Megara had been "inauspicious."

- iv Campbell, Joseph (1991) *The Hero's Journey*. Harper Collins: San Francisco.
- v Campbell, Joseph (1972) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- vi Neuman, Erich (1963) *The Great Mother*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- vii Wu, Cheng'en; trans. Jenner, W.J.F. (1993) *Journey to the West*. Beijing: Foreign Language Press.
- viii These heroes may be male or female since the male aim of making reproduction easier is no longer present. Still, males dominate even this category of heroism.
- ix Blackmore, Susan (1999) *The Meme Machine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.