

MYTHOLOGICAL BASES OF SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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I. Cultural Consciousness

Culture may be thought of as the collective consciousness of a particular group. And even as the individual consciousness is a pattern of experiences which form an awareness of truth that is the singular person, the culture of one society or group is a perception of truth peculiar to that society or group. That is to say, culture is the view of truth that differentiates one society from every other. This is not stated in order to emphasize the differences between cultures, but rather to emphasize the fact that there is no one "natural" or "correct" view of real truth. The very word "truth" is a chimera because we use it to indicate something we have no direct access to, "objective fact." Truth is, for us, a concept which we reason to but can only touch indirectly through the medium of culture, much as physical reality is transmitted to us through the media of our senses of sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste. We presume physical reality to exist, and exist in a particular fashion because we experience it so. But while we designate color scientifically as a particular wave length of light, there is no way to certify the actuality of any particular color since it is the result of stimulation of certain nerves in our brains. There is, in fact, no way of knowing whether the way one individual perceives the color blue is the same as any other person, since no one has direct access to any other person's perceptive apparatus, much less the effect of nerve stimulation in the brain, stories of extrasensory perception of others' experiences notwithstanding.

Descartes tried to solve the problem of "reality" through the reasoning that if he could think, then he must exist in some way. This indeed solved the problem of whether he existed or not, but only for himself and in no way indicated that anything else was any more than an extension of himself. All that is possible for any individual is to act and think "as if" everything were as perceived. The only argument against the solipsist who denies there is any reality outside his own mind is simply that, with no proof, denying something that seems to be true but can not be proven so, is quite gratuitous.

In the area of culture, however, while all societies are in the same boat, so to speak, in being unable to touch "truth" directly, we are able to compare perceptions of that "truth" as evinced in any particular culture by the reactions of members of that culture to common phenomena. While we may not be able to define "blue" as it appears to any individual, we can compare the way "blue"

is perceived by a particular culture because, on one hand we have made the perhaps gratuitous leap of assuming perceptions to be of "real" objects and, on the other, can perceive the difference in those perceptions and thus become aware that "reality" is quite relative, that is, "truth" as perceived by cultures is relative. In the concrete, the perception of time, space, beauty, good, bad, enjoyable, disagreeable, etc. etc. are all given a valence through culture. Not only value judgments, but our views of "reality" as a whole are dependent upon our culture. The perception, for example of "time" varies significantly from culture to culture, as demonstrated by E.T. Hall in *The Silent Language*. As people are normally unaware of the air they breathe, so they are unaware that they perceive time in any way different from anyone else. People of some cultures see time as a quantity endowed on a person to be divided up and "spent" for certain activities, or "wasted" by not being used profitably. Other cultures see time as sort of a large room belonging to no one and holding many different activities within it in which one can partake or not, or in as many as one wants to simultaneously. Some cultures divide time up minutely, others only into large categories of past, now, and future. Yet none of the people of these different cultures consciously think of "time" unless there is some clash in activity with persons from another culture whose perception of time is different and, in addition, only if one is able to sort out the reason for the clash.

In *The Silent Language* Hall speaks of time as one means of expression, that is to say, the way time is handled communicates. In America, where time is apt to be considered a quantity to be preciously dispensed, being fifteen minutes late for a business appointment communicates to the one that is waiting that the person who comes late has little interest in the subject of the appointment and not too much respect for the person who waits. This results in infuriating the person who has waited. In South America, where time is more like the large room mentioned above and where people are liable to schedule several appointments for the same time, fifteen minutes late would hardly be considered something to get upset about, and not really the length of time that would require more than a perfunctory excuse, which would be the case when someone came two or three minutes late for an appointment in the U.S. Therefore, the difference in the attitude toward time might create a clash between a North American and a South American, but the reason for the clash could very possibly be blamed on the late-coming South American for what is considered his attitude of disrespect which the North American thinks has been communicated.

None of man's most basic concepts can be defined, since to define them means to analyze them and this would mean to break them down into still more basic concepts like the atom is broken down into neutrons, protons, and electrons. The ordinary way to define time, good, beauty, etc. is to describe it. That is to say, to explain how it is normally perceived. This, however, is strictly a cultural phenomenon, as has been shown above. The individual perception of "beauty" has been transmitted through the culture in ways which will be

discussed later but the cultural perception of "beauty" is coextensive only with that culture, and might not be accepted outside it. These basic concepts may change from contact with other cultures, etc. but they are still cultural views of reality, not objective "fact".

