

INDIVIDUALISM AND MYTHOLOGY

Thomas Guerin

Forward

Forwards are usually only written for books or the like to point out the route the argument is intended to take and thank the many people involved in publishing. In this case, however, my reason for writing a forward is that, after looking at the completed paper, there might be some doubt as to the point I am trying to make. My own convictions on the problem are clear enough to me, but in handling any subject as broad as the sources of a cultural attitude, there is no way in which all the elements can be brought together to make a simple equation.

There is a tremendous need to investigate the cultural differences between the Japanese and the Western cultures, but there have been myriad comparisons done in the past, all of which point out the differences quite clearly, but then make judgments on the differences from whichever point of view they are written. Westerners in Japan have written numerous books about Japan, some making fun of it, even cartooning it, others sympathizing with it, almost all from a superior point of view. This has gradually come to make me angry, not because I am so enamored of the Japanese that I think they are perfect, or anything close to perfect. But neither do I think that foreigners, Westerners in particular, are perfect, or anything near it. I feel that there is a basic difference in orientation and values between the Westerner and the Japanese, and that this difference comes from the emphasis on the individual in the Westerner and on social consciousness in the Japanese.

I believe that almost all of the irritation that Westerners, especially Americans have with the Japanese, such as what euphemistically is called "trade friction" is the result of the Japanese trying to maintain a certain order within their own society, a necessity for the continued existence of their own culture. It may not fit in with the values of the rest of the world, and this may be putting it on a route that will cause a major clash with the West, but the Westerner who insists that Japan do things his way, is not recognizing the tremendous self-centered, *individual* attitude he brings to the confrontation. And those Westerners, be they in the highest circles of power in the Western countries, when insisting on the necessity of changing the way the Japanese run their own country, as in the negotiations with the United States over systems of internal organization, even as to how department stores should be given permission to open in any particular area, etc., are engaging in the most egregious cultural imperialism imaginable. When they come to Japan and demand that she run a deficit in international trade, as President Johnson did in the 1960's, one can only admire the Japanese for not showing their anger on the international stage. But then the Japanese would not show their anger in those circumstances, it would be myself, being a Westerner and much more "personally" involved, who would be angered by such a superior attitude.

I have heard foreigners express disgust with the explanations put forward by Japanese and others such as myself that the problems between the West and Japan are cultural. I find

it hard to imagine what else these people think the problem stems from. Having heard American politicians make statements to the effect that "the Japanese will not trade with anybody but themselves," and "The Japanese are out to get us," and "The Japanese are trying to put you all out of work," there seems to me that there is no sanity visible behind such hysteria. The problems between Japan and the United State and the rest of the Western world *are* cultural, eminently so. There is no "bad" or "good" involved here. In fact, good and evil are not valid adjectives in a cross-cultural situation. It is only within a single culture that these words have any meaning.

I would like to do a study on how the glorification of individualism has led the West, and especially the United States into confrontation and war down to the present day.

I. Oriental Social Consciousness and Occidental Individualism

Westerners are often characterized by Japanese and other Orientals as "individualistic." This, for the Asian, is significantly different from their own attitude or orientation toward life. In Japanese the word "individualism" is "*kojin shugi*," the *shugi* portion of the phrase meaning a "philosophy" or a consciously adopted attitude rather than simply a way of looking at the world which is basically cultural and unconscious.

Part of the point of this paper is to deny that individualism is really a conscious way of responding to the environment, but rather cultural and unconscious. But if the Japanese or other Asian sees it as a "philosophy," it may indicate that they see it as a break from what would be the "normal" manner of thought, that is, their own, and therefore, in some way opposed or at least in contrast to their own view of reality, as they see it.

As a matter of fact, however, there is no real opposite to the term "individualism" in English, nor is there one in Japanese. If not acting as an individual means to act as part of a group, would we then call group-centered people "socialists?" That, of course is a term with an entirely different meaning, and even a negative valence in the United States, having subversive overtones. It is primarily used to designate a political philosophy and does not describe a personal view of the psychological environment. The word "individualism" has few political connotations, though it may indeed be part of what Americans see as democratic and even capitalistic.

Westerners put a very high value on unique accomplishments by the individual, and are constantly telling their children not to be afraid to be different. Being different has such a high value placed upon it in the West, and especially in America, that in many areas, especially in the arts, people seem to strive simply to be "different," intrinsic value often lost in the process. Many exhibits at a museum of modern art have apparently required little ability in the use of material and pay little attention to the traditional idea of beauty as being pleasing to the eye. People not tuned in to modern art will simply admire the gall of the artist in doing the work and that of the exhibitor in showing it to what he may perceive as a gullible public. But in modern art, as in no other genre, there is a reverence for the individual, and for the ability to see reality from an entirely different perspective.

To see the extent to which being different is valued one need no more than look at the media, at television, at, for example, Sesame Street, a program that has become the symbol

of basic preschool education, which is constantly urging the children to be proud of themselves because they are different from everyone else in the world, they are not ordinary, run-of-the-mill people. "Use your imagination, think up things nobody else does, that's good," it says. This is so basic to the American way of thinking that few would even recognize it as "characteristic," that is to say, "different." Most would, in fact consider this "natural," and consider people who do not think this way as having a basic defect in character. The glorification of the individual is not considered a "trait" in America, or in the Occident as a whole, and therefore Westerners are mystified by some of the actions of the Japanese, for example, which are the subject of complaint and even derision such as staying after hours at the company because everyone else does, sightseeing in large, guided groups, etc.

