ACHILLES, THE ULTIMATE HERO

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Preface

The ancient Greeks are looked upon by most Europeans as their cultural ancestors, the originators of the democratic and philosophical traditions of the West. There is thus a certain amount of admiration for anything of ancient Greece which creates a lapse in the critical capacity when reading the most famous and earliest of Greek writings, the Iliad. While democratic and philosophical ideas can often be traced back to the ancient Greeks, most of the values of Western society are Judeo-Christian which are often quite opposed to the happenings found in most Greek mythology, including the Iliad. This is not to speak merely of sexual *mores,* which the modern Westerner might find reprehensible as well as titillating, but also of such things as the qualities that go into the ideal man or woman, what things or conditions are valued so highly as to be worth risking one's life to obtain or attain.

In this sense, the Greek heroes often present to the modern man anomalies which bring into conflict the admiration for the Greeks and their philosophy, and the abhorrence for the actions of these supposedly idealized figures. In many ways Achilles in the Iliad displays characteristics which would hardly fit into the heroic mold today. For that very reason, however, examining this Greek hero, we will be able to discern some differences in cultural values between the ancient Greeks and Western man today. Beyond this, using the examinations into the human psyche of Erich Neumann based on the psychology of Carl Jung, we may perhaps achieve an understanding of the hero's meaning to society which is not limited to particular eras or cultures.

The Hero's Journey[1]

In two works, *The History of Consciousness*[2] and *The Great Mother,*[3] Erich Neumann examines the interplay between the ego and its source by which the human psyche reaches consciousness. He uses the term "Great Mother" to indicate the source of all life, material and psychological, and the manner in which this source acts upon the individual human psyche, who is the hero. The essence of the actions of this hero is the struggle to achieve freedom from the all-enveloping unconsciousness which is the Mother. The Great Mother has two aspects: one which is benevolent and life-giving, caring for all the life she has given; the other terrible and jealous, keeping all life to herself and returning it to her womb. These two aspects of the Great Mother as symbolized in mythological terms as the Earth Goddess, etc. are found throughout the world from time immemorial and are consider an "archetype" by Neumann, who uses this term, made famous by Jung, to indicate a psychological image or idea not necessarily transmitted from culture to culture, but found in all cultures, being a result of the very nature of humanity.

The giving of life is, of course, the role of the Mother, and all life proceeds from Her as trees and grass grow from the earth. But all life must eventually return to Her as well, as it

dies. From the vast undifferentiated pool of energy which is the life of the Mother, an individual consciouness separates and achieves freedom, to act apart from the Mother only, in the end to be swallowed up by the great maw of the womb of the Mother from which it is born. Symbolically, the unconscious from which the ego separates itself is the female, and the ego, opposing the female, is then male. The Great Mother's role in the eternal cycle of birth and death has been long been symbolized by the *uroboros*(fig.1) with the snake swallowing its own tail, the mouth of the snake being the vulva while the tail represents the phallus. Thus the Great Mother represents both the female and male principles, with the male being subsumed by the female to achieve a sort of symbolic apotheosis. In another sense, the snake, swallowing its tail symbolizes both the sexual act by which life is created and the return to the source, or womb, in death.

Thus, the epitomal hero's journey is the journey of everyman, one that must be undertaken for a human being to achieve humanity, or consciousness of his individuality. To achieve this freedom=consciousness, the hero must, on one hand amputate that part common to both himself and the Mother, cut the imbilical cord, so to speak. Cutting the bond that keeps the ego tied to the safe precincts of the Mother is a kind of death that must be undergone by the hero-ego to achieve life-consciousness-independence. Thus the ego must fight both the Mother and subdue self simultaneously and be prepared to undergo death to achieve the goal. Every hero in every story, from the earliest mythology to the latest Superman epic partakes of and symbolizes this original Hero's Journey.