In tying together what has been said so far, one must remember that a "culture value" which indicates a positive or negative valence placed on some phenomenon by a culture, evinces itself in the words "good" and "bad" in the mind of a member of that culture. The person knows that some perceived phenomenon is "good" or "bad" and if asked why, may even be able to give an explanation, but the first reaction is not reasoned, it is what is called a "gut" reaction. If we ask a member of most cultures today whether killing is good or bad, the answer would be "bad. " But if the same question had been put to a member of a culture in which sacrificing the king or his substitute ensures the next year's harvest, he would have said that in certain circumstances it was a religious duty of high import and highly commendable. A similar answer would be given by so-called cannibals who would eat the heart of the defeated foe to gain his bravery and virtue. And even today, murder can take on an aspect of religious devotion, as seen especially in the fervor of some Moslems in killing their enemies or that of, for example, the Irish IRA in attacking the Protestants in Northern Ireland and *vice versa*. These people do not perceive murder, at least in certain circumstances, as evil but virtuous.

Thus we can say that value judgments made by an individual are expressions of these cultural values and in no way "objective" judgments.

II. The Role of Mythology in Society

As hinted at above, religious thinking plays a great part in the forging of cultural values. In societies which are admittedly religious such as many of the Mid-East countries, the people themselves avow their values to be Islamic or Judaic, etc. In the past, agricultural societies tended to develop religions related to fertility and, perforce, female deities. While the discovery of agriculture was not religious, the perception of something so closely related to the common good was given religious foundations. Man always searches for explanations of things most closely related to his own existence. If the sun or rain is necessary to his existence, as indeed it is to agricultural societies, why they are and where they come from will certainly be given an explanations no matter how far that explanation differs from what we call "science" today. No agricultural society could be without its calendar, either. The calendar was not only the way to tell the date, but explained the yearly visitation of the gods (goddesses) and when to beseech the gods for the new crop. And, in some cases such as that of the Maya people of Central America, it foretold the whole future of the people up to thousands of years into the future.

1. Religion as Science

Religion was the “science” of antiquity. It explained the then unexplainable and, while not providing “scientific” methods of solving problems, it gave a place of supplication for the humanly unmanageable problems. It provided a set of rules for a man to live by which afforded order to his universe and a set of convictions which gave him assurance which led to what science could never provide, hope of afterlife.

Religion, the word by which we designate a set of beliefs concerning something not of this physical world but which affects it and us, has been necessary to support the psychology of man who has risen above the primates to the point that he can not accept the world into which he has been born without questioning its reasons. He feels there must be reasons for all phenomena in the same way that man has reasons for the things he does himself. Explained this way, it would seem that the “explanations” which became religion were made up out of whole cloth, as it is said. The protagonists of a religion, however, are not simply demagogues trying to make people follow them for their own purposes. They believe what they are preaching and are explaining the world as they perceive it, though the explanation may be self-serving as well. They perceive the sky is blue, as is the sea. They perceive that rain falls from the sky and therefore the sky must contain water, and how else should this be explained than that the “water below was separated from the water above.” (Genesis 1,1) In fact, one of the most common cosmological descriptions is that the origins were from a “chaos” which was made up of water. The explanation is quite obviously true and became “Bible,” so to speak.

2. Religion as Government

In the ancient world there could be no such concept as the division of church and state, politics and religion. There could be no division between the laws of the gods and the laws of the state since they were one and the same thing. In the first cities in Sumeria we find the ziggurat temple at the center of the city, and we find that all civil activities were centered here. The civil activities included sacrifices to the gods and goddesses as well as judicial decisions and judgments made by the representative of the deities who was the *de facto* ruler of the city. In the present, because of the diversity of beliefs in many countries, some modern “liberal” governments find it difficult to administer a strict legal code since this will come in conflict with one or other of the moral codes of some group within country. Actually, the division of religion and government is largely a myth itself since it is impossible for a government to make laws without some kind of moral basis. For example, to make cannibalism a crime, one must not have the moral code of a cannibal, who sees it as a praiseworthy deed. In America the discussion over abortion is not a discussion concerning law, it is a discussion on whether abortion is moral or not. If the consensus is that it is not, then the majority will agree that there

should be a law against it. Thus it can be seen that there is not really a clear-cut distinction between government and religion in the sense that moral codes are expressions of some kind of religious belief, even a theology.

