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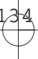
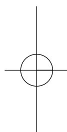
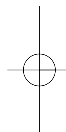
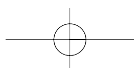

RELIGION, SOVEREIGNTY, NATURAL RIGHTS, AND THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

It is commonly held that the idea of natural rights originated with the ancient Greeks, and was given full form by more modern philosophers such as John Locke, who believed that natural rights were apprehensible primarily to reason. The problem with this broad position is threefold: first, it is predicated on the presumption that the idea of rights is modern, biologically speaking (only twenty three hundred years separates us from the Greeks, and three hundred from the English liberals); second, it makes it appear that reason and right are integrally, even causally, linked; finally, it legitimizes debate about just what rights might be, even in their most fundamental essence. In consequence, the most cherished presumptions of the West remain castles in the air, historically and philosophically speaking. This perceived weakness of foundation makes societies grounded on conceptions of natural right vulnerable to criticism and attack in the most dangerous of manners. Most of the bloodiest battles and moral catastrophes of the twentieth century were a consequence of disagreement between groups of people who had different rationally-derived notions of what exactly constituted an inalienable right ("from each according to his ability, to each according to his need"). If natural rights are anything at all, therefore, they better be something more than mere rational constructions. The adoption of a much broader evolutionary/historical perspective with regards to the development of human individuality and society allows for the generation of a deep solution to this problem—one dependent on a transformation of ontology, much as moral vision. Such a solution grounds the concept of sovereignty and natural right back into the increasingly implicit and profoundly religious soil from which it originally emerged, and provides a rock-solid foundation for explicit Western claims for the innate dignity of man.

The Constituent Elements of Experience

Imagine for a moment that the human environment is not merely what is objectively extant in a given situation, present or past, or even across the broad span of some evolutionarily archetypal Pleistocene

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BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 136

epoch (Cosmides & Tooby, 1987). Imagine, instead, something entirely different, paradigmatically different. Imagine that the human environment might be better considered "what is and has always been common to all domains of human experience, regardless of spatial locale or temporal frame." The environment, construed in such a manner, consists not of objects, but of phenomenological constants (although it still contains objects) (Peterson, 1999). These phenomenological constants constitute what does not have to be talked about when two or more people engage in a conversation—or even when one person attempts to understand himself.

All human beings are destined by the nature of their being, for example, to experience certain emotions: fear, anger, happiness, disgust, curiosity, surprise. The universality of these emotions makes them axiomatic: because they are experienced, they do not have to be explained. Their experience at a time and a place merely has to be stated, for mutual understanding to begin. A multiplicity of motivational states is constant, equally: lust, jealousy, envy, hunger, thirst, the wish for play, and the desire for power, to name a few. The raw fact of being is even more fundamentally axiomatic—but this being should not be confused with experience of the material world. The category of "material world" is too narrow and too precisely specified. The category of "material world" is a mere subset of the raw fact of being. The phenomenological world of being consists as much or more of environmental meaning, for example, as it does of environmental object.

Phenomenologically considered, all human beings have their existence in nature—but it is nature benevolent and nurturing and nature red in tooth and claw rather than nature as abstractly and objectively and distantly perceived. Thus construed, nature is the eternal susceptibility of the human organism to mortal vulnerability, physical limitation and psychological isolation, as well as the great realm of beauty and endless possibility that makes up the extended reaches of our being. This nature is paradoxical in meaning, intrinsically: simultaneously creative and destructive, as it offers both life and death; simultaneously immanent and transcendent (as what is nature can always be found at the extreme reaches of our conditional knowledge, no matter what that knowledge is of).

Phenomenologically considered, all human beings also have their existence in culture. We are social beings, axiomatically. Our being presupposes culture. Our period of dependence upon parental benev-

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 137

olence exceeds that of any other organism. The manner in which our nature is structured is inextricably associated with the process of enculturation that begins with our birth and that simultaneously stretches back into the dim reaches of prehistoric time. This culture, phenomenologically speaking, is not a *particular* culture, but the fact of culture itself. Traces of previous civilization, embedded in the here and now, shape our very consciousness, molding it, granting it linguistic ability, providing it with a plethora of preformed concepts, artifacts and objects. Traces of previous civilization also constrain our consciousness, tyrannizing it, corrupting it, and limiting it, as one shape is forced upon us, rather than the many other shapes we might take.

Finally, phenomenologically considered, all human beings are individual. We have a subjective domain of being, privately experienced. Its nature can only be communicated in part. Our pain is therefore frequently only our own, and so are our joys. Our births and deaths are individual births and deaths. Whatever creative realm we might inhabit exists at least in part uniquely within us. Furthermore, we are self-conscious, so our individuality is apparent to us—and the fact of that appearance colors our experience ineradicably. Individual being is our greatest gift and our most appalling curse. As a gift, self-consciousness is conceived of as the very image of God reflected within us. As a curse, self-consciousness is unbearable knowledge of our own finitude, inadequacy, and tendency towards wrongdoing—conceived of, equally, as never-ending labor unto death.

The world as experienced therefore manifests itself naturally to understanding, action and conception, in three categories: nature, culture, individual; unknown, known, knower. Each of these categories appears to consciousness as a paradoxical and ambivalent unity, positive and negative (Peterson, 1999). It is the continual apprehension of this complex paradox that accounts for the central existential problems that universally characterize human existence—that accounts for the nature of our postlapsarian selves. Every individual is faced with the vagaries of the natural world, and everything that remains mysterious, within that world. Every individual is faced, equally, with the vagaries of the social world, and its often arbitrary and unreasonable demands. Finally, each individual is faced with the fact of his capacity for transcendence, restricted terribly by the limits of mortal vulnerability. Regardless of where the individual is situated in time or in space—regardless of nature or culture—these

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 138

are his problems. His path of life is therefore necessarily characterized by comedy or tragedy, as he confronts the constituent elements of experience, as he solves or fails to solve the essential problems of life. It is for such reasons that the nature of human experience manifests itself to conscious apprehension as a story.

This is the world naturally apprehensible to a biological mind, an evolutionarily-constructed mind, the mind of a highly social creature, with a constant family structure: the primary or base-level category of mother, part of our ancient mammalian heritage, broadened with the help of our more powerful cortex to encapsulate the natural world itself; the primary category of father, broadened in the same manner to include the entire patriarchal social structure characteristic of our species; and the primary category of self, broadened to include the individual, as such, struggling endlessly with the primordial forces of nature and culture.

This is the world that makes up religious reality, as well—phenomenological description, eternal content, dramatic form: representation of *nature*, creative and destructive, the matrix from which all things emerge and to which all things eventually return; *culture*, tyrannical and protective, capable both of engendering a tremendous expansion of individual consciousness and power and of simultaneously subjecting everything natural and individual to a catastrophically procrustean limitation; *and the individual*, ennobled by the possession of private being and crushed by its terrible weight, torn by gratitude and resentment into motivation for ultimate good and unspeakable evil. This is by no means the same realm over which science spreads its unshakeable dominion.

Something is still missing, however, from this description, necessarily complete though it may appear. Three elements make a group—and the group is, in this case, the fourth element. The Totality of the constituent elements of experience—Nature, Culture, Individual; Mother, Father, Son—comprises a fourth element, the indescribable Absolute, out of which the separate elements emerge. This Totality is YHWH, the Old Testament Hebrew God, whose name cannot be uttered, who must not be represented, and for whom no representation is sufficient. This Totality is the Uncarved Block of the Taoists, the Mother of the ten thousand things, or the paradoxical initial union of Tiamat and Apsu, the primordial parents of the Mesopotamian elder Gods. Such concepts of the Divine all exist as finally inadequate representations of a primordial but undifferentiated

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 139

unity, an infinite plurality of potential (but no defined actuality), an eternal realm somehow predating, postdating and encapsulating being as experienced. This is the chaos, the *tehom*, the *tohu-bohu* out of which reality emerged, emerges and in the future will still emerge. In some sense, it is not a category of being at all—not even being itself—but the formless, out of which category and being themselves emerge. Despite this, its description (insufficient by definition) must be attempted, to render the religious story complete.

The Totality can be and has been commonly conceptualized as a winged serpent, the *Dragon of Chaos* (Peterson, 1999). It is a strange and monstrous concatenation of paradoxical features. It is earth and heaven, the source of matter and spirit (psyche). It partakes of the earth, and of matter, because it is a creature close to the ground, primordial, serpentine (see Ohman & Mineka, 2003). It partakes of spirit, associated with aerial being, because of its bird-like nature, its wings. It can shed its skin, and be reborn. It is in constant flux, characterized permanently by the capacity for transformation and rebirth, despite its eternality and agelessness. It is the primordial element.

How can such a representation, such a manifestation, be differentiated and understood? First, and most evident, is its absolute nature. It is a totality in time as well as space. Whatever it is, in itself, exists only in relationship to itself. It has no need of anything outside of it. It nourishes itself. There is nothing outside of it, by definition. Where it exists, there is no outside, and no inside, either. It is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. It is not something constructed, and then experienced—any more than the more comprehensible and differentiated elements of experience are constructed, and then experienced. Instead, it manifests itself directly to perception, in the guise of all things frightening, unexpected, and rife with potential. It is the anomaly out of which the differentiated world emerges. It is what is not expected, before it is understood. It is what has not yet been encountered and classified. It can be considered most productively in relationship to natural structure, and social structure, and the individual, as the ultimate source of those things. It is, finally, the chaos that is even more primordial than the simple unknown.

Religion as drama and literature portrays these domains of experience, differentiated and absolute, as characters, as eternal characters—as deities, really—granting them status not only as objects as modern people might conceive of objects but also as an admixture of objective

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 140

feature and motivational and emotional relevance. This means that everything contained within these domains has implication for action built into the nature of its being (and that the scientist arbitrarily although usefully eradicates this aspect of being from his purview when he reduces a phenomenon to its objective features). It is the characterological nature of the great domains of experience that make human experience a play, as conceived of by Shakespeare (1599/1952, p. 608)—a forum of action, and not a mere place of things. It is the world as dramatic play that is described by our great religious and literary stories: *All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts.*

Morality: Tradition and Transformation

If this is the world, then, how is it that people should act in it? How should the proper relationship between the individual and all the constituent elements of experience be conceptualized? What is the proper response of the individual, given that he is threatened by the natural world and the unknown on the left hand, and by social order and its tyranny on the right—but is also dependent on the natural world and chaos for all good things and all new information, and on the social order for a successful mode of being? How can such a route be properly negotiated? Is there anything constant and general that might be said in answer to such a question?