Americans hate to stand in line, but when they are forced to, they make a very unkempt queue. The space between people will vary greatly and the lateral width of the line will be two or three times what the same line would be in, for example, Japan. But the individual rights to a particular spot in the line are not ignored as can be tested by simply trying to break into a line at some point where it seems unfilled. Westerners, especially Americans, hate being thought of as part of a group. Japanese tourists are often laughed at by Westerners for always being in a group, and following the group leader who may use a flag for identification, just as if it was a small army on parade. The average Westerner, though he may indeed join a group tour, is loathe to be thought a part of a planned tour in which personal plans or desires may be suppressed.

Personal advancement, seen as a legitimate and normal, even laudable tendency in the West, is often looked upon with suspicion in the East. In America, if a worker in a factory thought of something that he was sure would make a lot of money for the company, he would bring it to the attention of the highest executive he could find, unless it was something patentable, in which case he would keep the whole thing secret until he had rights to the idea in his own name. If he succeeded in patenting the idea, or of convincing the president of the company of the worth of his idea, and the results were good, he would expect to be rewarded with higher salary, and perhaps a promotion. His co-workers would look with admiration and envy and would be encouraged by his success to find their own way of getting ahead.

In Japan, the same idea would have a different fate. Its originator would first gather his peers around him to get their opinions and acceptance of the idea, then they would take it to the immediate superior in the chain of command. When the idea became a success, the originator may receive a citation, but little more, much less the rights to any patent. He would, however, have achieved a harmony with his fellow workers. If he had acted as his American counterpart, he would be ostracized, which would be for him extremely painful, even to the point of despair. The Japanese saying, "*mura hachi bu*," literally, "eight-tenths of the village," is a reference to how an individual who tries something different will be treated by the community. Another saying, "*deru kugi wa utareru*," meaning that "the nail that sticks out gets hammered," also refers to the dangers of doing something that makes one stand out in society.

As much as the American would look upon such actions by Japanese as strange, self-defeating and resulting from oppression by a group consciousness, the Japanese would see the actions of the American counterpart as crass selfishness, a source of disharmony and destructive to the social fabric. It is this dichotomy in values which divides the Oriental

and Occidental, and is, to a great extent, the source of the myth of the inscrutable Oriental and the feeling that "ne'er the twain shall meet."

II. God or Gods

Individualism has its start in the idea that God is transcendent. That is to say that man is not God but separate from him. Naturalist religions, which include almost all recognizable religions until those of Sumer around the third millennium B.C. saw God as immanent, all around them and, as a consequence, considered the king or queen as the most important manifestation of god, the people partaking of this relationship as well. In Egypt, the Pharaoh was God, and the same holds true down as far as the later Roman Empire where the Caesars were proclaimed gods as soon as they died, though Augustus couldn't wait for this and had himself proclaimed so earlier. But when God was no longer found in the world around us, that is, when He became transcendent, the people were separate from the deity.

A corollary of God being transcendent is that He be singular. For a God Who creates everything except Self, plurality is a contradiction, and anyone who would think of God as transcendent would perforce be a monotheist. Monotheism, in other words, is responsible for the development of a people with a particularly self-centered, "individual" point of view. The Westerner who is heir to the Judaeo-Christian ethic, as well as the Moslem, are monotheistic. They trace their idea of God back to the Jews, who knew that "their" God, Yaweh, was the only God and all the others fake. The Moslem fiercely proclaims that "there is no God but Allah" and the Christian, while stating that God is a trinity, shows the force of his faith in ignoring reason to affirm that God is only one.

Where did this idea of a single God first arise? Where and when did the Jews get it? How did it happen that one small tribe in the Mid-East desert happen to develop this singular idea?

The Hebrews were certainly not the first tribe to arrive in the Near East, and their own scriptures indicate this, tracing their heritage to Abraham who is said to have left Ur sometime around the beginning of the second millennium before the Christian era. Of course the Bible describes the faith in a single God as full-blown from the very beginning, since, by the time the events are written down they are part of the religious faith of the people and could not have thought to have ever been otherwise.

There are several theories put forth as to how the Hebrews came by their monotheism. Sigmund Freud proposes a curious one which dovetails very nicely with his theories concerning the unconscious, however difficult they may be to reconcile historically. According to Freud, Moses was a lieutenant of Amenhotep IV, or Ikhnaton as he called himself. Ikhnaton had tried to change the religion of Egypt from polytheism to one that had a single god, Aton, the sun. This worship of a single deity lasted, however, only as long as Ikhnaton was alive. At his death the Amonite priesthood rallied the nation in a return to the worship of the former gods. Moses, dispossessed by this return to the former religion, gathered the people who were to become the Jews about him and left Egypt with them. During the time they spent in the desert, in very Freudian Oedipal fashion, the Jews murdered Moses as a father figure and were led to the promised land by his successors.

Another theory uses the Bible accounts rather more literally and sees Moses, who has fled Egypt after murdering an Egyptian, feeding the sheep of Jethro, his father-in-law in the territory of Sinai belonging to the Kenite clan. It is there he sees the burning bush and gets instruction from Yaweh, who dwells in the area around Mt. Sinai. As the gods of those days were territorial in the sense that they held sway within the limits of the power of the clan who worshipped them, Yaweh must have been the God of the Kenites. The actions of Jethro in offering sacrifices to Yaweh, etc. are not fully understandable unless Jethro is a priest of Yaweh, and Yaweh the God of the Kenites.