The Jews are a good example of a culture held together solely by the power of religion, and the Pan-Arab nation ideal is certainly another example of the idea of political unity through a common religious belief. It has been the experience of many cultures to have a religion or a religious view forced upon it for the purpose of politically unifying it. The *Tenno* clan of Japan had the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* written with the idea of supporting its claim to the islands which have become Japan, in opposition to another faction in the Izumo district. The Christianizing of South America by the Spanish and Portuguese was perhaps seen as an act of bestowing God's mercy on the heathen, but the political overtones in terms of conquest were obvious.

In the days when people were just beginning to form societies that included territory larger than villages, the social ties were customs, usages, beliefs. Laws assume an impersonal standpoint, usually expressed as "impartial," by which persons unknown, even unborn, can be judged. And it was from customs that laws were developed, while the customs were expressions of the beliefs of the people. And these beliefs, in a broad sense, were the religion of the people. If today, even with the diversity in the beliefs of people, total divorce of religion and government is impossible, it can be imagined how tightly religion and government were bound together when it concerned only one society of a unified culture who lived within a circumscribed area.

3. Religion and Myth

I have been using the word "religion" here to indicate mythology. This is hardly gratuitous. Most adherents to a religion, especially Christians, do not hesitate to call other religions "myth," while their own remains a religion. While I do not see the words myth and religion as interchangeable, myth is a little wider in scope and is often used to designate something thought to be untrue. If we exclude the reasoning or "theology" based on whatever writings or tradition are involved in the religion, the content of religion is no different from mythology. Mythology includes much which is folk tale and legend concerning heroes, etc., not usually considered religion. If we consider the tales of Samson, David, Ruth, etc. in the Old Testament, the heroic legend is as much in evidence there as it is in what is ordinarily termed mythology. The use of the two terms interchangeably here is meant to point out the depth to which society is affected by what may be called background assumption or belief. While many Americans would deny they are religious, they would hesitate to deny they were Christian or that they had a Christian moral code. Japanese will often say they are irreligious, but will profess to having a moral code which is Buddhistic. In other words, while the individual may not profess to have any religious convictions, he does have convictions about right and wrong which

stem from a religious source, that is, from a source which depends to some extent upon a suspension of reason, something which can not be directly examined but which pervades the society in which he lives.

Therefore it is quite possible to assert that basic moral codes, the attitudes which denote something right or wrong, or less right and less wrong, or more or less valuable in society, stem from religious or "mythological" sources. Whether "all" the basic moral codes are so derived would be rather difficult to prove. But lacking description of other major sources, it would seem that the major source of the moral code of society is religion, or myth.

It would be quite difficult, for example to defend "reason" as a source of moral code, simply because of the many differences in moral codes from society to society. There is great difficulty in forming any kind of final decision concerning morality simply through reason, as can be noted in the problems concerning abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, etc., etc. all argued "reasonably" but to no conclusion.

4. Transmission of Culture

Five or six thousand years ago when man was just beginning to form large societies, the problem of what was right or wrong never arose, everyone knew what was correct and there was no necessity of reasonable argument. Culture transmitted itself within the society with little problem and it was certainly monolithic. While the customs of a society today are primarily transmitted by parents and family, and, to some extent by designated "teachers" including priests and ministers of religion, and later by school teachers, and are reinforced with peer pressure, the diversity, mobility, wealth of information available from outside the local culture, make the "monolithic" impossible in most of the world today. There may still be some primitive areas which maintain "pure" cultural transmission but they are hardly in the mainstream of modern society.