It is precisely the mythology of the hero, in its multiplicity of forms, which addresses this problem. Carl Jung, who provided what has perhaps been the most complete analysis of such mythology, believed that what the hero encountered was the unconscious itself (Jung, 1911/1967). Jung's "encounter with the unconscious," however, seems a specific and limited manifestation of a more general class of conceptions and behaviors (just as Freud's Oedipal drama was a specific and limited manifestation). What the hero actually encounters, at the most inclusive level of analysis, are the constituent elements of experience: unknown, known and knower; nature, culture and individual. What is unconscious is a subset of what is unknown, but the unknown exists independently of the merely unconscious (Peterson, 1999) (even though it may be met, first, by the unconscious). It is confrontation with the unknown, as such, that is

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 141

most simply and evidently heroic. Equally, however, although somewhat more subtly, the hero also restructures what is known, widening the purview of culture or challenging and reconceptualizing its most fundamental axioms. Finally, no hero remains unchanged, as a consequence of such activity. He necessarily meets himself as an individual, defined in contrast to what he confronts and restructures, broadened and extended as a consequence of the information so garnered and conceptualized.

The story of the hero is the most basic of plots, therefore, because it deals with the most basic of encounters. The plot is immediately understandable, at least in its more specific manifestations, to everyone capable of becoming captivated by a story. There are romantic variations, and adventure story variations. Sometimes the hero meets an unfortunate end, and fails. This is a tragic story. Sometimes he or she prevails. This is a comic story. The first two basic elements of the plot can be summarized in the following manner: (1) A current state of being prevails. This can be a psychological state, such as a personality. It can be the state of a family, or an extended social group—a town, a city, a country, the entire global community, even the eco-system itself. (1) The integrity of this state of being is threatened. Anything dangerous, unpredictable and unexpected—anything novel or anomalous—can serve as an appropriate threat. It might be a stranger—a person or group from another culture, an alien in a science-fiction thriller, a terrible monster that lives in the deep (dominated and oppressed, but nonetheless capable of reemerging), or an agent of pure horror. It might be an object that moves, of its own accord, or the improperly buried dead in the basement. It can be anything fear-inspiring, anything reptilian, anything that smothers, or entrances, or seduces. It can be a strange idea, just as easily—a new ideological or religious movement, a political revolution. It is anything that can change, portrayed in some metaphoric representation. It is, in the final analysis, chaos itself that threatens the stable state.

This means, in passing, that the *apocalypse is always happening*. Chaos is an eternal constituent element of experience. In consequence, the End of the World is always nigh. What is presumed now, what is thought now, what is valued now is not good enough for the next second. Induction is scandalously unreliable. It is in part for such reasons that apocalyptic images are interspersed throughout the New Testament (Matthew 24:15–21): *When therefore you shall see the abomination*

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 142

of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet . . . . standing in the holy place[1] *. . . then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains: and he that is on the housetop, let him not come down to take any thing out of his house . . . and woe to them that are with child and that give suck in those days . . . for there shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now. . . .* Change is necessary, because change is coming. Change means "let go of what you know," or perish. That is, of course, the apocalypse, and it is always upon us. Structure is eternally threatened. This is an existential problem. How can this be dealt with, when it is structure that provides necessary security?

The individual threatened by chaos can merely refuse to look, can step away, and avoid. Such refusal is as simple as "not doing." This is not active repression, full processing followed by effortful forgetting. Not doing, not attending, is instead the default position (Peterson, 1999)—a sin of omission, not commission. The brain circuits that mediate fear do not respond so well to omission and avoidance, however. They are hard-wired and single-minded, and they scan the environment for everything unknown and threatening (Gray & McNaughton, 2003). They facilitate alertness and preparation for action. Because their job is so important, they cannot be fooled. The un-act of avoiding, much like the act of running away, is definition as much as behavior. If it cannot even be looked at, if it must be made distant, then it must be more dangerous than everything else, previously encountered and mastered. To avoid, to run away, is therefore to label the threat unmanageable, *de facto*, and the self unworthy. Once a threat, minor in its first manifestation, has been amplified in importance by the act of avoidance, it becomes increasingly able to elicit outright panic. It is in this manner that small problems transform themselves into disasters.

Our perceptions fool us into thinking that everything is separate. Everything is connected, however, and one damned thing inevitably

[1] Daniel's "abomination of desolation" (Daniel 12:11) is a false idol. This means an inappropriate highest value ("from each according to his ability, to each according to his need . . ."). Such idols disintegrate suddenly, and leave chaos in their wake. Daniel famously interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, featuring a colossal metal statue, with feet of clay. A small stone "cut out without hands" strikes the statue, breaking it into pieces. In Matthew, Christ likens this to the destruction of the temple, construing this as a precursor both to Noah's flood and the consequent appearance of the Son of Man (the proper value)—to the elect.

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 143

leads to another. When anything is ignored or avoided, the facts of its myriad associations with the surrounding world starts to inexorably manifest themself. It is for such reasons that Mircea Eliade, the great historian of religions, can state (1978, pp. 62–63): "As has been well known since the compilations made by R. Andree, H. Usener, and J. G. Frazer, the deluge myth is almost universally disseminated; it is documented in all the continents (although very rarely in Africa) and on various cultural levels. A certain number of variants seem to be the result of dissemination, first from Mesopotamia and then from India. It is equally possible that one or several diluvial catastrophes gave rise to fabulous narratives. But it would be risky to explain so widespread a myth by phenomena of which no geological traces have been found. The majority of the flood myths seem in some sense to form part of the cosmic rhythm: the old world, peopled by a fallen humanity, is submerged under the waters, and some time later a new world emerges from the aquatic 'chaos.' In a large number of variants, the flood is the result of the sins (or ritual faults) of human beings: sometimes it results simply from the wish of a divine being to put an end to mankind . . . . the chief causes lie at once in the sins of men and the decrepitude of the world. By the mere fact that it exists—that is, that it lives and produces—the cosmos gradually deteriorates and ends by falling into decay. This is the reason why it has to be recreated. In other words, the flood realizes . . . the 'end of the world,' and the end of a sinful humanity in order to make a new creation possible." What is the connection between anomaly, neglect, avoidance and the flood? Eliade clarifies the literary or dramatic description of something inexorably associated with the second law of thermodynamics: Things fall apart. He does not end with that observation, however—and neither do the myths of destruction he is describing. Things fall apart, of their own accord, but the rate at which they do can be accelerated by willful blindness on the part of the individuals involved with those things. A culture still scandalized by the recent catastrophic flooding in New Orleans—caused as much by willful human blindness and corruption as by any "act of God"—might have renewed reason to understand a very old story.

The mythological hero does not ignore what is right in front of his face. But what is right in front of his face? The hero says, "The walls are in danger of being breached. Something is lurking outside. We must deal with it, and deal with it now." This of course makes

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 144

him very unpopular, particularly if he is the first to ring the warning bell. The hero states, "What we are all doing right now, thinking right now, presuming right now, is no longer working!"—and all the people who particularly benefit from what is being done right now find themselves outraged. It is for this reason that the redemptive hero is always contaminated with chaos. It is for this reason that the redemptive hero always stands for the unredeemed and oppressed. It is for this reason that people do not really like heroes, and why they do not necessarily appreciate wise and creative people. The hero says, "Excuse me, but the little box you live in is missing *these important things*, and if you do not pay attention, you are going to be visited soon by things you will not like." The people he addresses, good citizens, blinded by satisfaction and pride, think, "if that person would just shut up and go away, then there would be no reason to concern ourselves with such catastrophe"—and, in truth, there is no shortage of false prophets of doom. Such a response is therefore eminently understandable. However, the dragon of chaos is not so easily mocked.

All of the persons within the walls of the social castle (see Figure 1) are secure, and they all know what to do, as long as they remain there. Those walls narrow their existence, of course, but offer security and the ease of partial blindness. There is no outside, in the castle, only inside, and everyone knows exactly where the walls are. But the castle walls are always crumbling, and the outside is always trying to claw its way in. Outside—and *there is always an outside*—lies the dragon. Some great ancestral hero holed it up in its bottomless cave a thousand years ago, but it did not die. It cannot die, because there is always something that remains to be mastered, differentiated and understood. So it dug its way out, patiently, for all those centuries, popped its ugly beak up through the soil, and returned to threaten the castle. If the hero is helped to flourish, however—or even let well-enough alone—he will leave the protective walls that surround his community, confront the dragon, rebuild the community, and keep the flood at bay.

The dragon, the unknown itself, is matter and spirit, before they are differentiated—while they are still "married," or conjoined in one (Jung, 1944/1968). It was Jung's unrivalled capacity for symbolic interpretation that revealed the meaning of this idea, and it was perhaps the most profound discovery he ever made. The developmental psychologist Piaget said, of the child: he constructs him-

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 145

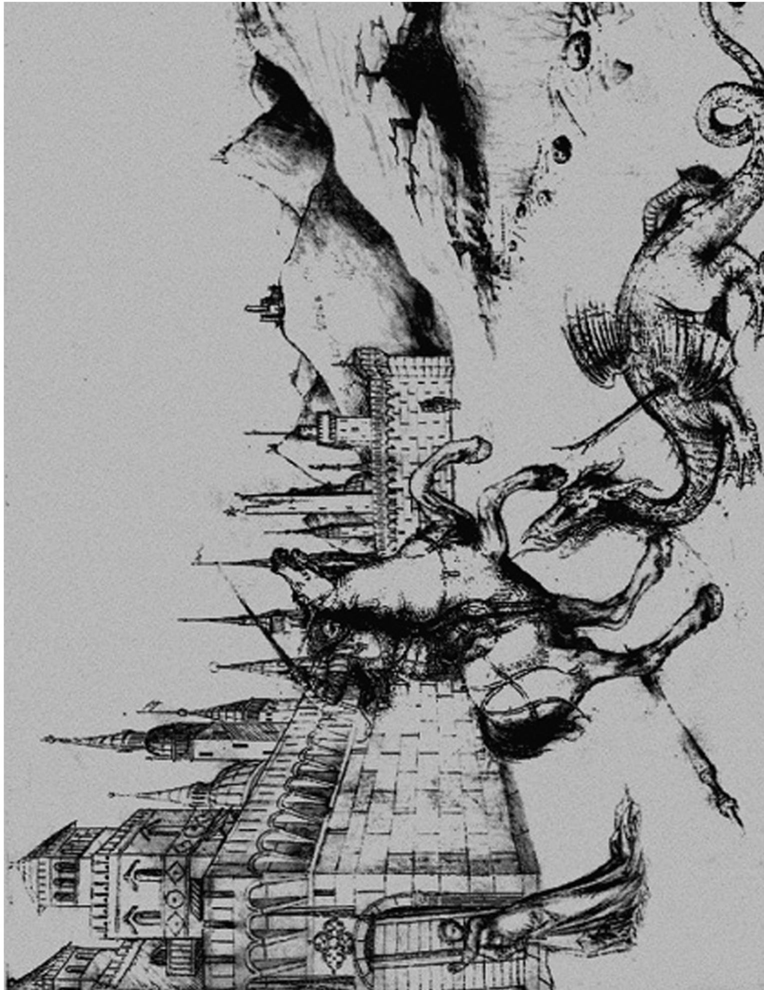

Figure 1: St. George and the Dragon: The constituent elements of experience, in dramatic action

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 146

self out of the consequences of his own exploration: "knowledge does not begin in the I, and it does not begin in the object; it begins in the interactions. . . . There is a reciprocal and simultaneous construction of the subject on the one hand, and the object on the other" (cited in Evans, 1973, p. 126). This constructivist observation sheds light on the meaning of Jung's strange claim (although the Piagetian and the Jungian observations were causally unrelated). *The personality has to come from somewhere*. Jung's genius placed that somewhere in the unknown, as such—the *prima materia*.

