

SYMBOLS IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

Universal Symbols



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UNIVERSAL SYMBOLS

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From

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UNIVERSAL SYMBOLS

INTRODUCTION

Certain symbols appear to occur universally. Scholars of transcendent symbolism see such symbols as manifestations of the ubiquitous influence of deity, their origin likened to a meteor falling to earth from the firmament above. Scientifically oriented scholars postulate an origin for such symbols, in the symbolizing function of the mind. They note that, faced with the problems of processing yearnings and fears based on shared drives, shared early childhood experiences as well as universal questions about cosmogony (from whence has come the universe) and eschatology (what is the thence beyond death), the symbolizing function, which is universal in all races, produces symbolic expressions and resolutions with universally shared characteristics.

Explanations for the existence of universal symbols, other than the explanation for transcendence, were described by Goblet D'Alviella (1894), a late nineteenth century Belgian student of the migration of symbols. He identified two natural processes as possible explanations of the existence of universal symbols. One process that explains the multilocal presence of symbols, described similar symbols as springing de novo in separate places as the result of a creative capacity shared by all mankind, which is both intrinsically and superficially similar and which as a result can produce symbols that are similar, wherever men live and culture thrives. Similarity of content across cultures can be explained by similarity of the experiences of all men. One can find in support of this idea in Goetz' (1959) comment that "... it is a common geographical background which induces (cultures) to make use of the same stock of traditional forms and symbols, the same climate which inspires them to similar ways of self-expression ..." (P 10).

The second process described by Goblet explains the universality of symbolic forms as the result of the migration of symbol and myth overland from one culture to another in the way that a tint spreads from a colored drop through a pool of water.

Core Fantasies and Transcendent Symbols

Transcendent symbols are held by their believers to have an existence independent of the mind. God derived, they enter the mind through dreams and visions. They always appear in the context of a culture. The scientific approach sees transcendent symbols as expressions of *core fantasy* content shaped by educationally preinfused mythic contexts, molded into manifest forms by the structures of the mind that create dreams and visions.

Core fantasies contain the simplest elements of a myth, before it has been elaborated into a conscious representation. They consist of just enough content to make a recognizable story. Core fantasies are the simplest, least elaborated often preconscious, verbal representations created during the construction of mythic narratives. Core fantasies can be compared across territories and time to myths and personal fantasies that have been similarly reduced.

The uncovering of a core fantasy by an investigator entails the reduction of a myth to its simplest form, exclusive of local cultural determinants. Core fantasies as such can be useful tools in cross-cultural studies. From the standpoint of the fantasy-creating function of the ego, core fantasies are the most primitive contexts within which expressive (as differentiated from interpretive) symbols can appear. These expressive contexts are derived from unaltered wish fantasies within the system UCS.

Modification into neutral conscious fantasies of anxiety laden unconscious fantasies about primary objects takes place through a series of displacements from the primary objects (referents) to symbolic representations. At first these displacements create preconscious fantasies that require elaboration and further symbolization if they are to be understood with affect comfort. These further displacements to symbols, which do not stir up undue anxiety, result in conscious fantasy, either personal or mythic.

Universal core fantasies appear in that zone of displacement in which sufficient softening of affect associated with content has occurred to make that content acceptable to consciousness. It is within this part of the spectrum of displacements that universal core elements of meaning can be identified.

Manifest *personal fantasies* and *cultural myths* result when there is displacement from core fantasy with elaboration through symbolization to a form that permits conscious awareness. The former, *personal*

fantasies, can be distinguished by their fleeting availability to consciousness, the presence of anxiety when they are reported to others, and content that strays a bit from the values and ideals of a person's culture. They are creative products of the mythopoetic function, which are used in the personalized discharge of drives.

Anxiety elements when present can be vented and mastered through the telling of cultural myths. *Cultural myths* are culturally infused, shared and readily accessible. They are usually free of anxiety and can be discussed freely. Their content consists of fully displaced cryptic symbols, whose manifest forms reflect the values of a culture through the use of poetic symbolization.

Creative artists actively discharge their drives through the mythopoetic function. For those who are not artists, the mythopoetic function provides a passive outlet through participation in established myths. The everyday man is served by myths, which provide him with the fantasies through which he can discharge drives passively and with social approval. The content product of the primitive personal fantasizing function is transmuted by the culture oriented mythopoetic function into adaptive patterns of behavior that conform to the demands of social reality. These demands define acceptable limits within a culture for the utilization of core fantasy derivatives during conscious drive-gratification and object relations. Breakdown and failure of the mythopoetic function is manifested in active recruitment of reality to serve personal fantasy, as occurs in the fate neurosis.