Of course, this is not yet monotheism in the strict sense. Most tribes of the period had their own tutelary god, but did not by this fact deny the existence or relative power of the gods of other tribes. It would thus still be a unique action of the Jews to reach the idea of strict monotheism to the exclusion of all other deities. Strictly speaking, the Hebrews themselves did not directly put forth this exclusiveness from the beginning, continually referring to the gods of other tribes without denying their existence. Also, early on in the Bible, God is clearly portrayed as anthropomorphic. He speaks and talks and walks. He is not a solar deity such as Aton or Marduk. Perhaps he has gained ascendancy over the other gods of the Jewish pantheon through the efforts of Moses and continued to develop until, after the return from the Babylonian Exile some six hundred years later, Yaweh had become the omnipotent Lord of all the earth in comparison with whom all the gods of the surrounding nations were but idols.

In the commandments said to have been given to Moses, God insists that the Jews shall have no other god before Him. That is not to say there is no other, but that He alone is the God of the Jews. Of even more significance, however, is the commandment not to have any graven images of Him. This, perhaps more than any other command, helped the idea of a single monolithic deity develop. While God is quite anthropomorphic as portrayed in the Bible, even to having a definite personality, jealous, sometimes unpredictable, definitely strict and serious, and very partial in His judgments, the prohibition against portraying Him in any form, and not even pronouncing His name, which can only be presumed to have been "Yaweh," eventually led to the total extraction of God from nature and the world.

The religion of the other peoples of the Near East in those days was what John Wilson⁽¹⁾ called the "nature-culture" type. He states that in the writings of Egypt the elements of the universe were continuous. That is to say that everything in the universe was consubstantial or, as Aquinas might say, "immanent." God or gods are part of a homogenous cosmos. The gods of Egypt are definitely portrayed as part of nature, in fact the original gods of the Egyptians are indeed animals, crocodiles, bulls, birds of various species, etc. definitely putting them within the realm of nature. The gods of the other cultures of the Near East were of similar type. Many of the religions had the Earth Mother as a center piece, and the other gods had authority or were changed with the operation of various natural phenomena. The Greek pantheon is of the same type as well, the ascendancy of Zeus only of a relative type, his primacy being maintained with the typical sky-god weapon, the thunderbolt. Indeed, Greek mythology has the first gods being born of the Earth Mother and therefore definitely a part of the whole scheme of nature.

In opposition to this, the Hebrews developed an image of God as Creator which was far and away beyond what other creating gods did. The Hebrew God stood totally outside nature

and chaos and all else. He had no part in what He created except as an observer and controller. There is a discontinuity between God and the world. He interferes with nature, and controls it, but is not part of it. The nature He creates is sullied and perverted by man's cupidity and perversion, and therefore becomes evil, but the Creator remains above it all. He does lose patience and decide to destroy it all, much as other gods do in Sumerian and Greek mythology. But not finally. He sees the world as a mess, but something that might be able to be saved, perhaps, and chooses a particular people, the "Chosen" to bring this world back to its primordial happy state. As a corollary, all other gods are mere idols and all religions that do not worship Him are false. And as a further corollary, the intolerance and rejection of all other religions are a logical consequence. Fanaticism and religious wars throughout history have been waged by the monotheistic religions far more often and with greater carnage than by any other type of religion, and the religious wars prevalent today continue to bear this out. The Roman empire tolerated many religions, those from Egypt, mystery religions (including Christianity) from the East, as well as its own pantheon. In fact, the Greek and Roman pantheons had developed from the political absorption of many local tribes whose gods and goddesses were added to the pantheon of the conquerors. This practice was only discontinued when Christianity achieved its status as the religion of the empire, and all other religions, gods and goddesses repressed.

In monotheism there is also the phenomenon called revelation. This is not to say that in other religions there are no revelations, no prophecies, no visions. But in monotheism, the revelations concern the secrets of salvation, the moral path necessary for one to achieve the final reward of the Deity, all of which is designated "God's Will." Revelation as generally thought of does not refer to secrets or prophecies applicable in a particular situation, but to an overall communication to man so that he can know the proper way to live. This, of course, results in a holy book which may be the Torah, the Bible or the Koran. There are sacred writings in other religions, but none which take up the central position of these three.

III. Monotheism and Individual Salvation

Faced with an individual God, a God with a personality very similar to Big Brother of the modern Orwellian myth Who is in total and everlasting control over a person's being, a true believer today would find he has no place of refuge. Perhaps the relegation of religion to a "category" having a particular time and place for its activity is the way modern man protects himself from God. The tradition inherited by the monotheist includes a totally sullied nature, self and the resulting mortality, sickness, accidents, death, and all the Pandora-box mess. There is no good in it, and therefore, there must be a way out, else why the existence of religion = mythology?

The God Christians perceive as a "personal" God, talks individually to them and indeed is patterned after man, himself. The Christian or Jew or Moslem perceives Him as speaking personally to them as individuals and each receiving direction in his or her own way. Their salvation in no way depends on anyone but themselves alone. They must tune in to God and follow the communications they each receive individually. This is the message of Christianity and Judaism and Islam. That there is no sin except in the individual's heart, intention,

thought. This is opposed to the Oriental feeling that salvation is a social thing, epitomized by the founder of Buddhism who refused to accept his Buddhahood until all humans have achieved release from the continual round of reincarnation and that sin is the result of social disharmony. In fact, Oriental sin does not exist until it becomes social. Hate, distrust, lust, etc. are not sinful until carried into action. The word "tsumi" in Japanese, which is used by most Christian sects there to translate the word "sin," is really equivalent to the word "crime" which indicates the condition of having been caught at doing something wrong.