The unknown world is a matrix of information, prior to its separation into world and psyche. It is by no means a simple place of pre-existing objects, there for the perceiving (Peterson & Flanders, 2002). The boundaries between things and the categories use to order them are not given, and are defined and established with much difficulty. The child explores the matrix, the unknown, extracting some of the information it consists of, parsing some segment of it into the world of material objects, and some into the world of spirit, personality, and subjective being. Through contact with the unknown, therefore, the child creates himself and the world. This is no mere metaphor. There are many physicists working today (John Wheeler (1980) foremost among them) who are convinced that the world is made up of information, at the most primary level, and that "matter" is a secondary manifestation—dependent for its existence in some uncanny manner on the act of observation. Out of the unknown, through exploration, springs reality: it is in this manner, through "incestuous" union with the hero, that the dragon of chaos gives birth to the world.

If an individual is to mature, he must learn to tolerate the unknown—the terrible figures of imagination that inhabit it, and its real dangers. He might just as well get over it sooner, rather than later, and voluntarily, rather than involuntarily. If he cannot or will not understand this, then he cannot be a hero. He will then go through life terrified or dependent—maybe on another hero, maybe on an ideology (which is just another crumbling castle, built out of words). St. George, mythological redeemer, emerges voluntarily from his dogmatic slumber, and confronts what lurks outside. The lair of the dragon, deep in the underworld, is surrounded by the skulls and the bones of his previous victims—unsuccessful challengers and travelers caught unaware. The threat it poses is real. In consequence, it is no wonder that people cower inside their castles and never venture outside.

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 147

St. George journeys outside the walls, voluntarily—it has to be voluntarily—and he defeats the dragon. In doing so, he frees a woman, a virgin. Dragons, as is well known, have a peculiar weak spot for virgins, and they also tend to hoard gold. Unlikely as the dragon is, these are two tendencies that are so non-reptilian that they could not possibly have been predicted. Perhaps it is, most concretely, that the exploratory hero makes himself attractive to the watchful maiden. Perhaps it is, more abstractly, that the hero discovers his anima, his soul, his inspiration, when he dares to confront what he does not yet understand. Perhaps it is, most generally, that the treasure beyond price is always to be found where everyone least wants to look. *In sterquiliniis invenitur*, according to Jung (1956/1976, p. 35). In threat lies opportunity. In the unknown lies possibility. Among the oppressed, lies salvation.

In the process of psychotherapy, which Jung identified with supreme moral effort, the client first has to determine where he is going, if he is going anywhere. If the client is not going anywhere, that is his first problem. He is enmeshed in chaos, with no direction. He has to determine what the good life would be, in principle, before doing anything else. What might health, in its most ideal sense, mean—even hypothetically? If he is in fact headed somewhere, but is stuck, fear is a likely causal agent. Just a glimpse of the Medusa can paralyze. The good therapist tries to determine what his client is afraid of—afraid of in the past, the present, and the future. Once he identifies the source of such fear (and resentment, and hostility, and anger, and pain), then he helps the client chop it into little, manageable pieces, bringing active approach to the problem, and clarity to the representation.

The psychotherapist says—and acts out, if he is a good therapist, "Look at this! Look, carefully, at all these terrible things!" The client thinks, "I have never looked at that, and I am certainly not going to start now." Then the therapist offers him just a little piece of the terrible things, and the client looks at that little piece, and he discovers something very surprising. He *can* look! He thinks, "That is so interesting. I always believed that I had to hide, and here it turns out that hiding is unnecessary! There must be more to me than meets the eye! This is absolutely a terrible thing I am looking at, yet I can do it!" So he looks, and he tears the thing apart with his teeth, and swallows it, and he gets a little bigger, and as he gets bigger, he tears into larger pieces of the terrible monster, and then

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 148

he finds he is no longer so afraid of things.[2] It is not that he "habituates" to the "feared stimulus," as the behaviorists had it. It is that part of the information he derives from his encounter with the terrible unknown is the knowledge that he can survive, if he does not run away—and that he may even thrive. Man is built to lift impossible loads, and to digest indigestible things. Man is built for weight—but he cannot discover his strength without shouldering his cross.

The hero separates himself, voluntarily, from the decayed remnants of his tradition, admits to the existence of the terrible unknown, and determines to face it. He defeats the dragon, encounters romance and adventure, and finds the treasure hoarded by the monster. There the story ends—or does it? This is all excitement, without responsibility, so it cannot be enough. Adventure without responsibility is impulsive and mindless and finally destructive. The full hero cycle therefore necessarily involves return to the community. The hero has to bring back what he has discovered, and rediscover, repair and restore the tradition from which he has sprung. He garners new information, as a consequence of his voluntary encounter with the unknown, and that is genuinely redemptive, in his individual case. However, there can be no sufficient individual redemption in a world still characterized by suffering. There can be no empathy or love in such redemption. In consequence, the hero must journey home, even if he has to abandon paradise to do so. The pre-existing structure, insufficient as it is, must be rebuilt—sometimes on a new foundation. In this manner the new information finds its permanent integration, and serves the cause of universal salvation. It is also for this reason, however, that the hero, unwelcome originally as the bearer of bad news, may be equally unwelcome as returning victor. He returns to the community necessarily contaminated by his adventure. He cannot help but bring back what he has won. He is half dragon. He returns as someone whose mode of being and manner of speech now screams out the necessity of change. He is therefore frightening to those who remained safely ensconced within the castle walls.

The hero has transcended some culturally-imposed limitation. The fact that culture limits, however, does not mean that it is without merit. This is the modern error. Without culture nothing exists but

[2] Williams, Kinney & Falbo (1989) note, for example, that the cured agoraphobic remains frightened, but now regards him or herself as capable of mastering the feared situation.

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 149

chaos and conflict. The hero and culture, the great father, must therefore exist in a very precarious relationship. Tradition limits the hero, by putting restraints on his domain of action. In a totalitarian state, for example—tradition taken to its logical conclusion—no individual behavioral or conceptual variability is allowed. The cowards who huddle within the thick walls of the totalitarian state want absolute predictability, even among those they huddle with, because the existence of the unpredictable and unknowable poses precisely the problem they most want to avoid. The application of such strictures kills creativity, of course, and allows the gap between social preconceptions and the real world to continually expand. The hero is the necessary antidote to such sterility and anachronism. His eyes are open, and he retains voluntary contact with the unknown. However, he is also the enemy of tradition. He demonstrates its limits and, therefore, undermines its structure. Despite this, without tradition, he is homeless and lost. Some form of entente must therefore be established.

Friedrich Nietzsche was very much aware of the complexity of this problem, and he solved it, partially (although its solution had been generated in more implicit mythological or literary form centuries before). He proposed that slavery was a necessary precondition to freedom. This is a message that is very much unacceptable to modern people, who believe that discipline and creativity are opposing forces. "What is essential in heaven and on earth," Nietzsche said (1885/1966, pp. 100–102), "seems to be . . . that there should be *obedience* over a long period of time and in a *single* direction: given that, something always develops, and has developed, for whose sake it is worth while to live on earth; for example, virtue, art, music, dance, reason, spirituality—something transfiguring, subtle, mad, and divine." Acculturation, in Nietzsche's view, is a necessary prerequisite to transcendence. The great father engenders the hero (and disciplines and stifles him, equally). It is easy to despise adolescents because they strive above all to fit in—but they should fit in, they should learn to be like everybody else, because the inability to do so is failure. Perhaps the development of the individual should not end with adaptation to the group, but such adaptation is at least a necessary stage of transition (as well as a stage that many never attain, let alone surpass). Fortunately, there is a withholding clause built into the contract of adolescent acculturation. Those who take advantage of it can escape from total assimilation.

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 150

Consider "The Grand Inquisitor" from Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880/1981), (8). Christ returns to Earth in Seville, Spain, at the height of the Inquisition. He wanders around, healing people, performing miracles, and generally causing havoc and confusion. The Grand Inquisitor, head of the Spanish Catholic Church, promptly has Him arrested for sedition and heresy. He locks Him up, and has Him sentenced to death. In prison, the night of the arrest, the Inquisitor confronts Christ. He tells Him that He is no longer welcome—if He ever had been. The Catholic Church is now properly ordered after centuries of effort. It has been made smoothly functional, and accessible to the common man. Anything truly mystical, anything genuinely transcendental, is only likely to cause trouble. For these reasons, Christ's death is once again necessary. Christ listens in silence. After the Inquisitor finishes justifying his actions, He kisses him on the lips. The Inquisitor pales, and trembles, and banishes Christ through the partially open door. This story demonstrates clearly that Dostoevsky was no simple ideologue. He knew that submission to the rigors of arbitrary tradition was a terrible thing. In the final analysis, however, a tradition that is not entirely corrupt still shelters, still educates, and still leaves a door open for the hero. In a society that is functional, there is a necessary tension between innovation and update and tradition and security, and one cannot be mindlessly sacrificed to the other. If you are careful, and disciplined, you can breach the wall—but every fanatic and deviant cannot be allowed to run amok and break every rule, merely to demonstrate his "freedom." "All impulse, no responsibility" is the slogan of the criminal and the psychopath, not the redemptive hero.

The attitude of the benevolent father is, therefore, "do what I say—but be your own man." This is paradoxical, by necessity, and may even seem hypocritical. The world is a paradoxical place, however, existentially speaking—phenomenologically speaking—and it is far from clear that it can be mastered without an equally paradoxical attitude or system of belief.[3] It takes something of the order of ten thousand hours of practice to master a discipline, and the rules of a discipline cannot be creatively transcended before such mastery

[3] As Dostoevsky says, in Notes from Underground (1864/1961): "one may say anything about the history of the world—anything that might enter the most disordered imagination. The only thing one can't say is that it's rational. The very word sticks in one's throat."

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 151

is obtained. Someone who practices ten thousand hours, some virtuoso, has therefore become a slave to his instrument, sacrificing momentary impulse, social life, relationships, career opportunities—but he may come out at the other end with a wild and turbulent freedom. Everything he needs has now been automatized (see Swanson, 2000). He sits atop a very complex and sophisticated machine, deeply embodied skills at the ready. None of that happens without discipline. So Nietzsche (1885/1966, pp. 100–102) says, "the long unfreedom of the spirit, the mistrustful constraint in the communicability of thoughts, the discipline thinkers imposed on themselves to think within the directions laid down by a church or court, or under Aristotelian presuppositions, the long spiritual will to interpret all events under a Christian schema and to rediscover and justify the Christian god in every accident—all this, however forced, capricious, hard, gruesome, and antirational, has shown itself to be the means through which the European spirit has been trained to strength, ruthless curiosity, and subtle mobility, though admittedly in the process an irreplaceable amount of strength and spirit had to be crushed, stifled, and ruined."