Heroism

Webster gives three definitions for *Hero*: 1. a mythological or legendary figure endowed with great strength, courage, or ability, favored by the gods and often believed to be of divine or partly divine descent; 2. a man of courage and nobility famed for his military achievements; an illustrious warrior; 3. the principal male character in a drama, novel, story, or narrative poem.[4] The first definition is certainly based on the perception of the Greek heroes today as seen in the Iliad; the second a more modern type of hero, basically the same but leaving out overt mythological elements; and the third the literary use of the word, again echoing the Greek myths and tragedies. For the Greeks, however, being a hero was more than simply doing great deeds, and, in fact the deeds need not have been great at all to be heroic for the Greeks.

fig, 1. Uroboros
(Bibliotque Nationale · Paris)

The heroic scale for the Greeks demanded simply that the doer be born a hero. The Greeks saw the world as gradually degenerating from its original pristine glory, the age called Golden, to Silver, Bronze and then Iron, during which the oral traditions and legends of the previous ages such as the Iliad and Odyssey were written down. The Greeks also interpolated another age between the Silver and Bronze as the Age when these events took place, the Age of Heroes. It was during these times that the heroes, made of mightier stuff than the people who related and read their stories, were born and did their heroic deeds.

As in Webster's first definition, Greek heroes were usually of divine descent and in constant contact with the gods and goddesses who play major roles in the Iliad. In the Iliad there is constant intervention by the gods and goddesses and all the major events in the plot are thought up and guided by the Olympian dieties. Achilles, the son of the goddes Thetis, is constantly being advised by her, as is Odysseus by Athena in the Odyssey. In fact, the amount of participation in the story by gods and goddesses seems to some to detract from the human role, that the heroes would have been more heroic had they acted without the divine help. As Peter V. Jones says in his introduction to the Iliad, "It is tempting to say that Athene's continuing presence diminishes the stature of Odysseus. But it is important to emphasize that in Homer the gods help only those who are worthy of it. Athene's patronage does not diminsh but rather enhances Oddysseus' status as a hero."[5] In any case, to the Greeks, the heroes were companions to, and often related to the Olympians. One of the most famous Greek heroes, Heracles, son of Zeus and the mortal Alcmena, actually becomes a god himself, being raised to Olympian heaven by Zeus from his death pyre and there marrying Hebe, the daughter of Hera, ever-jealous wife of Zeus, who had been his bane throughout life.[6]

Aside from this divine relationship, the differences in characteristics between the Greek heroes and those of today can be traced to a difference in values and especially in current views of what is morally correct and what is of the highest value. The Hero's journey, however it may change from age to age, remains a personal struggle in which the power to be overcome is constantly present, as is the need of being prepared to sacrifice oneself in order to reach the prize. It may be that the worth of the prize is valued differently in different times, and the prize sought by Achilles in the Iliad, symbolized by the girl Briseis or the death of Hector, may seem of little consequence in another age, and yet the heroism of Achilles may be demonstrated by his total commitment to the achieving the prize, his willingness to give up all else is an expression of the archetypical hero.

The Anger of Achilles

The Iliad is a poem about the anger of Achilles, as stated in its opening line. "Sing, goddess, of the anger of Achilles, son of Peleus, the accursed anger which brought uncounted anguish on the Achaians and hurled down to Hades many mighty souls of heroes,..." Anger which brings such devastation about must have a commensurate cause, and the cause must then indicate how highly the thing that caused the anger is valued. In the case of Achilles' anger, Agamemnon is miffed at having to give back a woman taken in battle, and very high-handedly replaces her with a woman taken by Achilles. Achilles is so angered at this that he withdraws from the fighting. The evaluation of "heroism" by the Greeks comes forward here for the first