Still, the cultures of today still manage to transmit themselves quite efficiently and not by reason. "Good" and "bad" are still "gut" reactions learned along with our native languages, a time before memory begins. These value judgments are unconscious, in the sense of not having been consciously implanted, and are coextensive with the culture. As an example of a "gut" value unconsciously acquired, in Japan it is quite impolite, even considered disgusting to blow one's nose into a handkerchief. If you would ask a Japanese why he may give you several hygienic reasons including the "Don't-put-a-cold-in-your-pocket" approach. He will not be convinced otherwise no matter how much you might explain how a handkerchief is used in the rest of the world and why it was invented in the first place. But if you tell the same Japanese that it is against the law to urinate outdoors in most States in America, and that you would have to pay a fine if you did so, he would simply laugh, and that without much embarrassment, at this revered Japanese tradition, any hygienic arguments

notwithstanding.

There are three levels on which culture exists and these levels indicate a distance from the core of culture. The highest level is called by Hall the "technical" level in which most things are taught logically in a "scientific" way. In a primitive society this might include the method of measuring the time to plant the crops or the way to skin a kill. Next is the "informal" level in which things are learned from watching others such as parents, relatives or role models. This may be anything from how a person cuts his hair to what makes kind of food a person likes. The lowest level, that is to say the one closest to the core of culture is the "formal" level and is instilled through simple statements of how things "are" in an absolute sense, and through the child's perception of the value judgments of others, how they feel or think about a certain phenomenon. Examples here would include both the use of a handkerchief and urinating outdoors for the Japanese. One is disgusting, the other is taken lightly, the reverse of how they would be looked at in most European countries. One can imagine teaching a child how to tie his shoelaces, this is a technical level. Of course a bow is the most usual way to tie a shoelace, but it is not necessarily "right" until a culture has endowed it with that label. You may imagine a child learning to swagger like his big brother when he walks. It is for him the "neat" way to walk, and one which the culture places some kind of significance on, perhaps manliness, perhaps boastfulness. But we can only imagine the child learning disgust at someone blowing his nose into a handkerchief by someone, perhaps his mother, saying, "That's awful!" and making a disgusting face if someone is seen doing this. In fact, since the action is so rare in Japan it is unlikely the child would have such an opportunity, but similar expressions of disgust would be made concerning the effluence from the nose, even into tissues.

These three levels are not sharply distinct, they blend into one another to form a continuum, but it can be said that the further away from the core any particular phenomenon is found within the culture, the easier it is to change and the more it will be affected by outside influences. Looking at the levels from the other end, as you proceed toward the core, reactions to phenomena become emotional. If you don't wear a tie people will think you out of place at a wedding banquet. But they would be outraged in some societies if you didn't wear a shirt. They would perceive it as an insult. Americans hate to stand in line, and lines in the United States wander all over the place, but Americans take line crashing personally and get quite angry. Italians hate crowding, dislike being touched even on what they would call a crowded bus. I have been elbowed fiercely in the back on an Italian bus for pushing backwards into another in order to let a person get to the exit. If they are coextensive with a culture these expressions of rancor indicate that we have approached something close to the core of the culture about which there can be little reasoning, and no persuasion.

Attitudes toward space, time, family, religion, etc. become emotional as the basic cultural values are approached. These attitudes certainly change with changes in the social environment, but very slowly since this conservative inertial force makes it difficult to accept any change, the cultural "status quo" being "right" and any change "wrong" to the members of the society. This must have been more true in the past when there were fewer outside influences and less diversity within the culture itself.

III. Sources of Culture

1. Response to Environment

A society is by definition an interacting group and for that reason must have rules for this interaction in order to avoid clashes, have some kind of order for "pecking" and for any other social activity. These rules and order are part of the culture but one may wonder about the mechanism involved in producing these rules when the culture was forming.

We can presume that basic survival-of-the-fittest rules would be adequate to produce many of the reactions to the environment and the modes of living which are a basic part of culture. I do not mean that there is any one "best" way to react to a culture, but that certain patterns of reactions and modes of living are more likely to lead to survival of the group than others reactions and patterns. These patterns are culture. For example, in the *Naked Ape*, Desmond Morris argues for the necessity of the hunting apes to trust one another and to work as a unit when off on the hunt. This would mean that there could not be the absorption of total power over the females as might happen in the world of monkeys, since this would leave many young, strong males dissatisfied, with the resultant adverse effect on the hunt. Thus would evolve the pattern of monogamy. Whether this reason for monogamy is valid or not, the idea that the environment would create life style, i.e. cultural patterns, is made.