The West had a morality, Nietzsche said—Judeo-Christian morality. For a long time we thought that such morality was the world. It was not so much a matter of belief, as appearance: the cosmos *appeared* as intrinsically Christian (just as it now appears intrinsically Newtonian). But then we journeyed to all corners of the world and discovered that people think a hundred or a thousand different ways—and that it was far from clear that we were right and they were wrong. But here, we have this morality—we put a lot of work into it, and we can not just throw it away. Out of such casual abandonment rises the nightmare of Hobbes. What must we do? And Nietzsche thought, "slavery . . . we do not like the notion of slavery, and we have our reasons for that. But maybe it is a developmental necessity, the precondition for freedom, particularly if it is adopted voluntarily. Maybe the individual has to adopt a framework, an arbitrary framework—a game, if you like—and become an expert player. Maybe, having mastered one game, he can play many games, and become in turn a master of games, rather than merely a player." The Great Father educates and tyrannizes his son who, in turn, betrays and enlightens him. The son looks past the father, to the mother of all things. He derives new being from her. His contact with her ensures his maturation. His consequent return to the father

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 152

revivifies tradition, and completes his journey. In this manner, society maintains itself, transcends itself, re-encounters the ground of being, and grows.

Mesopotamia and the Enuma elish*: Marduk, Tiamat and the genesis of Genesis*

The Priestly creation story initiating Genesis concerns itself with the origin of being. This is not precisely the same concern that occupies modern cosmologists. Modern cosmologists tend to concern themselves with the origin of the material world, and the time and space within which that world manifests itself, and believe that the problem of human experience is somehow nested secondarily within that broader domain of concern. The authors of Genesis, however, did not automatically draw a distinction between the subjective and objective aspects of being, and also did not assume that the subjective was necessarily a subset of the objective. Such distinctions and claims were not made, formally—could not be made—until the dawn of the scientific age. The measurement instruments and technologies necessary to separate the subjective and objective had not been invented. More importantly, the philosophical work needed to even begin such a separation had not been done. Science emerged a mere four hundred years ago, and then only in one place, in Europe. The sophisticated ancient cultures of Egypt, India, China, Rome, Greece and Meso-America existed in the absence of science, although they did develop some technologies. This all means that the authors of Genesis did not conceive of being in the same way that scientists do. They thought of experience as being. They thought phenomenologically. This does not mean in any way that they were naïve.

The first creation story in Genesis is, of course, a myth. Myth is instead a form of knowledge that is predicated on presumptions that are neither scientific nor empirical and that is dramatic and narrative in structure. The most profound myths describe states of being or transformation that exist eternally, in some sense. These states of being should not be confused with material reality. The authors of Genesis, with their innate phenomenology, were trying to account for the emergence of experience, including all the subjective aspects of experience, rather than the emergence of world, in some objective sense. In the opening lines of Genesis, God generates order from

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 153

chaos. Order is the habitable cosmos, while chaos is conceived as some pre-extant but formless matter. The idea that order emerged out of chaos sprang from a deep but inchoate understanding of the fact that all human environments were characterized by two invariants (ignoring the fact of the active observer, for the moment). All places and times that can be experienced are composed of things that have been given comprehensible form and structure, and that have been rendered predictable and reliable and habitable. All places and times that can be experienced, likewise, also still contain things that are unknown, dangerous, mysterious, and unexplored—and formless and chaotic and "pre-existent" for precisely those reasons.

The idea that being itself is a consequence of the interplay between chaos and order is one of the most fundamental mythological ideas. The most striking example of this idea can perhaps be found among the Taoists, who conceive of "the environment" at the most general level of abstraction possible. Tao—which is reality, phenomenologically considered—is the eternal and intrinsically meaningful co-existence and dynamic interaction of yin and yang, feminine and masculine, nature and culture. Lao-Tzu (Rosenthal, 1984b) describes this invariant and lowest-resolution environment in the following terms: *All things are microcosms of the Tao; the world a micro-cosmic universe; the nation a microcosm of the world, the village a microcosmic nation; the family a village in microcosmic view, and the body a microcosm of one's own family; from single cell to galaxy*.

There are two structural elements described in the first chapter in Genesis ("chaos," and "heavens and the earth"), one process ("creation"), and one actor ("God" or the "Word of God"), engaged in the process. The first structural element, chaos, is signified by *tehom*, for "chaos"; by *tohu*, for "waste," or for "matter without substance"; and by "vabohu," for "emptiness" or "confusion." These three words—*tehom, tohu* and *vabohu*—are very interesting, for a variety of reasons, and profitably bear further investigation. The Canadian Rabbi Itzchak Marmorstein (2005), who has begun to explain the Torah one word at a time, describes *tehom* as "the unfathomable, undifferentiated womb out of which existence, as we experience it, emerges. All potential exists in this primordial energy, or state. Metaphorically, it is a confused, seething mass; the abyss, the deep, and the surging bellowing of the waves." *Tohu*, similarly, is "a chaotic condition, or place without color or form—or, more specifically, something that seems for a moment to have form, but when looked at again, loses

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 154

that form. *Tohu* is the subjective effect of chaos; the force that confounds people, and causes them to have misleading visions," which is a definition that is very psychological in nature. *Vabohu*, finally, is related to *tohu*, but means more specifically "the indistinct, entangled, confused mass that all forms once were, prior to their division into separate kinds of objects."

The "heavens and the earth"—*hashamayim* and *ha'aretz*—comprise the vast and spiritually stunning spaces that rise above us as well as the material domain that makes up our physical being and the physical being of those things we experience. This material domain is both a trap in which our consciousnesses are caught and the *a priori* precondition for individual existence in its destructive and vulnerable but potentially redemptive aspects. The creation narrative in Genesis has deeply embedded within it the idea that the materiality of the world clothes partial beings, incomplete avatars of God, whose purpose is the continuation and potential perfection of the incompletely manifest being characterizing the original creation.

The process, creation, is characterized by the second word in Genesis, "*bara*." According to the Kabbalist Adin Steinsaltz (1985, p. 36), the creation represented by *bara* "is not the coming into existence of something new, but the transmutation of a divine and illimitable reality into something defined and delimited," particularized and actualized. This analysis of *bara* seems very illuminating first because it attributes genuinely creative power to consciousness and cognition (creative, though limiting), and second because it seems so closely related to the Christian idea of the *Logos*. *Logos*, one of the most remarkable of all the ancient philosophical or theological conceptions, is a word with an extraordinarily broad range of meaning. It means everything our modern word *consciousness* means and more. It means mind, and the creative actions of mind: exploration, discovery, reconceptualization, reason and speech. Logos is, further, something whose relationship to the mere material is so fundamental that the material does not really exist at all in its absence. Finally, it is something whose workings are essentially redemptive, continuing and perfecting the process of creation. It is generally transcribed, in the Christian tradition, as the Word, and is closely identified with the transcendental being of Christ, as well as with the original creative force of God. This is a very peculiar identification, from the perspective of strict temporal logic, because it is the Word of God

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 155

that creates order out of chaos—and that Word is a phenomenon that predates the birth of Christ, from the temporal perspective.

The fundamental story of the first part of Genesis is predicated on the assumption that *chaos* can be conceptualized as a matrix, as something with a metaphorically female aspect. A matrix is a substrate from which structures may emerge—something that can "give birth" to structure. It is the encounter with chaos of Logos that brings habitable order, the "heavens and the earth" into being. *Logos*—the Word of God, a phenomenon associated with speech, and communication, and logic; *logos*: logic, rationality, courage, exploration, all combined into a single entity or trait. The idea behind Genesis is that the background of experience—the matrix, *chaos*—cannot be conceptualized as real in the absence of the seminal ideas and piercing glance of *consciousness*. It takes the interplay between the feminine principle, *chaos*, and the masculine principle, *logos*, to produce being. Immediately after the establishment of livable order in Genesis, the deity Elohim identifies the individual human being with *logos*—man and woman are "made in God's image." The image of God is therefore considered the essential characteristic of the human being. What that means, by all appearance is that *logos* or *bara* also operates in human beings. The implication is that our everyday capacity to make order out of chaos (and sometimes the reverse), is identical to the principle that gives rise to the cosmos. The individual *logos* therefore partakes of the essence of the deity in a very direct sense, insofar as being itself is dependent on the operation of that *logos*. This implies that there is something genuinely divine about the individual—at least insofar as the existence of being itself might be regarded as divine.

How are such ideas to be understood? Where did they come from? How did they emerge, in all their mysterious profundity? How could such a daring and radical hypothesis have possibly been formed? Part of the answer to these questions is that the stories in Genesis are not mere stories. They are instead the mysteriously encapsulated representations of untold centuries of behavioral and conceptual experience. They are instead the inexplicable manner in which the wisdom of the human past compresses itself into linguistic form, unconsciously grasps the attention of the living, and continually serves as a source of security and inspiration. We are fortunate enough to know something of this past, however, in the form of the extant remnants of

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 156

the myths and practices that predated and informed Genesis. Because of that, we can see and come to understand something of the developmental process that led to its emergence. The *Enuma elish*, for example—the Mesopotamian creation story—substantively predates the Judeo-Christian Genesis account, was formulated over hundreds or thousands of years in the same geographical area, and constituted part of the general culture of the people who inhabited that area.

The *Enuma elish* (see Heidel, 1965) begins with the description, once again, of two fundamental characters—two constituent elements of a reality so universal that it transcends the merely proximal reality of current being. The first of these characters is a reptilian or fishlike or serpentine female character, who inhabits the unimaginable depths of the watery "primary element." This primary element is both like our modern water, in that it serves as the birthplace of life, and something more fundamental,[4] in that it serves as the mother of all things. This character is Tiamat, the dragon of chaos and, equally, the primordial ocean. Tiamat has a husband, Apsu, the begetter, whose nature and character are not subject to much development within the confines of the *Enuma elish*, but who can be recognized rapidly as the male consort of chaos, traditionally representative of order, limited and structured. These two characters represent the fundamental aspects of being in much the same way as the Taoist yin and yang represent the primal totality. The first of these aspects is the formless chaos that is all potential but no actuality, represented by Tiamat. The second, represented by Apsu,[5] is the order whose imposition onto chaos or combination with chaos is necessary for limited form to arise. The Mesopotamians regarded Tiamat and Apsu as locked together in a sexual embrace, in the incomprehen-

[4] It is very important to remember that our modern category of "water," despiritualized and high-resolution, excludes many phenomena or qualities that were more automatically perceived as similar or even identical by the pre-scientific mind. All things that were wet, for example, were so because of their watery nature—not because liquid was a state of matter, as it is for us. Water could therefore be considered "the primary element" by pre-scientific minds without such minds necessarily presuming that what we mean by water and "the primary element" were the same thing.

[5] It is necessary to remain unconfused by the interchangeability of the Great Father and the Hero, with regards to the Mother of All Things, or the Dragon of Chaos. All three elements of experience are regarded by the mythological imagination as primary, in some sense, and any bisexual pair of them can engender being. So the original creation might be the impregnation of nature by culture, or by the hero. The two element creation, however, remains partial and incomplete.