time. In the Iliad there is no match for Achilles. When on the battlefield no one can stand in his way, nor will any spear thrown by an enemy find its mark. Nothing is so clear in the way the Iliad is written as the invincibility of Achilles. Present day television dramas which include gun fighting repeat this refrain *ad nauseum* that the stray bullet or happenchance missle never strikes the hero. As the modern reader goes through the Iliad, in fact, he tends to hope that one of the "invincible" heroes gets it. But it never happens, with exception of the death of Patroclus, and that is only because of the original *deus ex machina* in which Apollo has to interfere by knocking away the armor of Patroclus. From the evidence it is obvious that the Iliad has been constructed or written down by someone who is acting at the behest of people who favor the mainland Greeks but is sympathetic to the Trojans. Achilles, though he may be a character that no one but a mother could sympathize with, is the only person who can save the Greeks. In fact, outside the scope of the Iliad, after Achilles is killed, the Greeks must resort to the subterfuge of conceding defeat to gain entrance to Troy. Other heroes in the Iliad are ranked accordingly. Hector can beat anyone but Achilles. When any "hero" is on the field, he is supreme, and spears, swords and missiles of various sorts never hit him, or glance off his armor. On the other hand, when Hector is facing Achilles, Hector is so aware of his own inability to win that he runs away. Running around the city of Troy three times, his is finally brought within killing range of Achilles' spear by the trickery of Athena. Ranking is so absolute that the outcome of any match is a foregone conclusion. Suspense is not the method by which the Iliad heightens its dramatic effect. As in a repeatedly seen Shakespearean tragedy, the doom to come is known beforehand by audience and participants alike and the mourning begins even the before fact.

Having this girl, Briseis, taken from him is a fatal blow to the honor of Achilles, and it is only the restraint of the goddess Athena that keeps him from drawing his sword and killing Agamemnon right then and there.

The problem, however, is not the worth of the girl, Briseis, but having something that he has a right to by honor taken away. Honor, symbolized by booty or loot won in battle, is the significant thing to Achilles. To deny his right to such booty is to deny him honor rightly deserved. And there is no other goal in living than to be honored among men. As Achilles bemoans, "Mother, since it was you that bore me, if only to a life doomed to shortness, surely honor should have been granted to me by Olympian Zeus, the high-thunderer. But now he has shown me not even the slightest honor. The son of Atreus, wide ruling Agamemnon, has dishonored me.....may (he) come to recognise his folly, in paying no honour to the best of the Achaians."[7] Achilles thus complains to Thetis that Zeus is being unfair to him, fated from birth to have only a short life, now without honor. Achilles knows already that his life will be short, but being the offspring of a goddess, he is saying that he deserves more than what he is getting, that is to say, to be honored by society is due him and he has been refused the possibility to achieve it.

Heroism and Pride

Heroism is, after all, a personal thing, as stated by Neumann, not a social phenomenon. A person must achieve consciousness as an individual, not as a collective being. The hero must,

preforce, be an individual and, in spite of the Judeo-Christian urgings to the contrary, be self-centered. It is, perhaps, the fact that Judeo-Christian ethics have not yet gained prevalence that heroes of the Iliad are so fanatically proud. And it could possibly be stated that the sin of pride, which is so throughly condemned in Chiristianity, is the very characteristic by which the hero is able to conquer, and thus being a quality both denied and demanded by the Christian Church. The pride of the hero is in contrast to the humility of the martyr. Though in the Church the martyr is often called a hero, the basic difference is in the activity or passivity. The martyr "accepts" the punishment dealt out, while the hero fights against it. The passive reaction of the martyr means that there is a feminine character attached to it, and whether the actual number of martyrs canonized by the Catholic Church includes more females than males or the reverse, the concept of martyrdom itself is feminine.

The hero's basic drive is to achieve the total self-awareness, the consciousness explained by Neumann. In the final analysis then, his every effort must be centered on his own creation. Existentialists such as Kierkegaard, Marcel and others, including Nietzche, concur in this manner of formation of the human consciousness. While many have been condemned for seeing this "self-creation" of the human psyche as what traditionalists call "soul," when the problem is approached from the discipline of psychology, as with Jung and Neumann, it does indeed seem the most logical and meaningful process.