Obviously, concern with heating and keeping warm is of more importance in cold climates than in temperate or tropical climates. The result of the concern will produce different types of housing, clothing, work, recreation and even eating. Environment is one of the major sources of culture. It is actually difficult to say whether the final element in determining a culture is environment or not, the problem being that to say that everyone having the same environment would have the same culture seems patently false until you try find a case where there are different cultures in the same environment, and you run into trouble. There may be a problem with the definition of environment, but if the social and psychological spheres are included with the natural sphere in the definition, we are back to the point that psychology has never completely extricated itself from, namely, does environment (experience) have more effect on the individual (culture) or does innate capacity. In other words, it may be that environment is the determining factor in producing "culture," but there are too many elements

involved to prove this, and we can say that there are differences in contiguous cultures, cultures geographically very close together, which are not fully explained simply by geography.

Other factors involved in the production of any culture are therefore much more subtle while not entirely unrelated to environment.

In accord with the tendency of traits which are most profitable to the existence of an individual or a group, human groups developed in the way in which an individual member of the group was able to gain dominance, at least minimal dominance within the group. This meant that the best hunter, for example, would achieve a certain respect within the group. It would also mean that his method of hunting would be imitated and perhaps become the norm. It would not necessarily mean that his method of hunting was the ultimate best, simply that it was the most successful thought of up to then within the group. Everyone has seen examples of primitive hunting, fishing or farming that seem ingenious in some ways but would hardly be thought efficient today. The different methods of hunting that appeared would be partly in response to the environment, but also, largely influenced by the ingenuity of the individual hunter.

In other words, the ingenuity of men in response to the necessities of the environment is greatly responsible for the creation of culture. In fact, if it were not for the ingenuity of man, the word "culture" would lack considerable meaning. But while the ingenuity of man does not necessarily discover the best response to any one environmental problem, it does seem to discover a great number, the diversity in customs from culture to culture is evidence of this.

Basically then, it would seem that the customs develop through the same mechanism as Darwin states that physical forms evolve, through successful responses to environmental situations. In the same manner as the physical world, however customs vary from society to society so that, though the development of an element of culture, a custom, is a response to the environment, it is not the only possible, nor necessarily the best, response to the environment. Whether responses are "best" or less depends on the criteria, but if we consider that the criteria are those of, first of all, providing for the continuance of the society, and secondly, for its expansion and dominance in relation to nature and to other cultures, in the same way that the "best" or most successful evolutionary response to the environment for the individual is that it enhances his ability to survive and multiply, then the "best" responses in any era will be those of the dominant culture or cultures.

Custom, however, does not arise from a single response to a situation encountered only once. By definition it necessarily demands repetition to become a custom. The individual who repeats a particular response to a particular situation will shortly become habituated. This is the method by which we learn many physical responses; how to drive a car or a golf ball, indeed, how to stand and/or walk. On the level of society, there is a social response to a par-

ticular environment, modified by human ingenuity, which is repeated a sufficient number of times to create what might be called a social habit, a "cultural custom." At the same time, a "cultural" custom is, in some way institutionalized or "sanctified." There seems to be no significant difference between a "custom" and a "cultural custom" when speaking on the level of society. If we speak of a social custom we are talking of a habit which is coextensive with a certain group. And whether this group is called a "culture" in terms of having a full set of living customs in common which are significantly different from other societies, or a "sub-culture" in terms of having only a limited number of customs which differ from the larger culture, the customs are "cultural."

2. Foreseeing and Controlling the Future

The natural environmental events which gave rise to responses by man were not seen as random events, especially since they repeated themselves in some sort of order. This is especially true of the yearly weather and astronomical cycles which had great importance for agricultural societies. That the sun went through a yearly cycle from acme to nadir, and the stars marched across the night sky in orderly fashion proved to man that a unified principle controlled them. Even for hunting societies, the foreseeable habits of their prey which could be foreseen and used to catch them told the hunter that there was a spirit imbuing the prey that related it to man.

Even without access to scientific knowledge of the universe, the principle seen to unify natural events could not be ignored. The mysterious principle became spirit or god, or gods, or goddesses, as it often is still today, the mystery of the universe not having been entirely dispelled by "science."