In spite of the basic Christian doctrine of "do unto others..." etc. the Christian faith, along with Judaism and Islam is a very personal thing, resulting in personal salvation or damnation, there being no social aspect to the final disposal of any Christian soul. Salvation for the Christian must mean a conscious awareness of salvation, not the envelopment into the infinite or the unity with the universal being of the Buddhist or Hindu. It would not do for the Christian, Jew or Moslem to be absorbed into the totality of the universe, since his religion has always been a personal contract between God and himself, not in any way an attempt to escape from the endless rounds of reincarnation of Buddhism. Even if life is cruel to the Christian or Jew, they foresee a happiness in the next world which is basically *personally* rewarding.

Beyond this, there is even a certain gloating of the "saved" over the fate of the rest of the human race. It would seem that Judeo-Christians, while not claiming to be able to get God to give them immediate rewards while alive, are assured of being among those favorites of God, and seem to look around them with a bittersweet smile as they think how all the smug people around them are going to be sorry when it hits the fan, so to speak. It would even seem that the main source of happiness after the Second Coming is the power given to the "just" to rule the earth.

In animistic and nature religions the respect for ancestors plays a very important role. In many cases, the act of ancestor worship is the main means by which the spirit of those ancestors continues. The social aspect of these religions is very strong. In early Judaism, the only salvation promised to Abraham, for example, is offspring numbered as the stars in the sky. The idea of life after death without the body was very late in Judaism and was not even absorbed by Christianity until well after the first century, as indicated by the epistles attributed to Paul in which he repeatedly insists on the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. (Thessalonians 4; 13, Corinthians 15; 35) The fears of the faithful about what will happen to the faithful who have died before what was to have been an early coming of Christ are quieted. The answer that "...they are as asleep," indicates the lingering idea that the body and soul are inseparable and will rise as a single entity, as opposed to the idea of an independent existence of the soul which later became the standard in Christian thinking. The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead has become somewhat of an embarrassment for Christianity in this scientific age, but the repeated insistence upon it in the New Testament generally makes it impossible for most Christian sects to reject it. (There are records of debates during the late middle ages about who would get which part of whose body if there were several bodies resurrected which had shared organic parts.)

IV. Individualism as a Cultural Value

Even if adherents to a monotheistic religion find themselves seeing the world from a very individualistic viewpoint, does this view of the world give individualism a high rank on the scale of cultural values? And does the culture continue to value this viewpoint even after it has rejected the more concrete parts of the religion or mythology?

The answer to both questions is a definitive "yes." In one sense, valuing a particular view of the world is not like having a choice of windows from which to look out, and choosing one. The view any person has of what is perceived of as reality is not reflected upon, it is unconscious, much like the glasses someone wears. In one sense it would be silly for someone to say he values a particular prescription for glasses. He hardly ever reflects on the fact that he is indeed seeing through a pair of glasses, but he knows that a certain prescription allows him to see well and though he may have a choice of changing the prescription, the resulting glasses would hardly satisfy him. While there is a possibility of viewing reality in different ways, this is indeed the core of culture, we do not reflect upon it consciously, and even if we do, we cannot really reject our view of reality for another, since it is, in effect, the only prescription we have for seeing it.

The problem as to whether cultural values are maintained after their religious, mythological, theological or any other bases have been generally denied or brought into doubt, is largely a matter of cultural common sense. Unless there is a reason to reject certain values, the simple loss of force of the reasons for maintaining those values does not affect the values themselves to any great extent, although there will be a diminishing in the vehemence of the effort to protect these values in society as a whole, except among those who will feel threatened by what may seem an attack on those values. Among this group which will, of course, be labeled conservative or even reactionary, the vehemence will, conversely, increase. The values concerning family life, marriage, divorce, sex, etc. have not really been denied in America as much as seen as less cogent. The ideals, however, seem to remain in place. It is therefore not so important that a girl be a virgin when she is married, but the ideal remains, and even for those who are vociferously in favor of abortion would not think of it as a good, but rather a necessary evil to be avoided if possible.

There cannot be a real interchange of cultural values, that is to say, something becoming good which was bad, or bad which was good, without the interference of another cultural force contradictory to the former value. There were considerable changes in values in South America when the Spaniards invaded and physically destroyed the culture of the Incas. The descendants of the Incas, however, still have not yet been converted entirely to the Spanish form of the Christian ethic, and while they have certainly lost many of the values which were important in their religion up to the time of the appearance of the Spanish conquerors, the fact that even today the descendants of the Aztecs, Mayas and Incas of Mexico, Central and South America maintain many of their old customs within their own group after more than 400 years, maintaining meanwhile an outward obedience to Catholicism, is indicative of the inertia of cultural values.