If the centripetal drive of the hero results in an overweaning pride, how can this be harmonized with the demand for humility in our heroes? The demand itself derives, perhaps, from the democratic feeling of the need to be thought equal, at least in worth. A typical American excuse for a child starting a fight is, "He thinks he's better than me." Another factor may be the religious insistence on humility as signifying spiritual worth. Finally, no matter how superior the hero, socially he soon learns that insisting on his superiority is definitely a detriment. The real hero, of course, *knows* he's better, and is so sure of it that it may not be necessary to prove it. Still, awareness of being "better" or "the best" is part and parcel of being the hero. In the Judeo-Christian ethic, "Pride" is the source of all sin, which it well may be as "sin" is defined by Western ethics,[8] but it might also be the natural result of a successful hero's journey.

Achilles sees the taking away of his justly deserved booty as total denial of any honor to him. He specifically declares himself to be the best of the Achaians, and is in despair because Agamemnon does not so honor him. His anger is a direct consequence of others' ignorance of his true superiority, and his self esteem is much more blatant than would be accepted in today's hero narrations. Achilles hardly plays the hero of today, humble and self-demeaning. In today's literature, Achilles' boasting would be the province of the eventual loser, boasts are used in fiction today to make sweeter the eventual revenge of the quiet protagonist. This particular method of arousing the anti-villain feelings in the audience has not yet attained ascendency in the Iliad where Achilles' feelings seem to be only natural. It can only be assumed that, for the Greeks of the time, "honor" is more important that anything else, including wealth and even life.

After Achilles has become angry and withdrawn from the fighting, the Trojans begin to win in battle, as Achilles' mother has foreseen, a result which will bring great honor to her son since everyone will know his worth. Agamemnon begins to regret his action and sends a deputation to Achilles to offer not only the return of the girl Briseis, but give him many other

treasures and even his own daughter in marriage if Achilles will return to the fighting. It is in Achilles' furious refusal that we see certainly that the driving force is not greed for material wealth, but personal honor. In his refusal he states that he has been told by his mother that he has two possible fates. If he stays and fights at Troy, he will never go home, but his glory will live forever: if he goes home he will have no glory but a long life. Now Agamemnon has made it impossible for a hero to gain glory in fighting so he might as well go home. Agamemnon has cheated him, and now with all these gifts being offered is simply trying to cheat him again. After communicating Achilles' refusal to Agamemnon, Diomedes comments, "Most glorious... Agamemonon,...you should never have made entreaty to the excellent son of Peleus and offered him countless gifts. He is a proud man at any time - and now you have sent him yet further into his pride." It is, of course, the pride of Achilles which has set in motion the events that lead to the final tragedy. Recalling Neumann's definition of the hero, we see that the ultimate good being striven for is personal "honor," and individual consciousness which, stated in another way, means awareness of self, or pride. While pride is more than simple awareness, heightened self-awareness is valued more highly than self, in other words, self-esteem. While the expression of self-esteem must be hidden behind a mask of humility in society, the Iliad expresses the pride of the greatest of all the Achaians as almost a natural adjunct to his heroism.

The symbolic "Terrible Mother" which attempts to keep the hero from escaping to an individual, free existence, is the whole mass of the "Achaians," represented by Agamemnon, from whom Achilles is striving to be distinguished through his deeds and the honor due them. Having the symbol of that honor taken away causes a catastrophically strong reaction against the Terrible Mother, Agamemnon. The mother of Achilles, Thetis, foresees this reaction, even promotes it, so that the final outcome will bring even more glory to her son. This interference of Thetis is the only part that does not dovetail well with Neumann's symbolic struggle for individual consciousness, since the hero would of necessity be forced to make his fight alone in order that the final outcome would be his own individuality. I can only suggest that the Iliad is the story of men and not the gods and goddesses, and the actions within it of the divinities are expressions of what may be called the Olympian explanation of events. A man who is hit by a bolt of lightning may be presumed to have been very unlucky, but by far the greater tendency, even today, is to seek a reason behind this apparently totally accidental phenomenon. A scientific explanation for the lightning bolt that kills a golfer on the golf course is, on the surface, convincing for people today, though it may not be fully understood. But the background noise contains a lot of guesses as to the "reason" such an "accident" happened to him at this particular time. It is still difficult even today for people not to attribute a reasonable *fate* to such occurrences, and so among the ancient Greeks. The thunderbolt was explained by an angry Zeus, and the unfortunate man who had been killed thereby was blamed forevermore because he had been judged by the god Zeus.