To see the world controlled by a mysterious force which can not be influenced in any way, however, was impossible for a human being who had the ability to foresee coming natural events. The ability to reason to future events using the data of experience is a major factor in the occurrence of religion. The fact that man is apparently the only living thing known to have what can be called a religion is proof enough that the significant attribute of man, his brain capacity, his intelligence, is responsible for it. And among the various capacities of the intellect, the ability to see past patterns and interpolate them into the future is most important. In other animals there exist preparations for future events such as the bear fattening himself for winter or the squirrel hiding acorns, or the birds migrating south, etc. which are all instinctual. I leave for others the task of validating the statement that many responses to the environment by man are the result of (not necessarily correct) reasoning, while the responses of other animals are instinctual, and the difference between reasoning and instinct. This ability to reason to future events however, certainly leads man to the desire to influence these events. And actually, the fact that man is able to foresee them makes him feel that he can, in some way, influence them.

There is no event which can be foreseen by man that does not have some

kind of magic to influence or foretell its outcome. There is elaborate folklore on how to tell the sex of a forthcoming baby. Children in Japan make little *teruteru bozu* dolls to make the weather turn sunny for a picnic. With all the scientific knowledge available today, people still pray for good weather, and the Catholic Church can match any so-called primitive culture prayer for prayer in beseeching the blessings for everything from good crops to a winning football game.

The idea that being able to foresee an event gives some influence over it is similar to the idea of the ancient Jews among others that by knowing the name of "God," to them "Yaweh," gave them special links to Him, and therefore, special power to seek and obtain favors.

Humans feel that "knowledge" of something awards a certain control over it, and if there is knowledge of the future, humans tend to feel that it can be influenced in some way. The future was seen to be ultimately under the control of some non-human, perhaps semi-divine thing. The "Fates" of Greek mythology are one manifestation of control over the future and that there is some path set for all humans at least at birth, if not before.

People believe that dreams foretell the future because they seem to do exactly that. While the theories concerning the sources of dreams put forth by Freud and Jung declare the dream to be a manifestation of the current psychology of the person dreaming, for many people the dream is an omen or portent, or sometimes a relic of a past life, etc. Even the most rational of men will feel uneasy after having had a particularly vivid dream about the future.

The point is that man himself, being able to some extent foresee the future, can not help but feel that the future is in some way determined. And to have the future determined necessarily presumes some being greater than man who is capable of creating such a pattern. It is in this way the deity is conceived, conceived by man. Therefore, though the physical properties of the deity varied, in hunting societies often animals, in agricultural societies having human form even to the point of being male and female, the processes through which that deity revealed itself is entirely according to human thought processes. In this way, though the astronomical activities of the heavens never varied and were for many societies the absolute foundation of their society, other events such as weather vary considerable within a close pattern, which gave rise to the notion that they varied according to factors that could be influenced, especially by the deity with which they (the society) were most closely associated with.

It would be extremely exciting to time-travel back to the point at which any society was beginning to achieve some kind of cosmological and theological certainty concerning the world around them. It would tell so much about the society involved and what their values were, and even what the sources of religion were in any particular culture. For Western society the Jewish tradition was quite vital, and it is one where the value formation is relatively evident, coalescing in the Bible around the fifth and fourth century B.C.

The biblical tradition is basically the story of a god attached to a particular tribe who promises prosperity of various kinds for loyalty to his (God's) commandment. God is therefore, of necessity, in control of the future.

Receiving this same tradition, the medieval Christian philosophers in Europe found that this came into opposition with the idea of free will, which would be necessary if man was to be blamed for sin, a willful disobedience to the will of God. Thomas Aquinas and others dismissed this by saying that though God knew the future he did not will it, only allowed it. This has never restrained Jews, Christians or Moslems from asking God to influence it, however.