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 157

sible depths characterizing the beginning. It was not the erotic aspect of this sexuality that provided its meaning, however, but its creative nature: sexuality is the primary physical expression of creation, the primary means of engendering new forms, and the appropriate ground for its most fundamental metaphorical representation. The *Enuma elish* therefore portrays creative intent on the part of both Tiamat and Apsu. As a consequence of the consummation of this intent, these original parents serve as ancestors to a sequence of elder Gods, their primal children, each identified with a particular domain or place (fresh water, salt water, mud, etc.).

The idea that there is a God associated with each domain of reality—each situation or place—is very complex, and not something easily accessible to the modern mind. This idea stemmed from the phenomenological observation that each locale or habitation that a human being might find himself situated in had not only a set of material or objective features (which we have become so good at identifying, analyzing and using) but a set of implications for action, which might easily be regarded as the spirit of the place, or at least as the inspiring nature of the place. Even in the modern world, libraries and churches are clearly built for meditation and contemplation, formal dining halls or restaurants for mannered celebrations, and pubs and bars for the calling forth of Dionysus, Bacchus or Pan. We are just not as conscious as the ancients of the spirits that inhabit the places we go or build, but we are equally under their control. The social psychologist John Bargh, for example, has produced an influential sequence of studies (see, for example, Fitzsimmons & Bargh, 2003) demonstrating that complex motivational states such as those underlying cooperation, achievement and friendship can be and frequently are "triggered and operate without the person's intention and awareness . . . . nonconsciously and automatically."[6]

The link between the locale and the force of that locale on behavior can be most clearly seen in dramatic productions—particularly in movies, and most particularly in animated movies. The background "sets" of such productions are generally matched precisely to the mood evoked and the actions taking place in those sets. A character whose basic motivations are negative or evil is therefore very much likely to be placed in a situation whose aesthetic attributes are in keeping with those motivations, such as a dungeon, or

[6] http://www.yale.edu/psychology/FacInfo/Bargh.html

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 158

an isolated basement—and in the night, rather than in the day, because the spirits of malevolent evil are even in this enlightened age much more likely to be active in the darkness. Now we do not consider the motivated states that a place is likely to generate part of the intrinsic character of that place, because we define the real as objective and material, *a priori.* However, that definition is only useful, not final, and it excludes something the ancients could not help but regard as of primary importance. All this is to say that the primordial Gods were both motivational forces, as we would construe them—unconscious motivational forces even, following the psychoanalysts—and that these forces were not initially dissociated from the complex external stimuli that gave rise to them. These gods are an amalgam of place and motive—an amalgam that we would no longer consider possible, philosophically, since we do everything we can methodologically to separate precisely those two categories of being, and to segregate the objective and the subjective.[7]

The creative union of Tiamat and Apsu give rise to a succession of primordial gods, each associated with a landscape or place and, arguably, with the motivational force or spirit inhabiting that landscape. The question then immediately rises: what is the emergent consequence of the production of such a diverse range of places and forces? The *Enuma elish* suggests a sudden acceleration in frenetic and somewhat unconscious action, production and reaction. The elder Gods engage in a variety of ill-specified actions, raising the wind, and disturbing the repose of Tiamat and Apsu, who after much provocation decide to destroy what they had given rise to. When the elder Gods hear of this, they become very upset, cognizant as they are of the great force of their forebears, and they determine to kill Apsu. Apsu, as we have said, plays a relatively minor role in the *Enuma elish*, in terms of description. It is not possible to derive much information about his character. For that

[7] It should be noted, however, that this division is "unnatural." There is compelling evidence to suggest that we perceive with our less conscious motor systems at a more basic level than our conscious sensory systems (Whalen, 1996; Swanson, 2000). It is very much worthwhile knowing that at least one major division of the visual system maps almost solely on to the motor system, allowing vision direct access to action, without any intermediation whatsoever of what we normally consider perception. To be motivated in the presence of something is therefore *something even more fundamental than the detection of its objective sensory or perceptual features*. We directly perceive meanings, as Gibson (1979) suggested.

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 159

reason both the meaning of his role and the consequences of his death remain implicit in the story, difficult to tease out.

The idea that permeates religious phenomenology is that ultimate reality is a kind of chaotic totality, characterized both by an infinite expanse in time and space, and an unformed or undifferentiated nature. For that infinite and unformed nature to adopt genuine, albeit limited form, it must be filtered or interpreted through an already extant framework. In mythology that framework is most frequently attributed a patriarchal nature, as order, culture, or tradition. It is very interesting to note that good evidence can be derived from the domain of modern neuroscience to support the idea that conscious reality (that is, the experience of reality) is constructed in something very much approximating this manner. What the human brain encounters before it gives structure to what it encounters is not really something material in the classical sense. Instead, it is much more like a plethora of complex patterns, some of which can be usefully interpreted as material, but some of which form the basis for the construction of "spirit"—both human consciousness and the structures that help give rise to that consciousness. It is therefore not too much to say that the brain constructs matter and spirit or psyche out of something more fundamental than either (Peterson & Flanders, 2002).

Whenever the brain encounters something novel or anomalous, it encounters something too complex for simple interpretation. No extant machine, for example, can make "reality" out of nature. The world as such can simply be interpreted and reinterpreted in too many valid ways, all equally true, all differing in their completeness, implementation cost, and aim. In consequence, the brain appears to subject this complex initial transcendent reality to a sequence of filters, whose aim is the reduction of infinite patterned potential to graspable and pragmatic reality (Vollenweider, 2001; Vollenweider & Geyer, 2001). It does this in large part through its own physical limitations (there are electromagnetic wavelengths, for example, that human beings cannot see, and which are therefore filtered *a priori*), in part through the application of acquired knowledge and skill, and in part through the application of memory, implicit as well as explicit (for example, visual areas far down in the processing chain and therefore "primary" are still innervated more by higher processing areas involved in visual memory than by lower areas hypothetically more in touch with what used to be regarded as primary sensation).

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 160

From a mythologically-informed perspective, the world as experienced is therefore a set of hypotheses and assumptions, fundamentally pragmatic in nature, simplified and incomplete (low-resolution, in fact). These hypotheses are laid upon an inconceivably complex underlying potential, and are extant in part because of the particular nature of the biological structures that are doing the interpreting and processing. Such structure has a particular size, for example, and a particular duration. In consequence, patterns of a particular size and duration (although no more "real" than any number of others) are much more likely to emerge on the stage of human experience and announce themselves as fundamental. We see only a fragment of what exists or what could potentially exist, and that fragment is a consequence of the imposition of an *a priori* interpretive structure. The output of that structure is not wrong, but it is not absolutely correct, either—and its utility is in the final analysis judged pragmatically. Certain experiences are likely to result in the maintenance and procreation of the forms that instantiate them, incomplete though those experiences might be. Thus the final court of truth to which our judgments of reality are brought is Darwinian in nature, and not the court of ultimate truth, whatever that might mean in any case for beings as limited in capabilities as we are.

The repose of Tiamat and Apsu, nature and culture, finds itself disrupted by the frenetic activity and disputes that increasingly begin to engage their provisional creatures. This means partly that every action—every motivated action—produces consequences that are not intended. The fact of unintended consequences has been represented mythologically in the form of the hydra, a being in part equivalent to Tiamat, and one capable of generating seven heads for every one that is cut off. These unexpected heads can swamp the active agent. The disruption of the primordial parents' repose therefore also means that the danger of initial conditions can be regenerated accidentally, by the careless assumptions and actions of those presently alive. Tradition (Apsu) holds primordial chaos (Tiamat) invisibly at bay—just as the smooth running of well-established laws and customs ensures intrapsychic stability within and day-to-day harmony among the members of a given society. This very invisibility can be confused by the ignorant with unimportance, as a well-functioning societal tradition can operate so much in the background that its protective capability may be easily dismissed. The careless killing of Apsu by his sons is an event that fits precisely in this category. Tradition is

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 161

a dangerous thing, but its careless eradication is even more dangerous. Chaos lurks under order. This is represented in the *Enuma elish* by Tiamat's absolute and terrifying outrage upon her gaining knowledge of the untimely death of her partner. She decides to go to war on her creatures, generating many kinds of monsters and electing Kingu, the most terrible of them all—the most evil—to "determine their destiny" or to rule over them.

It is not that Tiamat's capacity for outrageous action is particularly surprising either to the Mesopotamians, or to the elder Gods. After all, she is represented in reptilian and suboceanic form, and she inhabits the terrifying depths and the unknown. She is given that form and habitation because the terrible mother of all things, the ultimate generatrix, is destructive and malevolent, as well as creative and benevolent, in that the formless chaos out of which things rise may return those things to itself at a moment's notice. Of course, modern individuals remain keenly aware of this, because we are inevitably possessed by the sense that our frenetic activity is producing dangerous alterations in the world order. Our actions are upsetting Nature, and she might turn on us. That is a classic Sumerian fear. Nothing has changed in the last five thousand years. Is it not reasonable to point out that it is greed, and status-seeking, and selfishness that allow modern people to fish the oceans dry? Are these not well conceptualized as ancient and primitive gods? Tiamat is the ancient representative of Chaos, generative and destructive Chaos, and she gets irritable if too many things change—particularly if they change carelessly, and without respect. So the Sumerians say, "Well, the elder gods cause a lot of racket. They move around the planet, and they upset Tiamat, and she decides that enough is enough, and determines to wipe them out."

The gods are threatened. Nonetheless, they continue their activity, unabated, as well as their tendency to produce new generations of gods. In consequence, while the battle between Tiamat and her children begins to rage in the background, a new and remarkable god is born. This new god, Marduk, is a latecomer in the development of the heavenly hierarchy, and the supreme deity of the Mesopotamians. He emerges on the scene as a problem-solver, characterized by the attributes of higher consciousness, such as vision and light. He has eyes that encircle his head, for example, so that he can see in all directions simultaneously. He has a very highly developed linguistic capability. He can turn night to day, for example, merely as

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 162

a consequence of uttering the appropriate words, and is thus master of both chaos (the night sky) and order (the day sky). Marduk is also represented as a god of courage, voluntarily willing to confront chaos, the terrible unknown—but not without due payment. Tiamat defeats the elder gods, one by one. Chaos overcomes them. They turn in desperation to Marduk, despite his youth. Prior to agreeing to engage Tiamat, however, Marduk strikes a harsh deal, requiring the permanent subordination of all his fathers. The elder gods are compelled to elect him sovereign, to make him "master of destiny"—the ritual model for emulation, and the final authority. What does that mean, exactly? Well, these archaic stories are polysemic, in Northrop Frye's (1982) terminology. This means that they can be read at multiple levels of analysis.