V. *Individual Consciousness*

As we have said, the Western view of reality places a very high value on the individual. While the awareness of being an individual is hardly limited to the West and the human being everywhere defines himself in terms of individual consciousness, feeling that humanity is the only living thing actually able to reflect on his or her individual existence, the ego consciousness is at the center of the Western cultural canon. To quote from Erich Neumann's seminal work, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*; "The multiplicity of forms and phenomena in which the infinite diversity of the human psyche is expressed, the wealth of cultures, values, patterns of behavior, and world views produced by the vitality of man's psychic structure, must make any attempt at a general orientation seem, at the outset, a perilous venture. Yet such an attempt has to be made, even with the knowledge that our specifically Western orientation is only one among many. The evolution of consciousness as a form of creative evolution of ego consciousness is the peculiar achievement of Western man. Creative evolution of ego consciousness means that, through a continuous process stretching over thousands of years, the conscious system has absorbed more and more unconscious contents and progressively extended its frontiers. Although from antiquity right down to recent times we see a new and differently patterned canon of culture continually superseding the previous one, the West has nevertheless succeeded in achieving an historical and cultural continuity in which each canon gradually came to be integrated. The structure of modern consciousness rests on this integration, and at each period of its development the ego has to absorb essential portions of the cultural past transmitted to it by the canon of values embodied in its own culture and system of education.

"The creative character of consciousness is a central feature of the cultural canon of the West. In Western culture, and partly also in the Far East, we can follow the continuous, though often fitful, development of consciousness over the last ten thousand years. Here alone has the canon of stadial development, collectively embodied in mythological projections, become a model for the development of the individual human being; here alone have the creative beginnings of individuality been taken over by the collective and held up as the ideal of all individual development. (underline mine). Wherever this type of creative ego consciousness has developed or is still developing, the archetypal stages of conscious evolution are in force. In stationary cultures, or in primitive societies where the original features of human culture are still preserved, the earliest stages of man's psychology predominate to such a degree that individual and creative traits are not assimilated by the collective. Indeed, creative individuals possessed of a stronger consciousness are even branded by the collective as antisocial.....

"So far as Western man is concerned, the assimilative vitality of his ego consciousness is more or less assured. The progress of science and the increasingly obvious threat to humanity from unconscious forces impel his consciousness, from within and without, to continual self-analysis and expansion. The individual is the bearer of this creative activity of the mind and therefore remains the decisive factor in all future Western developments."⁽²⁾ Here it is obvious that Neuman sees the development of consciousness as the source of creative personality and seems to say that the development of this individualistic creativity is a measure of the advancement of the society. He states further that mythology parallels the develop-

ment within the culture of the development of individual consciousness. Within the underlined portion above we find the statement that only in the West has creative individuality been held up as an ideal to the whole culture. Since Neuman sees this creative individual consciousness as a sort of final goal of society or culture, there is a very strong temptation to feel that he is in fact making a value judgment concerning the advancement of culture using the values of his own culture as a criterion.

Neuman would certainly have scorned anyone who so judged him or his work, but it can not be denied that though he humbly states that "...our specifically Western orientation is only one among many," in the next breath he states that, "The evolution of consciousness as a form of creative evolution is the peculiar achievement of Western Man." This latter certainly indicates a bias, the touchstone of which is the word "creative," and the crystallization of which is "individual consciousness."

There is no quarrel with Neuman concerning the fact that Western man has indeed collectively held up the ideal of individuality as the highest value, and that it is reflected in his mythology. There is, however, possibility for argument as to whether the "stadial development, collectively embodied in mythological projections become a *model* for the development of the individual human being,..." if the word "model" here is taken to mean "ideal." If, however, the word "model" is used to mean that the mythology of a culture, as an expression of the basic thrust of a culture indicates the path that the culture will develop, then the result will be less chauvinistic in tone.

VI. *Individuality and the Hero Myth*

When Neuman speaks of "mythology," he is more often than not referring to heroic mythology in which the hero is battling with one form or another of dragon which for Neuman is a symbol of the Great Mother keeping the "hero-individual" from attaining "victory-individual consciousness." And Neuman sees the struggle of the hero to escape the Great Mother as symbolic of the struggle that every individual goes through in achieving individual consciousness. But before the hero is a symbol of the individual, he is a symbol of the collective ideal of the culture. Simply stated, the hero in any culture epitomizes the ideals of that culture, and in Western cultures, the hero is, if nothing else, an individual.

If we made a list of the characteristics of the heroes of Western mythology from Heracles to Rambo, there would be very few that would be found in all of them. Most are strong, at least strong-willed, many are clever, many are honest and defenders of the right and of the weak, but there are some who are anti-social and selfish. Heracles himself was anything but a likable guy, managing to murder his children and even a friend that had done him a favor, and even his own twin.

It is true that most heroes function in support of the social ideals of the culture, but for that very reason, when a hero acts in a way that is not in accord with the professed ethic of the culture, it is more likely that the ideal is in opposition to the ethical standard. Ethics do reflect the cultural values of a culture, but they are conscious value judgments of what is thought to be "moral," and the result of logical reasoning. Unfortunately, it is often found that reason leads more often to a conclusion desired at the outset than to an impartial

result. Both Jung and Freud would agree that unconscious human reactions are more indicative of internal states than conscious and studied reactions. The ethical standards applied to many movie heroes would put them outside the social pale rather than allow them to be admired. The Godfather glorified members of the Mafia, seeing them virtuous in their loyalty to the boss, and brave in overcoming adversity in the shape of their enemies. For a society that professes to see murder as the largest crime, and the only one currently punished by the death penalty, the overlooking of it indicates that the cultural values in America do not weigh so heavily against murder as to make it unacceptable, which it is to a far greater degree in other cultures without the "Christian" background of values present in America.