Clues for Tracking Core Fantasies across Cultural Boundaries

Similar mythic symbolic forms are found universally. Polylocal origins theory, which portrays the appearance of symbols as multiple spontaneous generations, offers the simplest explanation for this. Its validity seems to be supported by the presence of the same manifest symbol or mythic core fantasy in different geographic areas, especially ones, which are isolated from each other. By contrast symbol migration theory, offers the concept that the consistent content of universal myths reflects the existence of a core fantasy that migrated through space and time during cultural evolution. Symbol migration theory explains the presence of few symbols spread wide. The theory is supported by histories of migrations. Such migrations have been identified repeatedly. The migration of the Greek pantheon to Rome is an example. In all probability both processes (polylocal generation and migration) have been at work

during the evolution of culture.

Migration of Core Fantasies

Tracking the migration of core fantasies across time and territory requires that one keep in mind the fact that varying degrees of culturally localized alterations in the fantasy narrative produces variants. These include some in which reversal into the opposite and repression make relationship of a fantasy to universal core myths difficult to identify. Repression of core fantasy content, as fantasy moves across the land, does not erase the relationship between modified core fantasies and manifest content in multiple cultures, both distant and distinct. Indeed a core fantasy may have derivatives that are negative images of itself. This occurred for instance, when repressive forces transmuted symbols into masked forms, as occurred when stone penises in ceremonial centers were transmuted into serpent gods during the evolution of Mayan religion and when semen as ritual fluid was replaced with wine during the introduction of the Judeo-Christian tradition in the Middle East. Early manifest blatantly sexual symbols such as semen as the divine fluid, which served in rituals as the bearer of fertility, failed to persist in their original form as Western civilization evolved. This was the result of repression of sexuality in the rituals of Middle Eastern cultures during the first millennium B.C. The absence of similar manifest fantasies in a culture does not negate the presence of similar and universal core fantasies.

Cross Cultural Study Of A Core Fantasy

The core Fantasy to be studied in this chapter were first identified for the author in 1955, during his search for symbols, myths and core Fantasies in the once geographically isolated Precolumbian Cultures of the Western hemisphere.

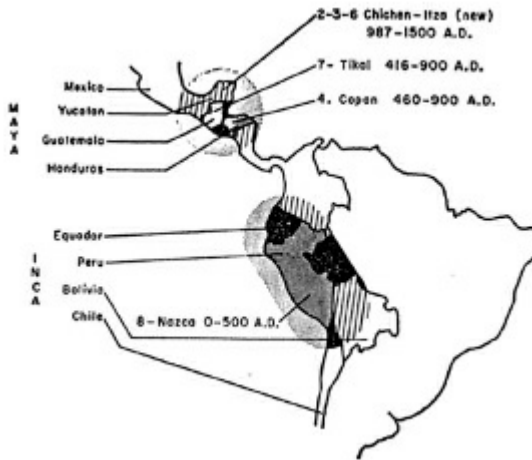


Figure 1
Map giving general location of Precolumbian cultures and cities.

If symbols were universal, there would be independent spontaneous similar cognate forms in many cultures of the world, for which one could search. Since the Precolumbian Cultures of the Americas and Western Civilization had developed high levels of culture in complete isolation from one another until the fifteenth century AD, an ideal situation presented itself. No migration was possible. The setting provided a natural experiment for use in exploring the concept of polylocal independent origins for universal innate core fantasies and symbols.

After the Precolumbian and the European cultures were forcibly mixed by conquest in the sixteenth century, the period of mixing was marked by the destruction and mutilation of the Indian Culture. Precolumbian religions were suppressed and their symbols all but forgotten. Those elements of the culture, which were carved in stone or buried in the earth, were left in fields distant from the centers of the new Western-oriented cultures. The great cities of the Indians crumbled in the wake of conquest and the wilderness reclaimed the land. Covered by a blanket of moss and jungle trees, they became the domain of monkeys, locusts and jungle cats. Though all else was lost or distorted, their myths slept in the stones. These have only recently been recovered through the awakening touch of archaeological inquiry. The symbolizing function of the artists of that long hidden isolated culture has been made available for

study. A comparison of these remnants with Western and Asian cultural elements becomes a source of information about just how universal are the symbols of unconscious content and core fantasies.