Throughout the Iliad, when something happens that seems unusual, a god or goddess is suspected of having been the cause, as when the spear of Diomedes glances off Hector's helmet and Diomedes shouts, "Dog, this time....Phoibus Appolo protected you, doubtless you pray to him when you set out for the thud of spears."[9]

Achilles and Patroclus

The one unselfish aspect of Achilles is his love for Patroclus who is the only person in the Iliad to whom the adjective "kind" is attached. It is also this quality which is the "beginning of his doom."[10] There is often a discussion whether the relationship between Achilles Patroclus was homosexual or not. Given the well-known homosexual practices of the ancient Greeks it would hardly seem impossible. If the narration intends to transmit the fact that there really was such a relationship between the two, the consternation would be more in the mind of the modern reader than in the Greek audience of 700 B.C. The Judeo-Christian ethic or its conscious rejection would perhaps give rise to the suspicion that Achiles was very *macho* and was really fearful of his own effeminacy, and the *real* reason for his anger was that he feared being perceived as not prizing the sexual attention of women as symbolized by the beautiful Briseis. Or the modern between-the-lines analytic reader might see the guilt of Achilles in the background. The problems with these theories are that they presume the Iliad is a carefully written history of a war and that the actions and reactions of the main characters are all objective truth. This is patently false, or else the reporter had a special envoy on Olympia relating all that went on among the gods as well. Considering the internal problems with the historicity of the Iliad,[11] or imagining that the characters appearing therein can be psychoanalyzed any more than any other character in a Grecian mythological story, is to overreach Dr. Freud himself, who saw the characters of Greek mythology as archetypes of common human neuroses, not as historical cases on which to base his analysis. Certain actions today considered homosexual arise in other parts of Greek mythology. There is the episode of Achilles hiding himself among the daughters of King Lycomedes on the island of Skyros to which some might attach a suspicion of effeminency, and there is the story of Heracles trading clothes with Queen Omphale and being mistaken for a woman by the god Pan. There is little likelihood that Greeks saw either of these heroes as transvestites, though there may by some significance in relation to matriarchal practices of the previous ages. From Sumerian times it had been the custom for men-priests to wear the clothes of women, the priestesses of the goddess, if they were to offer sacrifices to Her.[12]

An argument against the homosexual pairing of Achilles and Patroclus may be found in the fact that in the classical ages the homosexuality of the Greeks was a type of pederasty in which the older men would seek partners among boys who were just reaching puberty, 12 to 15 years of age. There was a kind of attachment in which the older partner gave presents to and supported the younger partner through the period until the boy himself had become a man and began to seek his own younger partner.[13] This "younger-older" relationship does not seem evident in the case of Achilles and Patroclus and, in any case, Patroclus was supposed to be the older cousin of Achilles, which would mean that Achilles, as the younger partner, would be the pampered one, hardly a condition the Greeks would ascribe to the hero of an epic poem, a poem that was universally popular among them. In fact, Achilles relationships with women are described in the same way a hero's sexual prowess is always described. After the delegation from Agamemnon leaves, Achilles and Patroclus go to sleep in the same hut, each with his own woman; Achilles with the beautiful Diomede, Phorbas' daughter from Lesbos, and Patroclus with Iphis who Achilles had given him when he took Skyros. The statement is not one by which the narrator is defending the heterosexuality of the pair, but a typical description of two

heroes going to bed. That women would be beside them is natural to the heroic epic, whatever it bespeaks of the status of women in Greek society.