Many other Western heroes perform actions well outside the professed ethic of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic cultures. In the last few decades the taboo of extra-marital sex has lost so much force that even Superman engaged in it in one of his later movies. It has still not been erased from the ethical standards to the point that public figures are not blamed and ostracized for it, but sexual activity has never really been a big taboo for the Western hero. While the Greek heroes were not limited by the monotheistic morality of the Jews, some of the stories of heroes, (and heroines) from the Old Testament provide just as much spicy reading, Samson, David, Solomon and Judith, to name a few. Later on in Medieval literature, such stories as *Morte d'Arthur*, *Tristram and Iseult*, and other "courtly" literature continue this tradition.

The fact of the matter is that heroes are symbols of the unconscious standards of the culture rather than that of its ethics. In America this includes famous frontier heroes who were bigger and stronger than anyone else and could "lick their weight in wildcats," including myths such as Paul Bunyon, and real people who became myths such as Daniel Boone and Jim Bowie, not to mention some that made myths of themselves from what is historically rather suspicious material such as "Buffalo" Bill Cody and Wyatt Earp. The typical American hero myth sees as the ideal someone who can go into the wild and fend for himself and even thrive without the help of others. Most recognize that this typically anti-social type of hero, perhaps epitomized by the actor John Wayne who was given a medal by the U.S. Government before he died for what can only be interpreted as his portraying of the American-style hero so well on the screen, would be very hard to live with on a personal basis, no matter how much he is admired as a "man."

This self-sufficient hero is not the sole property of America, of course. It was received originally from Europe, and reinforced through the rigors of settling the frontier lands. There are many heroes who show this same type of self-sufficiency in the literature of Europe such as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Swiss Family Robinson*, etc. The popularity of this self-sufficient, even anti-social hero even extends to the hero who is not particularly strong physically, nor even mentally, would help explain the popularity of one of the first of the modern novels, *Don Quixote*. In the novel, Don Quixote himself is imbued with romantic, courtly values, and sees himself as the ultimate hero, fighting against all odds, against stultifying values of society for an ideal. The deeper message intended by the imprisoned Cervantes, a struggle against the Inquisition and the suppression of freedom of thought by the Church, has lost its urgency today, but the chord he struck certainly matched Western society's ideal of an individual fighting with evil, which in his case included even Quixote's own relatives.

Eccentricity, another word for "individuality" which is "different," is part and parcel

of the hero in the West. The hero digresses from the beaten path, has the courage to strike out on his own, and this makes him a hero. In a sense, his rejection of the normal routes of society is what makes him a hero. Neuman points out that the drive toward freedom from the Great (Terrible) Mother is something that the hero attempts which is "out of the ordinary way," the symbolic "safe" way would never enable him to escape into full consciousness.

The problem then has come into focus. In the West individualism is the ideal. At the same time, this individualism is destructive of, or at least unconnected to social harmony. This culturally based but socially destructive ideal derives from an exclusive monotheistic mythology which, while no longer being consciously the main source or framework of the Western Culture, except in some Islamic areas, is the unconscious source of value (moral) judgment in the West today. Western man sees both personal and cultural development in terms of the individual, and without individualism there would be no salvation for the individual or society.

What replaces individualism in the East?

VII. The Individual in the Orient

The eternal return of nature is foremost in the naturalistic religions and mythology that predominate even today in the Orient. The daily, seasonal and yearly cycles; "the rhythm of organic birth, death, and new birth, represent a miracle of continuous arising that is fundamental to the nature of the universe."³ The constant repetition of this cycle is proof of the constant repetition of all of the modes of the living, and of the nonliving as well. Time itself is repeated and will continue forever. "There is therefore nothing to be gained, either for the universe or for man, through individual originality and effort.... The first duty of the individual is simply to play his given role — as do the sun and moon, the various animal and plant species, the waters, the rocks, and the stars — without resistance, without fault; and then, if possible, so to order his mind as to identify its consciousness with the inhabiting principle of the whole."

This orientation toward the cycles in nature, the repetition of life and death and life again, produced a myriad of mythologies which saw causal connections in the events of the ever-returning cycles. As death follows life, so life follows death, and each is a cause of the other. The tremendously gory animal and human sacrifices of the ancient agricultural societies are due to a belief in the efficacy of death as the seed of life. In India even into the middle of the 19th century particularly bloody human sacrifice has been documented. The modern Western point of view would be to perceive these sacrifices as a form of murder, but to many, if not most of the victims, the sacrifice was voluntary, almost to be wished for since through it the victim discards his "mortal coil" and attains a new one.

For the West, the possibility of such an egoless return to a state of soul antecedent to the birth of individuality passed away long ago. Even before the advent of the Jews and Genesis, the Kings of Sumer departed from the ritual of the god-kings that had continued for centuries, and became the supervisor of the human slaves of god. The king was no longer God, but his servant. Man was made not to *be* God, but to know, honor and serve Him. In the course of the following centuries the sense of separation led to a counter-yearning for

return, which became the basis for the theme of Genesis and many other Western myths, a return to the presence and vision of the forfeited god. "Hence the new mythology brought forth, in due time, a development away from the earlier static view of returning cycles. A progressive, temporally oriented mythology arose, of a creation, once and for all, at the beginning of time, a subsequent fall, and a work of restoration, still in progress. The world no longer was to be known as a mere showing in time of the paradigms of eternity, but as a field of unprecedented cosmic conflict between two powers, one light and one dark."⁽⁴⁾

In India, the yogis of the Jain sect sought to eliminate all vestiges of the individual from man. The person was likened to a pond of water in which the water represented all the personal feelings and experiences received up to the point when the person enters upon the correct road. From that point on all intake of feeling and experience is to be limited until the "life force" of the individual is dried away, and the person becomes a non-person, absorbed into the total reality.