Consider, first, the story of *maturation*. A typically immature individual remains under the dominion of assorted primordial gods and goddesses—aggression, fear, panic and, according to Freud, a certain degree of sexuality and pleasure seeking. The infant, for example, essentially moves from domination by motivated state to domination by motivated state. It is not until the age of three or four that all of those fundamental motivational forces start taking on a structured relationship to one another (under the pressure applied by the social world; as a consequence of the maturation of the prefrontal cortex). As the personality becomes integrated, a single motive force starts to bring the underlying motivational systems into harmonious arrangement. This motive force is one associated with higher consciousness—and with evolution/maturation of higher-order cortical circuitry.

Consider, second, the problem of *psychology*—both developmental and social. The Mesopotamians tried mightily to determine who should rule, given the original dominion of the elder gods, the instincts. Who should be in charge, when chaos threatens? How should a hierarchy of values be constructed? How should sense me made of the order, the hierarchical order, represented by the merger of dozens or hundreds of tribes, over great spans of time?—a problem the Mesopotamians continually faced, as one of the first great civilizations. Marduk might well be considered a product of the merger of many tribal gods—indeed, he had dozens of epithets, among his followers. He can also be thought of as a representation of the force that emerges to put all fundamental motivational forces in sequence. It is useful in this light to remember that the Mesopotamians associated him with the sun, with consciousness and illumination, and with language.

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 163

The Mesopotamians formulated the following idea, in implicit, dramatic form: "when the elder gods remain in charge, then Chaos constantly beckons and the archetype of evil (Kingu) comes to be the very thing that determines destiny." Human beings motivated fundamentally by instinct act without forethought, without the capacity to consider others or their future selves. Even if not cruel, like the psychopath is cruel, they are as impulsive as a two-year-old. A personality—or a society—characterized by such a primitive mode of being will tend towards a tragic and painful destiny, and corrupt itself with resentment. It is perfectly appropriate to characterize such a mode or path of being as dominated by the archetype of evil. Something has to counteract that destiny, for the world to continue. In their dramatic form, the Mesopotamians observe that the society had better be governed by something more than what the elder gods represent, when chaos beckons, because the elder gods both engender and are defeated by that chaos.

In charge, and armed with the agreement of his forebears, Marduk grasps his sword and his net, and sets off to conquer Tiamat. Neither the sword nor the net are meaningless details. Jung (1956/1976), for example, regarded both differentiation (*solve*) and synthesis (*coagula*) as primary but antagonistic aspects of the process underlying personality development. The analytic aspect of consciousness analyzes what appears to be a homogeneous whole on first apprehension into its diverse constituent elements. The synthetic aspect of consciousness, by contrast, weaves diversely differentiated elements into a coherent and comprehended whole. Edna Foa's work on the reconsideration of memories of assault provides solid evidence for the utility of voluntarily facing and attending to chaos, even when traumatic (Foa & Kozak, 1985, 1986; Foa, Feske, Murdock, Kozak & McCarthy, 1991). In addition, there are now more than forty experimental studies, pioneered by James Pennebaker (Pennebaker & Francis, 1996), demonstrating that it is the linguistic organization of chaotic or traumatic or unconsidered elements of experience, rather than catharsis, that produces positive benefits on immunological, psychophysiological and psychological function (reviewed by Smyth, 1998). Such facing and revisioning might be regarded as two aspects of the attempt to weave disparate experiences—particularly those associated with high degrees of negative emotion—into a network of meaning. Traumatic experience is traumatic precisely because the information it contains has potentially unbounded effects on the largely implicit and unconscious

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 164

presumption structure currently characterizing the individual (Peterson, 1999). Traumatic experience re-engenders chaos. Enclosure, mediated by attention and language, means control, and limitation, and re-establishment of protective boundaries.

Once Tiamat is trussed and encapsulated, Marduk uses his sword and divides her in two, then cuts her into pieces, and constructs the habitable world from her remains. Thus the exploratory hero makes the world as a consequence of his encounter with the generative unknown. This idea was so well developed among the Mesopotamians that it was virtually explicit. One of their many names for Marduk was precisely "he who makes ingenious things from the conflict with Tiamat" (Heidel, 1965, p. 58). The mythological description of this process is of course reminiscent of Plato's injunction to "cut nature at her joints," in order to further the process of understanding (an injunction whose essential theme underlies the entire practice of modern science).

Marduk also deprives Kingu, Tiamat's most potent and evil ally, of the tablet of destinies. He had already obtained one such tablet from his procreators, the elder gods—an action that signified his emerging dominion over what was once their territory. Thus he became master of culture and tradition. Afterward, he triumphs over nature and chaos, in the form of Tiamat. This victory is viewed by the Mesopotamians as a simultaneous defeat for evil. This is a stunningly creative and provocative idea, and it echoes throughout both religious and secular history for the many centuries following the demise of the Mesopotamian civilization. Voluntary confrontation with chaos and uncertainty defeats chaos, redeems culture, and deprives evil of its motive power. Why? The makers of mythological tales presume that evil thrives on decadence, existential terror, and individual avoidance of responsibility. Tellingly, in this regard, Marduk makes mankind out of Kingu's blood. Then he sets his new creatures to the task of eternally serving and satisfying the demands of the elder gods. What this means is twofold.

First, the Mesopotamians presumed that the capacity for deceit and evil characterizing the pre-eminent minion of angry chaos was an integral and fundamental part of man. This idea saturates the second creation story in Genesis and the entire theology of classic Christianity, with its emphasis on original sin the fallen nature of man, and the battle between Satan and Christ for the human soul.

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 165

Second, the Mesopotamians presumed that man's destiny was and would forever be subjugated to the demands of the elder gods—primary motivational forces and implicit demands of situation and place. It is for this reason that the ancients regarded mortal men as mere playthings of the Gods. From the Mesopotamian perspective, such motivational forces only remain at rest once serviced. A man in the grip of the desire for never-ending power, for example, may feel that his actions are voluntary. However, it is perfectly reasonable to regard him as a pawn of a transcendent force, whose ultimate aims may not be coincident with his own personal interest. The same might well be said of someone possessed by obsessive love or lust or struggling in the grip of an eating disorder.

The manner in which the Mesopotamians "played out" their understanding of the drama of Marduk should be of no small interest to the modern thinker. Even the best of enlightened rationalists presume that the foundations of modern democracy can be traced, sufficiently, to the enlightenment, with its emphasis on reason and its skepticism of religious claims. The problem with such a notion is precisely the problem posed by the Cold War. If the claims of intrinsic human right are merely rational, then they remain arbitrary, dependent for their validity on nothing more than the coherence of the story that their application can generate. Hence their philosophical fragility in the face of Communism, with its equally logical *a priori* assumption "from each according to his ability," and of Fascism, predicated on the equally reasonable notion that the strongest and most brutal is most equipped to rule. For such reasons and in the light of the events of the twentieth century the West could do well to hope that its most cherished assumptions—"we hold these truths to be self-evident"—are grounded in something far more substantial than mere axiomatic opinion. A thorough assessment of the religious ground out of which such ideas emerged—over millennia, instead of mere decades or centuries—can demonstrate precisely that.

Marduk was the ritual model of emulation for the Mesopotamian emperor (Eliade, 1978). During the New Year's festival, when the habitable world was renewed, the king undertook a sequence of activities, grounded in archaic tradition, understanding, consciously, only what a child understands when he is playing a game. This is not to denigrate the intelligence of the Mesopotamians. They were biologically identical to modern men and certainly capable of the same

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 166

quality of thought. It is instead to point out that human beings act out what they do not yet understand. Some kinds of knowledge are encoded in patterns of behavior long before they can be rendered fully conscious and philosophically explicit. It is for this reason that Shakespeare can be regarded as a precursor of Freud, even though he was by no means a psychologist. Drama precedes knowledge.

At the beginning of the yearly renewal of time, the king was first stripped of his emblems of power. This dissociated him, as an individual, from the trappings of his office, and revealed him as an individual, vulnerable, like other men. He was then ritually humiliated by the high priest, who stood for the highest deity—for the ultimate value that transcends all earthly values. On his knees, he was struck in the face, and required to offer a declaration of innocence, proclaiming his status as a true follower of Marduk: If he was a Good King, his conduct was emblematic of the process by which chaos is constantly turned into order. In consequence, the high priest reassured the sovereign, noting that his dominion was certain to be increased, if his protestations were true.

This is a remarkably complex ritual. First, the sovereign must be humiliated. This means that the Mesopotamians already understood, in dramatic form, that pride and blindness are inextricably linked. The earthly ruler is always prey, mythologically speaking, to a Luciferian grandiosity, which can easily expand to the unwarranted assumption of final omniscience. The pioneering cognitive psychologist George Kelly, searching tongue-in-cheek for a myth to buttress his claims, settled on the story of Procrustes, who trimmed his guests to fit his bed (Kelly, 1969). The Luciferian assumptions of the tyrant, unwarranted by fact, demand the re-arrangement of the world to fit the model. This leaves the tyrant unbothered by factual or existential challenges to his own all-encompassing wisdom and power, while the kingdom inevitably degenerates. It is impossible to confront the chaotic unknown if that domain has been deemed nonexistent, as a consequence of sovereign fiat. To reject what is still not understood is precisely to deviate from the path of Marduk, which is sight and language harnessed and voluntarily directed towards creative encounter with chaos.

Subsequent to the king's humiliation, the statues representing the elder gods were gathered together. At their head, the king marched in procession, outside of the city of Babylon—outside the dominion of order or civilization. There the primordial battle between the hero

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 167

and chaos was mimed. After victory was re-attained, a great banquet was held, and the king was mated to a ritual prostitute, signifying the positive and creative aspect of the great Tiamat (echoing her role in the initial production of the world, and its secondary reconstruction by Marduk).

The king's sovereignty was predicated on his assumption of the role of Marduk. That sovereignty was not arbitrary: it remained valid only insofar as the king was constantly and genuinely engaged, as a representative or servant of Marduk, in the creative struggle with chaos. This is in fact what made him a ruler, capable of extending his dominion, and of embodying Marduk's other benevolent attributes, all considered a consequence of the courage to confront the primordial matrix. These included the bearing of light, the granting of mercy and justice, the creation of rich abundance, and the generation of familial love, among many other capacities. Sovereignty itself was therefore grounded in Logos, as much for the Mesopotamians as for the modern Christian—and equally as much for the ancient Egyptian and Jew (as we shall see). This notion of sovereignty, of right, is not a mere figment of opinion, arbitrarily grounded in acquired rationality, but a deep existential observation, whose truth was revealed after centuries of collaborative ritual endeavor and contemplation. Existence and life abundant is predicated on the proper response of exploratory and communicative consciousness to the fact of the unlimited unknown.

Ancient Egypt: Osiris and Horus

Societies that have managed to render themselves stable over long periods of time have solved the problem of how human interactions should proceed. This is a very complex and dynamic stability, however, because things change. In the land of the Red Queen, as Alice discovered, everyone must run as fast as they can, just to stay in the same place. Stability can not mean stasis, because the environment is in a state of constant flux. A society that lasts therefore must balance predictability and originality, and allow old but once useful forms to die—and to re-emerge, if necessary, transformed. It is for this reason that the ancient Egyptians worshipped Osiris and Horus, simultaneously—the god of stone and stability and the god of sight and transformation.