Throughout mythology, however, there are pairs of males, not necessarily homosexual partners, one of whom dies and whose death has a crucial effect on the narration. A striking resemblance to Achilles and Patroclus is Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the Sumerian myth of Gilgamesh. Enkidu must die as retribution for the insult he and Gilgamesh have committed against Ishtar. The death of Enkidu devastates Gilgamesh and sends him on his quest for eternal life.[14] A further resemblance between the two stories is Gilgamesh's mother Ninsun and Achilles' mother Thetis, both goddesses who give advice to their sons. It would seem that the story of Achilles, central to the Iliad, has borrowed greatly from that of Gilgamesh. In the case of Gilgamesh, Ishtar had asked him to marry her and he had refused, referring to the terrible ways she had caused the destruction of her previous mates. This angers Ishtar and eventually ends in the death of Enkidu. Robert Graves comments that Homer did borrow this part of the plot of the Iliad from the story of Gilgamesh.[15] He presumes that the story of Gilgamesh was known, at least in Ionia where the internal evidence of the Iliad makes it most likely to have been composed in the eighth century B.C., which is not impossible if there was some communication perhaps with the Hittites in Anatolia.[16] Graves also adheres to the theory that Homer was a single author and "wrote" the Iliad at the behest of "overlords" who were apparently attached to the Greek mainland.[17] On the other hand, Graves sees the relationship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu as that between a king-consort of the priestess to the goddess, the king to be finally sacrificed to the goddess, and the substitute, or *tanist* as Graves calls him,[18] is treated as a king for a while, but in the end dies in his stead.[19] Rather than state the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, homosexual or not, as simply a borrowing from Gilgamesh, it would seem to be a mythological motif signifying the fate to which the goddess, the Terrible Mother, is leading the two, and the death of the companion is the dues that the Terrible Mother exacts for the resistence of the hero to Her efforts to restrain and retain him. And so in the Iliad as well.

Denoument

The Achaians are being pushed back to their ships and are afraid the the Trojans will reach them and set them afire when Patroclus rushes to Achilles and begs him to at least allow him to wear Achilles' armor into battle which would strike fear among the Trojans. It is only to this dearest companion that Achilles relents and agrees. But he warns Patroclus to return after he has driven the Trojans away from the ships and not to try to drive them back to the city.

This half-way measure is catastrophic in its effect. If Achilles had swallowed his pride and gone himself, the Achaians would have been saved, and the dissension among them assuaged. If he had refused to do even that, the Achaians would have been defeated perhaps, but the war would be over. The temporizing action has drastic results, as it must in any heroic tale where by definition only superlatives are valid. In *The Masks of God, Creative Mythology,* Joseph Campbell speaks of Parzival the young knight seeking the holy grail. He has been trained in all the knightly etiquette and he was told not to be inquisitive about other people unless they offered to tell about themselves. He visits the castle of King Anfortas who welcomes him and

treats him well, but seems to be in great pain. Parzival refrains from asking about the pain, however, remembering his lessons. After staying one night he is suddenly treated coldly and sent on his way. Years and many experiences later he returns, and this time he asks about the knight's pain, at which his human pity is rewarded with the grail and the position as its guardian. The problem had been that before, the one thing that had been needed he chose not to do because of what he had been told, not what he felt.[20]

The plot of the Iliad has Achilles temporize and allow Patroclus to wear his armor. Achilles see a ship set afire and urges Patroclus into battle. Patroclus saves the ships but forgets the warning of Achilles and chases the Trojans across the plain toward the city. As he is threatening the city Apollo knocks away his armor and Patroclus is wounded by one Trojan and then killed with a spear thrust by Hector.

Patroclus dies wearing the armor of Achilles, in his stead, so to speak, and his death throws Achilles into the depths of despair. Now Achilles' anger is turned toward a new target, Hector. Forgotten is the dishonor paid by Agamemnon and now heroic hate for the killer of Patroclus overwhelms Achilles.