In Buddhism, the elimination of self, equivalent to selfishness, is a necessary step on the road to nirvana. Nirvana is sometimes described by Western students of philosophy as a realization of the meaning of "being." Thomas of Aquinas is sometimes said to have experienced this realization which made him consider all he had written as "grass," that is, as worthless. Nirvana for the Buddhist is hardly intellectual, however. It is more an experience of the infinity of the cosmos, and his own insignificance within it. As the Jain yogi was supposed to reach a point where he would die when he was ready, that is to say, when he reached a realization that life and death made no difference, the Buddhist would rejoice in joining with the infinite and the consequent loss of individual consciousness.

In the Orient, the discovery of the infinite, if not always a specific god immanent in the world in which people lived, resulted in an awareness of the insignificance of man and his endeavors and, especially for the Jains and the Buddhists, the world became a place of sorrow. "All life is sorrowful," may be the first message of Buddhism and its basic tenet is that repeated incarnations is the curse of man, a fate literally much worse than death. The Jains saw all life as sacred and went to great lengths to avoid harming it, even to the point of not eating anything killed, including fruit which must drop of its own accord to be eaten. As a corollary of this, the Jain saw their own life as not their own, but part of the great infinity.

The Hindus see the constant reincarnation as a curse also, and salvation as the release from constant recycling. And while the Hindus have an exciting pantheon of gods with Vishnu, Indra, and especially Siva alternatively terrible and protective, trivial and profound, erotic and chaste (though eroticism is major expression of Hindu theology), the final cycle of the universe is found in the total destruction of all and then recreation by Siva.

In all these Eastern religions, individuality must finally be suppressed in the infinite or whole. The fatalistic outlook prevalent throughout the East gives no final value to the individual being, and rejects any idea of the eternal worth of an individual, the cornerstone of Western religions.

VIII. *Heroes East and West*

If the hero is the expression of the struggle to achieve individual consciousness, as stated previously, then should we expect that the mythologies of the Orient would have no heroes? The case is patently not so, as heroes appear in every kind of mythology, not only the monotheistic ones. Naturalistic religions are replete with them, the mythologies of the native American people have many heroes and are basically dependent upon heroes in telling how the gods treat with humans. Ahaiyuta of the Zuni tribe who restores fertility to his people, Lodge-Boy and Thrown-Away of the Crow are examples. In Japanese Shinto myth we have the shady brother of Ameterasu, Susa-no-O, descending into the Izumo district and saving a girl who is to be sacrificed to a snake-like monster almost exactly in the manner of Perseus saving Andromeda in the Greek myth.

If the struggle of the hero against the Great Mother symbolizes the human struggle for individual consciousness, as Neuman states, then the Great Mother in Her two manifestations, the kind and nurturing Mother and the terrible and destructive Mother, first nurtures the child She has born until it has reached a point in development to where it must try to strike out on its own, at which point the nurturing Mother becomes the jealous, restraining Mother who struggles to return the child to the womb for rebirth. In the Orient as well as the Occident, the hero eventually dies and descends into the nether regions. The hero is essentially a tragic being doomed to death, as is the rest of humanity whom he represents. At the death of the hero, the East and West part ways. In the West the hero has literally distinguished himself from all other beings by his heroics, and to whatever world he is relegated, Hell, Sheol, the Elysian Fields or elsewhere, he remains himself. This, of course fits in with the religious thought in the West where there is one birth, one life, one death, one personality thus created and one determination of fate.

"Mohammed in heaven spoke to his brave and loyal friends, just as Dante (spoke) both to the damned and to the saved in the course of his adventure (in the Divine Comedy). And in the Classical Greek and Roman visits to the underworld as well; both Ulysses and Aeneas talked with their departed friends. Whereas in the Orient there is no such continuity of the personality. The focus of concern is not the individual, but the monad, the reincarnating *jiva*, to which no individuality whatsoever intrinsically pertains, but which passes on, like a ship through waves, from one personality to the next: now a mealworm, now a god, demon, king, or tailor.

"Hence we find...that in the Oriental hells and heavens, though multitudes of beings are depicted in their agonies and joy, none retains the traits of his earthly personality. Some can remember having once been elsewhere and know what the deed was through which the present punishment was incurred; nevertheless, in general, all are steeped and lost in their present state. Just as any dog is absorbed in the state of being precisely whatever dog it happens to be, fascinated by the details of its present life — and as we ourselves are in general spellbound by our present personal existences — so are the beings in the Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist other worlds. They are unable to remember any former state, any costume worn in a previous existence, but identify themselves exclusively with that which they are now....

"Whereas the typical Occidental hero is a personality, and therefore necessarily tragic,

doomed to be implicated seriously in the agony and mystery of temporality, the Oriental hero is the monad: in essence without character but an image of eternity, untouched by, or else casting off successfully, the delusory involvements of the mortal sphere. And just as in the West the orientation to personality is reflected in the concept and experience even of God as a personality, so in the Orient, in perfect contrast, the overpowering sense of an absolutely impersonal law suffusing and harmonizing all things reduces to a mere blot the accident of an individual life."⁽⁵⁾ That is to say, the Oriental hero seems to have finally lost the last great battle with the Terrible Mother and returned again to primordial unconsciousness.