Comparison of Symbols in Precolumbian Myths with the Myths and Usages of Other Areas

Precolumbian myths were derived for use as the basis for this study from sources in antique stone carvings and pottery designs. The author ranged far and wide through deserts, jungles, mountains, and high plateaus during a five year period, searching for varying representations of pictorial themes, at archeological sites and museums throughout the Western hemisphere. As one stone after another spoke with slight variations, a theme was clarified and a consistent manifest fantasy was revealed.

At first, data was collected haphazardly. After about two years, sufficient data had accumulated to point towards sustained and repeated symbolism in Mayan Bas Reliefs. Subsequently, personal fantasies similar to the myths derived from Mayan stone carvings were found in clinical reports in the psychoanalytic literature. Eventually the search for related core fantasies was extended to encompass world literature, Preincan culture, Western culture, Asian rupestral carvings and the fantasies of psychiatric patients.

There was a difference in the frequency of appearance of the symbols and myths, which were uncovered and the degree of their penetrance into the consciousness of other cultures. The Mayan core fantasies and their related symbols were found to be rare in the West, while they were found to be quite prominent in the ancient culture of the orient and its modern day derivatives. Prodigious appearance of these core fantasies was found in all but Western culture.

FLUID FROM THE BODY OF A GOD CREATES LIFE

The first myth uncovered had the core fantasy 'fluid from the body of a god creates life'. Its representation in Mayan stone carvings was a flat strip connecting a bodily orifice with an arborizing structure containing living things. Its most graphic representation is a stone panel found in the ball court at Chichen Itza, Yucatan (Figure 2).



Figure 2
Scene of Human Sacrifice. From the Ball Court at Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico

A man has just been beheaded. The gush of blood from his neck turns into individual streams; six become snakes. The seventh becomes a strip of raised stone that resolves itself into fruit and animal bearing branches. The modern local legend related to this stone relief, as told to me by a native in Yucatan in 1955, is the following:

“Each year, ball teams come from all different tribes to play here. The captain of the winning team becomes a great hero. (He is treated like a god.)”. It would be a good idea to point out at this time that the veracity and antiquity of this story is challenged by reports from people who saw the game who reported that the successful player could claim prizes from observers. In addition, the main player is not wearing the customary padding for a player. (See Von Hagen, (1961). He is dressed as an important person with a fine costume and a pendent around his neck. To return to the native story, “He is beheaded and his blood goes into the ground. See how the blood becomes snakes and one snake becomes all living things.” Other graphic representations show mask like rain god faces with a flow of fluid from the eye that resolves into fruit and animal bearing branches (Figure 3).

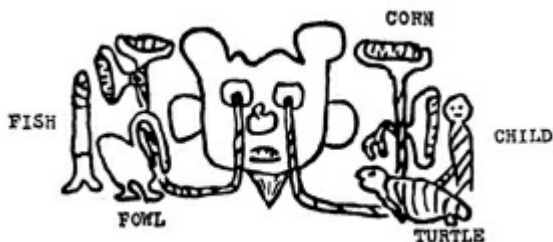


Figure 3
Rain God Mask with Tears That Resolve into Fruit and Animal Bearing Branches

There are even some figures in the round with hollows running through the head to the eyes through which water could flow to appear like tears. (Figure 4)



Figure 4
Head with Eyes through Which Water Flows

The result of a search of Western world symbolism for core fantasies relating to the myth “fluid from the body of a special person brings fertility (to the earth)”, unearthed few and isolated examples. For instance the presence of a personal fantasy, in which blood spurts from the decapitated body of an important progenitor, has been reported. Annie Reich (1951) described this fantasy in a patient who masturbated with the fantasy that he was cutting off his father’s head, and that the ejaculate represented the stream of blood spurting out of the father’s body. There is striking surface similarity between this

manifest fantasy and that, which was carved into the ball court wall. This bas-relief has been neglected by Mayan scholars. Eight scenes of human sacrifice among the Mayans are described by Morley (1956). This scene is not mentioned. This is helpful information, since the patient could not have been aware of a neglected Mayan Bas relief in the scrub jungles Of Yucatan. In the religious precincts of ancient Babylon, rituals were devised through which surrogates for the gods partook in sexual intercourse. The product of this coition was semen, which was used to assure growth in the fields. Substitution of wine for this ritual need accompanied the transition to monotheism. The manifest symbol was changed. The core fantasy remained the same.