Again we find the hero striving towards a goal, but this time it is not the passive one of *not* fighting, but the very active one of making the Trojans and Hector pay for the death of Patroclus with their lives. The fury of Achilles is especially illuminated by the oath to sacrifice twelve Trojan lives at the funeral of Patroclus. The capture of the twelve young Trojans for the sacrifice takes place immediately before he denies another Trojan, Lykaon, the boon of being taken alive and later traded for much wealth. Achilles' slaughter of the Trojans is terrible indeed. Named victims number 23, and the unnamed, except by plural impersonal pronouns, amount to many more, including the twelve set aside for later sacrifice. There is little comment made in the Iliad concerning this sacrifice, other than that the oath has been made, the Trojans taken, and the oath fulfilled; and the indication of the disproportionate worth placed on the life of Patroclus, however, becomes even more pronounced through it.

In the end, Achilles kills Hector, and then does his utmost to dishonor him. He drags the body about the area behind his chariot, and round and round Patroclus' body, trying to wreak the ultimate vengeance upon Hector. Hector has plead for the return of his body to his parents even as dying, but Achilles' hate allows not even the last wish of the dying Hector to be granted.

Finally, even the gods and goddesses are aghast at this total inhumanity of Achilles and conspire to allow Priam to retrieve the body of his son for burial. It requires a warning from Zeus to have Achilles even agree to giving the body back, but at last he does and the Iliad ends with the funeral of Hector.

The Moral Hero

Achilles represents the totally emancipated consciousness which is labelled "Hero" in human society. Shorn of all its decorations, heroism is the performance of outstanding actions in the face of mortal danger which benefit a certain group, and the performance of which causes the group to designate the performer "*hero.*" The danger must be present for the group to award the title of "hero," but there must also be some outstanding ability present not found

among ordinary men. In the Iliad, Achilles is not a hero because of his personality, he is not particularly liked by anyone except Patroclus and his own mother. In today's cinema, the hero is often misuunderstood or even ridiculed and spurned, but the audience is always aware of his real worth. For the American he may be strong and silent, even morose, but independent in the extreme. The John-Wayne-type hero would be impossible to live with, but is nevertheless the ideal movie hero because of his independence and self-sufficient strength.

And the hero is moral. The cinematic hero is almost always in tune with the morals of society. There is an occasional tragic hero of the Godfather type, but even then, the hero murders people or has them murdered to right past wrongs, not out of simple greed. In *The Godfather*, the wholesale slaughter of the young Godfather's enemies all seemed justified to correct injustices, such as the death of the young "Don's" wife when he had just been married in Sicily while hiding out from the American police for murdering a policeman in New York. That murder was of course justified because the policeman was a "bad" cop who had been instrumental in the attempt on the older Godfather's life. The hero must be proclaimed such by a group from which he is seen to stand out, and so the values of that group must be the values of the hero. That is why the hero must be moral, but in a relative sense. The real values of the society cannot be transgressed, but apparent moral values are often ignored. The changing values of society can be noted in the storyline that has Superman stay overnight with Lois Lane in *Superman II*, something that would have been unthinkable a few years earlier.

Anti-hero types, however, do appear more often in French cinema. Alain-Delon-style gangsters usually end up losing out in the end after struggling very hard to achive an ideal goal through somewhat shady means. In the final analysis, however, it is not the morality but the struggle that designates the hero. Nor is it the personality. It is not really necessary for the hero to be liked, but he must work for a goal with which the related group is in sympathy, whatever his own personal motives may be. In fact, Achilles and other Greek heroes fight not for their social group, but for the honor given them by the group. Thus it is that while the hero may be instrumental in bringing about the common good, the hero's own motives may not be so much interest in the common good as in his own personal good.