IX. Social Consciousness Versus Individualism in Japan

Two major sources of cultural values are easily recognized in Japan, Buddhism and Shintoism. Shinto is a religion of nature, polytheistic and treating the phenomena of nature as the manifestations of the gods who have authority over them. The goddess of the sun, Ameterasu, is important, but there are gods of the hearth and wind and tree, etc. The agricultural basis of the livelihood of the Japanese means that there are many elements in common with other agricultural mythologies with rituals centered on the calendar, the winter solstice (New Year's), planting, harvesting, etc. Japan today, with all its industry, is perhaps one of the few nations in the world that celebrates the spring and autumn equinoxes as national holidays. There are sufficient traces from prehistoric Japan to ascertain that human sacrifices to assure fertility for the coming year as well as sacrificial burial of attendants with the king were practiced in the past. This trace of human sacrifice in an agricultural context is representative of the reincarnating man as fertilizing agent for the coming seasons.

The other source of culture values is Buddhism, arriving in Japan in the late seventh century. Buddhism in India had a basic pessimistic view of the world and saw salvation only as absorption into the infinite beyond all categories. In China this gloomy view extended only as far as the society of man, so that the Chinese found absorption into nature as their Buddhistic salvation. The Japanese Buddhist, however, found disillusion only in his own individual being and found salvation in submersion into the society into which he was born.

Buddhism was adapted to the Japanese society especially during the Kamakura Period when the Buddhist sects of Jodo, Shinshu, Zen and Nichiren were founded. Especially significant among these is the founder of Shinshu, Shinran, who said that the necessary means to salvation were found within the life of the ordinary believer rather than any special way of life or strict self control, etc. In this way, the attitude of the Japanese was more and more bent toward orientation to the group.

Added to this mythological background, Japanese became, as it were, a laboratory experiment in culturalization in the early 17th century with a policy of strictly enforced isolation, only relaxed with great trauma in the latter half of the 19th century. This resulted in an inbred society and culture receiving no outside elements to alleviate the extreme prejudices and tendencies of the society by bringing it into comparison with elements in other parts of the world. At the rude awakening from this isolation in the 1860's, the Japanese

society found itself in a total disassociation from the world and not really able to understand it, especially since the opening of Japan was forced not by other Asian nations, but by the West; America, Britain and Russia.

X. Conclusion: The Twain Have Still Not Met

The Westerner who does not recognize that the Oriental's values are not individual but group-centered, will never understand why, for example, the ordinary Japanese citizen will be against the importation of rice from the U.S. since the non-rice growing Japanese would save a considerable amount of money. In fact, in every aspect of the trade problems that the West is having with Japan, the basic problem is that Westerners do not perceive that the Japanese citizen sees him- or herself in relation to the whole society. The individual Japanese does not consider the personal benefits in trade situations, but feels that what is best for the society as a whole, is good for them as a person. Or more, the Japanese hardly perceives the personal benefits at all because he is so oriented toward the group.

Westerners sometimes express the idea that the Japanese consumer is wreathing under a burden of profit-taking businessmen and that the Japanese worker is being exploited by capitalist bosses, and is straining to get out from under this system of slavery. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Japanese consumer seldom even thinks of him- or herself as a "consumer." The Japanese who works for a company thinks of him- or herself does not even think of the company as "belonging" to someone who is gaining from his or her employment. The company, in fact, may not really belong to any "one" at all. Most Japanese companies are owned by such a conglomerate of businesses, banks and brokerage houses that the executives of that particular company give a kind of "personality" to the company only accidentally and not by reason of ownership. This is sometimes hard for the Westerner to understand since the corporate "person" has a much more concrete existence for them. There does arise from this the system of *keiretsu*, thought of as "pernicious" in Western business circles, in which any particular company will do business only with a company related to it financially, and sometimes will even create a company with which to do business when entering a new business sector.

This type of activity, along with the tendency of the Japanese to prefer buying Japanese products or doing business with other Japanese, is called xenophobic and destructive of international relationships. The problem is simply, stated in the extreme, that the Japanese do not reflect upon themselves as individuals. The Westerner may wonder at the lack of crime, at the few laborers laid off in times of economic stress, at the world's best rate of distribution of national wealth. But these are all part of a Japanese awareness of their relationship to a whole, a whole nation, or perhaps, more exactly, a whole race. Westerners will find that understanding the Japanese is impossible until they understand that the Japanese consider themselves as part of a larger whole, a whole which includes all their fellow Japanese. Westerners are not treating with individual Japanese when they negotiate, but with "all" the Japanese, the only individual they know.

If I end this paper with that sentence, I run the risk of sounding critical of the Japanese to the Westerner. That is not the case. There is simply a problem of where values lie, and

the Westerners are unable to conceive of an "individual" who would not seek the greatest good for "self." And they look down on any culture or race that made the individual subservient to the group.

I hope I have made the reader aware that "individualism" is not something that every human naturally arrives at as he develops, but only one of several possible outlooks on life.

* * *

Footnotes

- (1) Neuman, Erich: *The Origins and History of Consciousness*: Bollingen Series XLII, Princeton University Press, 1973, pp.
- (2) Campbell, Joseph; *The Masks of God, Oriental Mythology*; N.Y.; Viking Penguin, Inc., 1962, p. 3.
- (3) Campbell, p. 62.
- (4) Campbell, p. 242-3.
- (5) Campbell, p. 242-3.

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