THE SERPENT THAT GIVES BIRTH

The second Precolumbian myth "The Serpent That Gives Birth" was found in both Pre-Incan and Mayan reliefs. The basic representation is an elongated snakelike animal with humanoid forms (full bodies, heads, faces and torsos) attached (Figure 4). This representation is sufficiently ubiquitous that everyone, from students of primitive art to local residents, has a theory about its meaning. Students of primitive art (Christenson 1955) have said the following. "A human head with nose and earplugs was added to the serpent body to turn the serpent motif into an anthropomorphic being, the human head protruding from the serpent's jaws. A fusion of animal body and a human head was developed by the Maya in an original manner. A mere increase in size of the animal body to suggest divinity was not sufficient; the god had to be imbued with intellect, hence, human heads appeared within serpent's mouths, In some examples, the human head is more important than the serpent's mouth, suggesting that the head is not a victim, but part of divinity. In other examples, this head in the serpent's mouth may have been intended as the victim. It shows a head and shoulders armed with spear and shield as coming out of the serpent's mouth. Serpent heads devouring human heads were represented convincingly."

The major native theories are: a. A man shows his bravery by sitting in the serpent's mouth. b. The man is being devoured by the serpent. c. The serpent is giving birth to the man. d. This is the way the Mayans imbued an animal with intellect. Setting aside theories, let us turn to the stone carvings themselves to see the myth. A depiction on the disc altar from Tikal (Figure 5) shows human forms in the mouths of a serpent.



Figure 5
Disk Altar with Depiction of Human Forms in the Mouths of a Serpent

A stone carving from Chicken Itza (Figure 6) shows a snake with bodies attached at the side and head.



Figure 6
Snake with Human Forms Attached

A Lintel from Tikal (Figure 7) shows both arrangements around one snake.

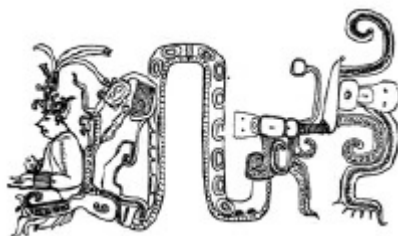


Figure 7
Small Humanoid Forms in the Headdress of a Figure in the Mouth of a Snake

In figure 7 small figurines are to be seen at the sides. The mouth contains a fully developed torso. The combination suggests gestation. Support for this interpretation comes from Pre-Incan (Nazca) polychromes. There are many representations of caterpillars with faces lined up along a central white stripe. This drawing (Figure 8) made from a design on a fifth century water jug in the National Archaeological Museum in Lima is an example.



Figure 8
Line of Faces Leading to a Head Issuing from the Back End of a Caterpillar

The Myth of the Snake That Gives Birth As It Appears in Other Cultures

Related mythically organized symbolic contexts, which suggest identical core fantasy determinants, can be found to have arisen independently in the mythology of Western cultures (i.e. Italy and Wales), ancient Egyptian, Chinese, and East Indian Cultures.

Western Culture—To this day, the coat of arms of the Visconti family emblazoned on the walls of a

palace in Milan depicts a snake with a child in its mouth (Figure 9 right).

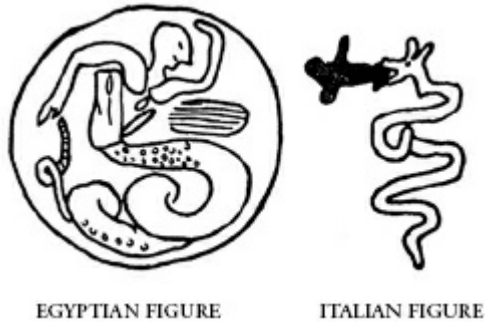


Figure 9
The Snake who gives birth in Egyptian and Italian Culture

Milan, Italy—The people of Milan say that it has something to do with wisdom.

Ancient Egypt—There is an Egyptian myth quoted by Bayley (1957), which depicts the following fantasy. “Osiris enters the tail of a great serpent, is drawn through its body and came out through its mouth, and then was born anew.” (Vol. 2, P 299—see figure 9 left.) Bayley (1957) describes such birth as expressing the core fantasy of the purifying transit of the soul through wisdom.