IV. Conclusion

1. Mythology and Culture

To the individual or to society which is pure in the sense of not having contact with conflicting cultures, ways of thinking concerning the basic elements of life and morality are not usually "theories," they are either true or not. The human mind works in absolutes when considering "right" and "wrong." As mentioned earlier, value judgments are not reasoned to, but imbibed, as it were, with the mother's milk. And the reason that value judgments which derive from the culture are so absolute and unexplained is that their source is the same as religion in that it is a way of looking at reality, a view of reality which the individual does not really perceive since it is the same as air, the medium in which he lives. Here the term "reality" may be considered the cultural foundation or the religious foundation of the individual's life. Originally these two were the same. It only came about later that one person could conceive of several different ways of looking at reality; the religious reality, the scientific reality, etc. The culture of Sumeria did not perceive science, politics and religion as different categories. Their cultural view of the world pervaded all, and all cultural actions, be it a human sacrifice or making beer, were simultaneously religious, political and scientific, although those categorical terms would only have meaning for modern man.

Beer making, for example, was a sacred rite. Alcohol had the effect of taking man out of himself, making him feel good because he imbibed the "spirit" with the spirits, so to speak. If beer contain "spirits", it was necessary when making it to keep out the bad "spirits." Therefore, the priests were entrusted with this job. "How quaint," may be the observation, but if you visit any distillery in Japan you will find a braided cord on each vat as a Shinto amulet to guard against evil spirits. The extent to which *sake* is used in Japanese ceremony and ritual is of course due to the Shinto background.

The customs of ancient Egypt are known for the most part only through burial texts, etc. found in tombs. The customs of the ancient Hebrews are known only through religious writings, mainly in the Bible. Since there are only religious rites and writings to learn about the culture, it would not be logically sound to

state that all customs stemmed from religious or mythological foundations. The fact remains, however, that if religion or mythology supplied the foundations for the society, the view of reality on which the culture was based, then the mythology would be the chief source of the values in value judgements. Just as the value placed on the individual and the individual's life is called "Christian" and is the chief point from which attack is made on abortion in America, the lesser importance of the individual in Japan and the emphasis on the social aspect of the problem, a largely Buddhistic approach, make abortion more acceptable there.

2. The Enertia of Custom

We have established that social customs are responses to environment by a society, and therefore the culture's view of reality is greatly influenced by the environment. At the same time, values become attached to those responses to what is seen as reality. As these responses become custom, they are institutionalized or sanctified through a body of mythology, in a sense they are justified by mythology. Once the mythology is in place, the customs are then transmitted through it and, to some extent, protected from change through it. Even after the mythology has lost credibility, there is an enertia which maintains the perceived values of the culture. This is because the values are transmitted through a medium which is not directly rational, but unconscious. Value perceptions are absolute, allowing of no gainsaying. To argue against a cultural value results in opposition which is outraged, emotional. To talk of urinating in public as being rather natural would cause outrage in many Western societies.

If the reasons why it is so terrible, answers connected with hygiene may be the first produced, but the underlying taboo against exposure in public as having sexual, and therefore sinful, overtones is probably more to the point and more "Christian" in orientation.

Of course, this enertia is not so total as to cancel all evolution in culture and cultural customs. While the basic orientation of American culture remains European, there have been many other influences upon it which have created significant divergence from western European culture. Still, most of the core remains unchanged, and the vast majority of Americans, no matter what their ancestry, still acquire what are mostly western European values during childhood.

Perhaps one of the strongest influences on the American value system has been the black American culture which by being isolated through prejudice and segregation developed in a direction quite separate from that of white America, and with the breakdown of barriers between the two races, the black culture has significantly affected the cultural values of America, especially in the last 30 years.

The conclusion of this paper, and the basis upon which further studies shall be done, is that differences in cultural values derive primarily from the view of reality of a culture, that is to say its mythology, and that even today the inertia

of cultural values maintains itself in people who profess no belief in what was the basis of the values, that view of reality called religion or mythology. It would be difficult to find a religious basis for specific cultural values such as the necessity of a larger personal space for Italians than the Japanese, or the insistence upon punctuality for Americans. But in these cases as in every other case of a cultural value which is the source of a reaction with emotional rather than rational overtones, there is an irrational source, a "belief" involved, which is to call it "religion," or myth. Thus, while the sources of all cultural customs may not readily be discerned in the canonized myth of the culture, an examination of the mythology of the culture will result in an understanding of the source of many values of the culture, and explain the differences in values between one culture and another.

As a sequel to this paper I intend to examine and compare the cultural values of Europe and Japan, and see to what extent the bases for the differences in values can be found in the view of reality, that is to say the religion and mythology proper to each.

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