The Ultimate Tragedy

Heroism is not really the main topic of the Iliad, nor war, but human suffering and death. "The young men, for all their godlike greatness, die; the old men, the women and children suffer and grieve: the gods, exempt from pain, look on."[21] And Achilles, the ultimate hero, dies also, not within the confines of the plot of the Iliad, but his death is a foregone conclusion with the spot and perpetrator already designated by the dying Hector.[22] So this hero's journey ends the way all such journeys do, with a final defeat. The Great Mother can be resisted but never finally overcome. Achilles returns to her womb, a shade in the underworld. He is there when Odysseus visits the house of Hades as related in the Odyssey. The bravado and overbearing manner are gone from our hero who, when Odysseus mentions how he was honored by all when alive and even now has power among the dead, bemoans,"...do not you make light of death, illustrious Odysseus...I would rather work the soil as a serf on hire to some landless impoverished peasant than be King of all these lifeless dead."[23] The ultimate tragedy of the

ultimate hero is that the great honor he had sought and achieved while alive could not balance the one thing he can have no more, life itself. While alive the honor that he sought was dearer to him than life, but now his values have been reversed.

The tragedy of the Iliad is then the heroism that humanity displays in its ever renewed struggle to distinguish itself must, in the end, fail, as the gods and goddesses, exempt from pain, struggle and death, look on.

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Notes:

1. I borrow this heading from a book about Joseph Campbell, Edited by Phil Cousineau. Campbell was responsible for my interest and many of my ideas concerning mythology. The Hero's Journey: Cousineau, Phil ed.; Harper Collins; San Francisco; 1991.
2. Neumann, Erich; The Origins and History of Consciousness: Bollingen Series XLII, Princeton U. Press; 1973.
3. Neuman, Erich: The Great Mother: Princeton U. Press; Princeton, New Jersey: 1963.
4. Webster's Third New International Dictionary: G.&.C.Merriam Co.; Springfield, Mass.; 1971: p. 1060.
5. Homer: The Oddyssey; trans. E.V. Rieu: Penguin Books; London, 1991: p. xi.
6. It is thought however that the apotheosis of Heracles was a later interpolation due to his very popularity, much as Sherlock Holmes had to be returned to life by Conan Doyle after being killed by Professor Moriarity because his fans would not allow him to die.
7. Homer: The Iliad: trans. Martin Hammond: Penguin Books; London; 1987: p. 60.
8. The word "sin" is much more difficult to define in Japanese, since it only occurs in the concrete, not in the intention, as in Chirisitianity, Judaism and Islam. The difference in morals between Japan and the West has been described as one between a culture of "guilt" for the West, a guilt deriving from one's own knowledge of one's own sins; and a culture of "shame" for Japan, a shame which derives from other people's knowledge of one's failings.
9. Iliad, p. 203.
10. Iliad, p. 208.
11. Iliad, introduction; pp. 9-10.
12. Graves, Robert: The Greek Myths: Penguin Books, Middlesex; 1955: vol. 2, p. 167.
13. Dynes, W. and Johansson, W.; Greece, Ancient," in Encyclopedia of Homosexuality, edited by W.Dyses. Garland Publishing, Inc.: Nee York; 1990: pp. 491ff.
14. Guerin, Thomas: Heroes in Mythology, I. Gilgamesh: Sapporo University Women's Junior College Division Bulletin, No. 13; 1989: p. 7ff
15. Graves; vol. II p. 312.
16. In the Odyssey, when Odysseus is telling Achilles of the bravery of his son, Neoptolemus, he mentions how, "...the heroic Eurypylus, son of Telephus fell to his sword, and how many of his Hittite men-at-arams were slaughtered at his side..." Homer: The oddyssey: Translated by E.V.Rieu: Penguin Books; London; 1946: p. 174. The word "keteioi" is here translated "Hittite" by Rieu and is one of the few references to some kind of communication between the Greeks of Ionia and the Hittites of Anatolia that can be found in either Greek or Hittite writings.
17. Graves; vol. II p. 310ff.
18. Graves: vol. II p. 88 and elsewhere.
19. Graves, Robert:
20. Campbell, Joseph; The Masks of God, Creative Mythology; Penguin Books; Middlesex: 1965; p.

448ff.

21. Hammond, Martin: Introduction to the Iliad: p. 16.
22. "But take care now, or I may bring the gods' anger on you, on that day when for all your bravery Paris and Phoibos Apollo will destroy you at the Skaian gates." Iliad; p. 368.
23. The Odyssey: p. 173.

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