Wales—Support of this link between rebirth and wisdom is found in the Welsh myth of Taliesen described by Bulfinch. (1993 P 521) Taken as an infant, brow first, from the mouth of a bag removed from the water, Taliesen is a person of great intelligence. At one time, he sings, “Three times have I been born, I know by meditations; all the sciences of the world are collected in my breasts, for I know what has been, and what hereafter wil1 occur.”

The myth of the snake that gives birth to life was detected in the art of early agricultural people who had large empires with great cities, and who entombed their kingly dead. Linton (1955) has pointed out that there have been three major areas of development of culture related to the cultivation of three different cereal food staples. These are: the Central South America maize eaters of which the Mayans and Incas are representatives, the Indo-European eaters of grain which the ancient Egyptians represent, and the East Asian eaters of rice, which include the peoples of the Shang dynasty of China and

of the Indus valley. The former two have already been discussed. The search for snakes that give birth in the Shang Dynasty and the Indian subcontinent follows.

The Chinese Shang Dynasty (2nd century AD)—entombed their kingly dead, had no iron, and used pictographic script. They stood in the evolution of culture at the level of sedentary farmers with organized religious and social practices for dealing with a vast population. They practiced human sacrifice. In the evolution of Asian Culture, they appear to parallel the Mayan and Egyptian peoples cultural positions in their own territories. It is therefore of interest that in Shang art there also appear representations of the snake that gives birth. Speiser (1960) calls our attention to a “snake gives birth” representation in Shang bronzes. I paraphrase his comments: On the lid of a finely shaped portable vessel in the Minneapolis Museum, a bird stands on the wide-open mouth of a snake. The bird stands upright, happy and ready to fly away. It is not anxious or struggling on the defensive. It is not trying to attack the snake with its beak. The implication is that the snake, that is the earth, has spewed up or given birth, to the bird, and is letting it go into the air and light. This interpretation is made more convincing by bronzes of the fifth century B.C. in which this motif was unmistakably expressed through a bird with its wings outspread who is flying out of a snake’s mouth.

India—The core fantasy “a snake gives birth” appears extensively in Hindu lore. Campbell (1962) described carving on reliquary mounds dating from @ 100 A.D. in which “flowering vines and lianas pour forth from mouths and navels of mythological monsters. Conches, masks and vases likewise emit lianas, lotuses, and auspicious fruit and jewel bearing plants, from which animals spring.” (P 298) The foremost of the serpent like monsters that give birth is the makara or “Chimeric Water Beast” (P 326). Tettoni (1989) notes that “Nagas (snakes) are often represented as emerging from the mouth of a makara, a colorful creature combining the characteristic elements of crocodiles, dolphins and elephants.” (P 64) Jansen (1993) describes the “. . . Makara, (as) a sea monster which is half fish and half-antelope.” (P 68) The makara can be seen in a sculpture of Kamadevi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Kamadevi is the prime Hindu god of love. (MMA 1993.175) Kamadevi is identified by the presence of a Makara, who is the keeper of the quiver of the love god, over his left shoulder. Here the Makara carries five arrows in its mouth. Kamadevi (Prince of Love) shoots these arrows at potential lovers, as did cupid. Fisher, R.E. (1993) in describing Indonesian and Indian architecture notes that makaras served as door guardians up to the late classical period. (P 202) Sahi (1980) describes an

archway “ . . . like an orb rising from the ocean . . .”, which “seems to spring from the gaping mouth of a makara, which is a mythical sea monster . . .” (P 131) The manifest resemblance between snake shaped makaras and Mayan stone reliefs that depict serpents giving birth is striking. (See Fig. 10)

The snake (Naga), which dwells in and emerges from the earth, is frequently used to represent the earth (i.e. a chthonic symbol). It is a symbol of the earth in its guise of that, which brings forth life. The snake that symbolizes earth as a source of life and wisdom occurs universally. For instance, it also served in the tholos precinct at Delphi, where the oracle offered wisdom.



Figure 10
Makara at Khajuraho Temple Complex, India

Clinical Examples of The Serpent Who Gives Birth to Life in Western Society

Insight into the sources of the core fantasies that are referents for the myth that serpents give birth to life may be explored in psychoanalytic studies of personal manifest fantasies, dreams, transference and associations, which involve beings issuing live from the mouths of serpent like creatures. No important universally observed myths containing these elements are to be found in modern Western culture.