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 168

The Mesopotamians told a remarkable story, but the Egyptians may well have done them one better. Remarkably, too, they did it very early. According to Eliade (1978), the fundamental story that drove the development of the great Egyptian cultures was revealed at the beginning of the Egyptian dynasties, rather than at the middle or the end (as might be presumed, if the Egyptians derived their religion from the structures of their society, rather than the other way around). The Egyptians were driven by the revelation that the most fundamental of gods was one who created as a consequence of his tongue and his speech—a revelation very much akin to the Sumerian idea with regards to Marduk and to later Judeo-Christian ideas.

The developmental sequence of culture—first revelation, then civilization—poses a tremendous mystery. Jewish culture flourished as a consequence of the ideas, central to Judaism, revealed to the ancient Hebrews several thousand years ago. The Christian revelation drove Western society, in the same manner, much later. After that, the same could be said about Islam. How is it that the religious drama can be primary, given its fundamentally implicit nature, its incomprehensibility, and the unconscious manner of its derivation? It is as if the people possessed by the religious insight—some uncanny combination of behaviorally-coded ethical knowledge, imagistic representation and, finally, verbal instantiation—are given a new source of direction, purpose, as well as freedom from anxiety. Somehow the newly revealed story is capable of uniting people, and of driving them forward. Somehow some heretofore intangible purpose, something less conscious than a dream, manifests itself with enough power to unite a people and motivate a new civilization. Such a thing seems to happen when a society becomes at least partially conscious of the games they are already playing. The newly emergent concordance of description with action seems both clarifying and liberating. We know very well from modern clinical/experimental accounts, such as those provided by Pennebaker, that individuals are more hopeful, more productive and less anxiety-ridden when they have developed narratives about their past, present and future that are insightful and coherent. Such narratives seem to serve a beneficial purpose because they simplify planning—at least in part. A good narrative provides a goal capable of uniting diverse subgoals, within and between individuals. A good narrative helps its listeners identify the causal pathways that lead to the goal, so that they do not wander down counterproductive paths and disappear. A good narrative establishes

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 169

a mode of being whose end purpose is transcendent, so that it stands above all things proximal and finite, but whose nature is still clear enough so that everything else can be bent to its service. It might be said that a mode of being of this sort is half buried in art, so that it cannot be defined entirely—or easily argued away—but that it remains clear enough so that the outlines are comprehensible. The figure of Christ serves such a purpose. So does the figure of Buddha. Such a figure, goal and path, is a dramatic, embodied and dynamic ideal—a personality, a way of being, rather than a fixed end point.

The Egyptians developed a drama to represent such an ideal. Like all complete religious stories, it represents the constituent elements of experience: individual, society, and nature, in their positive and negative manifestations. This drama helped the Egyptians clarify the nature of individual being, in relationship to society and the unknown world. It helped them understand the intrinsic and emergent nature of sovereignty, as such, rather than as something merely embodied in the person of the current ruler. It helped them develop a philosophy of power, applicable both to the individual and to the social world. It is altogether a remarkable story, and our culture is indebted to it in ways that we are still far from realizing.

There are four players in the Egyptian drama: *Osiris*, god of stone, his evil animal-headed brother *Seth*, his wife *Isis*, queen of the underworld, and their son, *Horus*, the all-seeing eye, often represented as a falcon. Osiris, the patriarch of the family, was a remarkable man/god. He was the founder of the Egyptian state, from the mythological perspective—an individual like Romulus or Remus, in the case of Rome (both mythological figures) or George Washington for the U.S. (who, like Elvis, is well on the way to becoming mythological). Osiris was a figure who represented the totality of all of the people who had actually constructed the Egyptian state, in its nascent form, over the centuries that it developed. Osiris was therefore the great father of Egypt, in its past glory. He was no longer well adapted to the present, however, because the present constantly shifts. Osiris was therefore an aged god, archaic, and willfully blind. He represented the tendency of a well-established society towards unthinking conservatism, dreams of past glory, and wishful thinking. He was great in his youth, but lost contact with things as time passed. The rules that he lived by, traditionally, were not necessarily applicable in the present, and some of the things that he chose to ignore or did not know at all emerged as newly paramount in importance.

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 170

It was therefore necessary for Osiris to have an evil brother, Seth. Seth, who turns into Satan as mythology develops through the centuries, is partly the dark side of social organization—its tendency towards authoritarianism, fear of novelty, and vengefulness. Seth might be regarded as a combination of the tendency for every bureaucracy to maintain its structure (and to therefore oppose every form of change) and the fact that bureaucratic self-preservation is rendered more dangerous by willful blindness and spite.

Seth wants undeserved dominion over the Egyptian state, and he is perfectly willing to use treachery and deceit to get it. Osiris ignores the machinations of his evil brother—partly because he is old and decrepit, and partly because he does not want to see Seth's true nature (the Egyptians place particular stress on this latter trait). He does not want to see the possibility for evil that is by necessity twin to state power. Seth therefore waits for Osiris to weaken, attacks him, chops him into pieces, and distributes those pieces all over the Egyptian state,[8] so they cannot be easily re-assembled. Seth cannot kill him, because Osiris is a god. The old king never dies, the villain never dies, and the hero never dies. This is because there is always "the old king." Likewise, there is always "the villain," and "the hero." These entities are transcendent, transpersonal, because they represent aspects of experience that never change. Even if particular individual embodiments of what those figures represent are eliminated, new embodiments manifest themselves immediately. The final battle with evil is never won, therefore, in mythological representation. Evil is a permanent property—a permanent constituent element—of the world of experience. The same can be said of the state. It cannot disappear, even if its overarching structure is temporarily disrupted. When it has been disrupted, the possibility of the state merely reverts to potential, residing in its now-divided parts.

Osiris therefore ends up living in spirit in a shadowy, ghost-like form in the underworld, and Seth takes over the kingdom (much to its detriment). Fortunately, Osiris has a wife, Isis. Isis had a huge following in the ancient world. She was ruler of the underworld, and a very powerful goddess. Like Tiamat, she represented the primordial chaos underlying the habitable forms and structures of the world. Isis rules confusion and opportunity. Individuals fall under her power

[8] See also Daniel 2 and Matthew 24.

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 171

whenever their beliefs are powerfully violated—whenever they lose faith and suffer betrayal. She represents destruction and death, but also creation and renewal. For something new to arise, something old must give way. Isis therefore rules the domain of transition. She gets wind of Osiris' destruction, and determines to oppose it. She searches all over Egypt until she finds his phallus. With it, she makes herself pregnant.

The collapse of any great order brings with it new potential. Large structures do not merely collapse into dust, when they fail. They are complex hierarchies of quasi-independent units. When they disintegrate, such units still retain much of their functionality. They can therefore be revivified, as these unit parts are reorganized and reintegrated into more thoroughly adapted superstructures. The demolition of one form of order thus brings with it the possibility of another. Culture cannot be so easily destroyed. When its highest-order structures fall, the structures that remain gather new information, change their manner of interconnection, and rise again. Culture can be hacked up into bits, disembodied, and introduced to chaos. No matter: it retains the potential for new birth, and can rise like the phoenix from the ashes.

So Isis, the matrix, finds Osiris' phallus, the container of the seminal idea, the germ of culture, and she makes herself pregnant. Then she gives birth to Horus, the long-lost son of the once-great king, a very typical and profound mythological motif. Horus, like all maturing sons, is alienated from the kingdom, and lives partly in the underworld, in Isis' domain. This means, of course, that the son is always in some profound sense "fatherless," as the structures of the past are eternally insufficient to ensure the complete stability and comfort of the developing individual. Horus grows up outside the classical structure of the Egyptian state, which is now tilted terribly towards evil, in any case. When he reaches maturity, however, he decides to reclaim his rightful heritage.

He travels back to Egypt, and confronts Seth. They engage in a vicious and dangerous battle, and Seth gouges out one of his eyes. This is an indication of just exactly how devastating it is to battle with the forces of evil. Horus can see through Seth, because his vision is clear. However, the forces represented by Seth still present a critical threat to the integrity of consciousness, even when it is thoroughly prepared—even when such evil is encountered voluntarily. Luckily enough, however, Horus proves himself superior to his

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 172

foe. He defeats Seth, and banishes him to the nether regions of the kingdom (he cannot kill him, because evil is immortal). He also regains his eye. The story might end here: Horus recaptures his eye, restores his sight, and rules happily over his recovered kingdom. That is not what happens, however—and this is where the Egyptians reveal their true genius.

The Egyptians believed, paradoxically, that their pharaoh was the living pharaoh and the dead pharaoh, at the same time. Such a statement makes no sense, rationally, but it makes a lot of sense from a mythological perspective. The Egyptians noticed that the role of pharaoh was so all-encompassing that it transformed the person who adopted it. Such a role is necessarily composed of the tremendous weight of the tradition that it represents. Every experience changes the person who has it. Physicians and lawyers in our modern culture are, for example, very much transformed by their training and their position. It is much more so for the individual playing the role of president or prime minister. So the president is partly the person, and partly the role—and the pharaoh is the live pharaoh, the living person, and the dead pharaoh, the cultural tradition: the king is dead, long live the king.

Paralleling that idea was another, similar idea: the pharaoh was not only the dead pharaoh and the live pharaoh at the same time, but also Horus and Osiris, at the same time. How does this play out? In the story, as told to this point, Horus has defeated Seth, and recovered his eye—he could therefore be king, all by himself. However, he is not truly sovereign, yet, and he cannot become so, in isolation, no matter how conscious and prepared he might be. It is the rest of the story that has the most significance for modern people. Future-oriented, and dismissive of the past, modern people are likely to sidestep their obligation to their culture. This is a genuine failure of responsibility, and it is very dangerous. Observations concerning the outdated and archaic nature of culture provide disingenuous rationale for its abandonment, but it has always been so: tradition is a blind king, or a drowning king, or a trapped king. However, the hero must not abandon his father. He is too unstable and error-prone without him. So, instead of replacing his eye (the most obvious next move), Horus does something unexpected and foolish. He leaves his kingdom, and goes right back down to the underworld, where Osiris is living in his ghostlike and near-dead manner, since being demolished by Seth. Horus finds Osiris and

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 173

grants him an eye. That eye—the eye of youth, the eye of the falcon—enlightens Osiris, and gives him *vision.* Then Horus takes his newly revitalized father back to Egypt with him, arm-in-arm, and they rule the kingdom together.