A personal fantasy was recorded by David Beres (1960), who quoted a seriously disturbed child to the effect that he saw “An inchworm could be laying babies” during a Rorschach test. (16).

The analysis of a six-year-old girl in treatment with the author demonstrated the fact that the core fantasy “a snake gives birth” can be a manifestation of the undoing of oral cannibalistic wishes directed at the mother at times of separation. One of Jill’s presenting complaints was repeatedly dreaming of a thousand snakes led by a bloody headed monster. The snakes wound themselves around the mother to kill her. Another complaint was inability to eat her breakfast on school days. This stemmed from a fear that she would throw up on the way to school. Going to school necessitated separation from her mother. The resolution of her anorexia was related to the appearance in the analysis of fantasy material such as the following. “It’s better to be eaten by a whale than a shark because a shark grinds you up and kills you while a whale swallows you down and you can live in there and eat the fish he swallows and when he dies he always goes to shore and then he’ll vomit you out and you’re O.K. Once a man was swallowed by a whale and was living in the tummy. The whale swallowed a plane full of people. Something went wrong. The whale made a B.M. in the wrong direction and a pipe broke and all the duty and sissy went into the plane and they thought it was hamburger and lemonade and they ate it. Later the whale died and he went to Europe and let the people out. Then the whale went to America where he let the man out.” The death and rebirth theme is clear in this production of the patient, as is the doing and undoing of oral cannibalistic fantasies.

After she was able to verbalize devouring fantasies, the patient began to eat breakfast in the morning more often. In fact, she ate breakfast for the first time in three years while working through these fantasies. She then developed a new symptom. She had to have her mother with her while she dressed. She related this to frightening dreams, in which there was a person she feared. She feared the person in the dreams while awake. She refused to tell about the dreams. Then one day her parents planned to go away to the city and prepared to send her to sleep over in the house of a friend for the first time. She explained that the person, who appeared in the dreams, and whom she feared, was myself. As she told of the dreams she illustrated them by making clay objects. She made a long thick snakelike object, which she explained, was the spook and was Dr. Sarnoff. She made a large stomach that left the snake a shell from stem to stern. A large mouth two eyes and a control box completed the figure. She then set little pieces of clay on the table. “Watch him eat houses and people and junk. I’ll make the mouth bigger. Watch him kill and eat people.” She put the clay houses and objects into the snake’s stomach.

In association to the dream, she told a story using the clay snake and a small doll family. She told of

the kidnapping of children who are killed and eaten by the analyst-snake-spook and return from his stomach through the mouth healthy and intact. Amongst the mechanisms that permit the displacements that allow these fantasies to come into consciousness are the reversal and projection of oral cannibalistic wishes toward the mother and mother earth, transferred to the analyst. Doing and undoing of oral cannibalistic fantasies are clearly among the determinants of these fantasies of birth and rebirth through the mouth. Unconscious fantasy remnants of parental separation and denial of death form the core of this patient's manifest symbols of birth through the mouth. Birth through a snake's mouth appears to be an undoing of maternal (mother earth, Gaea) separation and loss; perhaps it is an attempt at mastery of the loss of closeness to agriculture and the earth that occurs as a society moves its emphasis and respect toward art, administration, commerce and manufacture.

Discussion

It is at levels close to the system Ucs, where words are first assigned to concepts on their way to consciousness, that universal content should be sought, not in the zone of the manifest symbol. Comparison of myths on the basis of single manifest symbols in common is a faulty approach. It is an example of predicate identification (syllogism). In actuality, when comparing myths across cultures and across cultural evolutionary steps, it is best to reduce them to their core fantasy (the elaborated symbol series) and compare on that level. When this is done, for instance, the equivalent Greek myth to "fluid from the body of an important person gives life," is not the bleeding head of Medusa but the bleeding Uranus (Bulfinch 1993), when "from (his) terrible wound (castration) black blood dropped and drops seeping into the earth, gave birth to the furies, to monstrous giants and to tree nymphs. The debris turned into white foam from which was born the goddess Venus."

Myths consist of series of symbols, which have been woven into preexisting cultural and historical contexts. The manifest symbols used in myths are drawn from elements such as language and remembered or infused memory contents that define specific cultures. The context that shapes these elements into myths is derived from the core fantasies of the culture. Referents for core fantasies are held in the mnemonic structures of the System UCS. The latter are drawn from universal childhood experiences and from infused culturally accepted answers to universal questions about cosmology and eschatology. The path to consciousness for such mythic infrastructures is eased by the formation of

symbols.

The conscious (manifest) content or details of myths vary with the local objects and customs of the land. They may appear to be universal cross-cultural boundaries, but are universal in form not in meaning. They may be chosen to be representations on the basis of suggestive characteristics, such as the phallic nature of the flagpole. The content and technique of assigning mythic symbolic meaning to manifest symbols is not innate.

Core fantasies are most often not conscious. They are amongst those fantasies described by Freud (1900) when he noted that “There are unconscious fantasies in great numbers which have to remain unconscious on account of their content and their origin from repressed materials.” (P 492) Such fantasies enter consciousness altered through symbolization. It is in these fantasies that the universality of the unconscious is manifest. It is through this level of representation that myths should be compared, when tracking cross cultural similarities. It is on this level that one can establish an identity of thought content in a modern personal fantasy, a Hindu legend, a Greek myth and a representation of the mythology of the independently developed Mayan civilization. An historical parallel in the psychoanalytic literature underscores this approach. In establishing the identity of the stories of Moses and Prometheus, Abraham (1909) says in ‘Dreams and Myths’ (P 91) (I paraphrase) The Moses of the bible corresponds to the Prometheus of Greek Mythology, but we find two figures who have little in common, Displacement in both is considerable. Yet both ascend and bring something to man from God.

Conclusion

Myths are a series of symbols, which in representing a core referent are elaborated into the cultural and historical context of a culture. The manifest symbols used in myths are drawn from elements such as language and remembered or infused memory contents that define specific cultures. The referents for core fantasies are imbedded in the mnemonic structures of the System UCS. The latter, drawn from universal childhood experiences, together with answers to universal questions about cosmology and eschatology, form the infrastructures of the myths that are festooned with manifest symbols as they find their way to consciousness. The context that gives shape to the manifest myth is derived from the core fantasies of the people associated with the myth. It is at levels close to the system Ucs that universal

content should be sought, not in the zone of the manifest symbol.

Comparison of myths on the basis of single symbols in common is a faulty approach. It is an example of predicate identification. In actuality, when comparing myths across cultures and across cultural evolutionary steps, it is best to reduce them to their core fantasy (the elaborated symbol series) and compare on that level. Based on the specific examples presented in the comparison of the Precolumbian myths, personal fantasies in Western culture, and Asian symbols, we can draw the conclusion that there is an universal potential for a discharge of drive energies through the formation of the same core fantasies. In the Amerindian cultures, and Hindu-Buddhist cultures, this expression of the drives was culturally sanctioned, encouraged, and contributed a common set to the manifest symbolic forms. In Western cultures this shared manifest expression of the drive through generalized mythological derivatives did not develop. Core fantasies, identical with those that were widespread in the lands of the Amerindian, Hindu and Buddhist religions, are to be found in Western peoples only in very limited personal wordworlds created by the spontaneous evocations of minds not driven by communicative needs, and in psychotherapeutically tapped verbalizations.

SUMMARY

The same specific manifest symbol series can occur independently in multiple loci of origin. Basic core fantasies can be similarly ubiquitous. Direct manifest representations of basic core fantasies do not necessarily exist in all cultures.

The existence of a cross culturally shared myth—based on a universal core fantasy—when it does occur, is aided by but do not necessarily depend on migration along paths, which provide geographic cultural continuity between cultures, one of which had such a myth at the start. Migration is a possible but not a necessary source of mythic content. The universal experiences of childhood inform the content of the universal core fantasies that appear in a given society. Common symbolizing functions shape the form that the fantasies take.

Traditions and sanctions that are characteristic of the culture and its landscape elevate some core elements to the level of a myth, which is culturally shared within limited geographic boundaries.

Manifest transcendent symbols remain unchanged within the borders of a culture. Evidences of change indicate a transition to a new culture. (See “the great repression” in this volume Chapter three.) Cultural sanction guides the elaboration of personal core fantasies into a manifest culture defined myth. The factors involved in these influences will be discussed in the following chapter.