Horus voluntarily stops his father, tradition, from rotting away uselessly in the underworld. He grants him sight, and brings him back to the surface, back to real life, as a full partner. It is the *conjunction* of Osiris and Horus that constitutes the basis for Egyptian sovereignty. All have to manage the exceedingly complex job of imposing enough stability, so that everybody within the society is not constantly plagued by novelty-induced terror, and allowing enough novelty and transformation, so the society can maintain its adaptation to constant change. To do so, a society must be free enough so that the individuals within it can express their own unique individuality, which is something that can not be encompassed within a stridently predictable social order, but disciplined enough so that individuality is carefully honed and sharpened. This is a staggeringly brilliant realization. It is nothing short of amazing that the Egyptians understood this, even though they did not do so explicitly. *We* do not yet do so explicitly. Our Horus-oriented culture undermines its traditions without thought, and constantly undermines its necessary stability. It is for this reason, in part, that we have trouble with meaning, or the lack thereof. We consider the traditional aspects of our culture (the religious aspects) beneath our notice, particularly when we are educated, and we do not understand that we have the responsibility to revitalize them. This is no trivial matter. First, our civilization is dependent on those traditions, in ways that are not obvious, but are nonetheless true. Second, it is ignored intimations of the importance of that traditional structure that drives the increasing tension between fundamentalists, who oppose modernism, and modernists, who casually dismiss what they do not understand.

Horus is Marduk, for all intents and purposes. He is the exploratory hero (hence the eye, which is also a cardinal figure of Marduk). Horus fights political and social corruption, rather than the chaos that confronts Marduk, but these are the same phenomenon, manifested in two different manners. The hero confronts the terrible aspect of nature—chaos, in its most brutal form. Equally, he confronts the anachronistic aspect of culture, and the evil that speeds the development of such anachronism and decay. These elements are, therefore, indistinguishable, in some important manner: if culture

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 174

is not degraded and archaic, chaos will never threaten. The idea of environmental degradation and the revenge of the natural world cannot in consequence be separated from the fact of moral and political corruption. It is the corrupt state that nature destroys.

The actions of Horus dramatically represent the Egyptian conception of sovereignty: first, the ability to see evil and to respond appropriately; second, the humility to recognize personal incompleteness, despite great victory; third, the courage to re-enter the underworld domain of darkness and uncertainty, when necessary, to recover the lost values of the past. This is a spiritual story, with profound psychological implications, as well as a political story. The individual should be awake and alert to the dangers and evils of the state, from family to country. The individual should maintain an acute consciousness of his ignorance, regardless of his power. The individual should master his fear of uncertainty and transformation, and remain open to the knowledge embodied in the past. In this manner, he can be Horus and Osiris, the live pharaoh and the dead pharaoh, refreshed and rejuvenated by Isis, crisis and uncertainty. Egyptian society was dedicated to deifying the immortal spirit of the pharaoh, the union of Horus and Osiris. It was the embodiment of this union, this immortal spirit, which gave the pharaoh the ability to maintain *maʿat*. *Maʿat* was like truth, or good order (Eliade, 1978)—but was also a deity (like all motivational forces, conceived by the ancients). *Maʿat* might be conceptualized as conscience, as something akin to Socrates' daimon; as something akin to the relationship established between the ancient Israelites and YHWH. If the pharaoh was properly utilizing the union of Horus and Osiris, properly embodying or imitating that union, he would be blessed with an intuitive or unconscious ability to decide the appropriate course of order. This unconscious ability might be regarded as the end consequence of constant proper action—the benefit of thousands of conscious decisions, carefully made, automatized, and then rendered capable of framing and guiding ongoing behavior.

The Egyptians would pay homage to the embodiment of that union when they said, for example, "the sun has risen," when the pharaoh walked into the court. They meant, "the power that reigns over the dominion of evil, chaos and the night has arrived." The Egyptians conceptualized *maʿat* as the capacity to put order in the place of chaos, essentially, and assimilated the union of Horus and Osiris to that capacity. They regarded this union as something immor-

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 175

tal, something valuable beyond conception. This idea of the immortality of the union of Horus and Osiris, and its association with sovereignty, was an absolutely potent idea for the Egyptians. It gave their whole culture motive force. No less for us.

The Egyptians thought (or acted as if they thought): "the pharaoh is sovereign. As sovereign, he is immortal. As subjects of his, we do his bidding, under the ultimate tutelage of Horus and Osiris. We thus partake in his immortality." This is an idea that lends tremendous dignity to everyday being, even if only by association. As Egyptian society progressed and changed, however, the idea of this immortal individual dignity became more explicit, and less something real only by association. Eliade describes a process he calls "the democratization of Osiris." Initially, certain symbolic forms representing the immortality of the pharaoh could only be used by the pharaoh. In the later stages of Egyptian culture, however, the symbolic representations of immortality started to be adopted by the aristocracy—high nobles and courtiers. This meant that the process the Egyptians viewed as integral to the order of the state and of nature was no longer seen to be embodied solely in the person of the pharaoh. By the end of the Egyptian dynasties, the aristocrats themselves were characterized by identity with the immortal union of Horus and Osiris. Sovereignty had started to spread itself out, down the great pyramid of society. By the time of the Greeks, sovereignty was an attribute intrinsically characteristic of every male citizen. Barbarians were excluded. Women were excluded. Slaves were excluded. Nonetheless, the idea of universal sovereignty was coming to the forefront, and could not long be resisted.

The ancient Jews, likewise, began to develop ideas that, if not derived directly from Egypt, were at least heavily influenced by Egypt. Perhaps that is the basis for the idea of the Exodus, since evidence for its historical reality is slim. The Jews begin to say, and not just to act out, this single great idea: "not the aristocracy, not the pharaoh, but every (Jewish) individual has the capacity of establishing a direct relationship with the Transcendent, with the Unnameable and Unrepresentable Totality." The Christian revolution followed closely on that, pushing forth the entirely irrational but irresistibly powerful idea that sovereignty inheres in everyone, no matter how unlikely: male, female, barbarian, thief, murderer, rapist, prostitute and taxman. It is in such well-turned and carefully prepared ancient soil that our whole democratic culture is rooted. These unbelievably archaic ideas,

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 176

first acted out, first embodied in ritual, first dramatized, then told as stories, developing more and more coherence over stretches of time of thousands of years—they serve to ground our self-evident notions in something that is much more than mere opinion, mere arbitrary supposition.

Conclusion: The Transcendent Reality of Value

Human beings are playing a very complex game—but not one that is arbitrary. Every individual has to get what he wants and needs, not only because he wants it, but also because *society needs to give it to him*. If the social group does not help provide the individuals that compose it with what they want and need, then those individuals can or will not contribute to the society in any reasonable way. As soon as someone can no longer contribute, then society loses access to his or her creative and cognitive resources.

Societies move forward because individuals bring them forward. Since the environment moves forward, of its own accord, a society without individual voice stagnates, and petrifies, and will eventually collapse. If the individual is refused a voice, then society no longer moves. This is particularly true if that individual has been rejected or does not fit—because the voice of the well-adjusted has already been heard.

It is important to know this, because it is impossible to make justifiable claim to a set of beliefs unless there is a rock-solid foundation under those beliefs. If the value hierarchy, which is an absolutely necessary part of individual and social being, is built on sand, then it will not stand when it is challenged (and that is precisely when its solidity is most necessary). It will not compel belief, produce hope and ameliorate anxiety. It will not guide negotiation, prevent capitulation or put a halt to war. All individuals need value structures to guide them in their lives. They have to set goals, and make decisions. Their value structures have to be *real*.

The historical evidence suggests that certain value structures are real. They are emergent properties of individual motivation and motivated social behavior. As emergent properties, moral structures are real. It is on real ground, deeply historical, emergent—even evolutionarily-determined—that our world rests, not on the comparatively shallow ground of rationality (as established in Europe, a

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 177

mere 400 years ago). What we have in our culture is much more profound and solid and deep than any mere rational construction. We have a form of government, an *equilibrated state*, which is an emergent consequence of an ancient process. The process undergirding the development of this governmental form stems much farther back even than the Egyptians, even than the Mesopotamians—stems back to behavioral ritual and oral tradition. It is very old, this process, and it produces very reliable results (even if we do not always understand them; even if they can be variably interpreted).

The ideal personality, justifiably granted sovereignty, is composed of an optimal balance of creative exploration and substantive traditionalism. He is also not afraid of the chaos that is attendant upon error, as a signal for necessary change. That optimal balance is what an individual perceives, when he encounters someone who he automatically, pre-consciously, respects and admires. Genuine success in the struggle with nature, the human social hierarchy and the individual soul is a consequence of the literal embodiment of that admirable combination. It has always been that way.

Our political presuppositions—our notion of "natural rights"—rest on a cultural foundation that is unbelievably archaic. That foundation, in turn, rests on something even more fundamental. Chimpanzees, ever so closely related to human beings, live in dominance hierarchies, like their human cousins. They are very aggressive, especially the males, but they are also very cooperative (de Waal, 1989). Despite their aggression, the males spend a substantial amount of time repairing social boundaries in the aftermath of an aggressive incident, because they are just as concerned with keeping the hierarchy intact as they are in climbing to the top of it. They have to be. It is the most politic chimpanzee, too, that maintains his position, sexually and socially, rather than the most aggressive (de Waal, 1989). Likewise, rats play fair (Panksepp, 1999), and wolves will not kill a subordinate pack member once they have defeated it. The dominant wolf allows the subordinate wolf to maintain its own existence. Even wolves have this notion, this procedural or action-oriented "notion," that even those who appear insignificant may still contribute to the integrity and health of the whole.

Even the chimpanzee and the wolf, driven by their biology and culture, act out the idea that sovereignty inheres in the individual. Human beings have taken the idea much further, of course. We

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 178

have observed it in action, and codified its details and consequences. We have turned it into religion and philosophy, implicit and explicit knowledge. No matter what an individual does, in modern society—even if he is in clear violation of the law—his natural rights remain intact. No matter how outcast he is, how apparently beyond redemption, his existence may still contribute something to the integrity of the whole. This is not merely a "metaphysical" idea. Nor can it be dismissed, regarded as a merely rational construction, without such dismissal threatening the integrity of the modern state, psychological and social.

How has it become appropriate, then, to presume that everything we rely on is arbitrary? A true fan of modernity and rationalism would point proudly to the capacity for critical analysis enabled by our times and intellectual abilities. However, it is starkly obvious upon close examination that our religious stories are not about the same thing that our scientific theories describe. In consequence, it seems that the inability to distinguish between them must almost certainly be motivated. Ancient stories proclaim that the wisdom of the past cannot be rediscovered without the ability to identify and defeat evil, the courage to withstand the terrors of the underworld, and the humility to see the self as unworthy, if it is not informed by tradition. Why bother with all that, if God is dead?

Modern people believe that it is the application of their critical rationality, their hard-won critical intelligence, which has necessarily deprived their lives of transcendent meaning. This seems a very self-serving and therefore suspect interpretation: "we are so intelligent that it has become clear that life is meaningless." Perhaps it is not precisely our intelligence that is whispering such a doctrine into our ears. Perhaps the modern individual is faced with a choice: life with meaning rationalized away, and responsibility therefore eradicated—or life with every action seen as necessarily meaningful, and adoption of the ultimate responsibility described by Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn. Who would ever choose the latter? Science has not chased God away. Cowardice in the face of such a burden has chased God away. Natural rights truly exist, and they come with natural responsibilities. Some truths are indeed self-evident.

BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 179

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BELZEN_f10_133-180 4/10/06 7:55 PM Page 180

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