

The Model of the Popular Hero

By

William Charles Nicholas, Jr.

Senior Project

Coordinator: Dr. Dean Hoffman

Advisor: Sr. Patrice Benson

Reader: Fr. David Windsor, C.M., Psy.D.

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Please Make Note:

In this paper I examine the models of the life-stories of four popular heroes, one of which is Jesus Christ. It must be made clear, however, that I treat Jesus not as a theological or historical figure, but as a popular hero as he is described in the Gospel of St. Luke. My intention is not to question, debate or undermine my beliefs as a Catholic, or the teachings of the Church, but to show how Jesus fits into the heroic model that I am presenting.

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Part I: Introduction

Throughout history, the popular hero has played an important role in the social culture of man. In literature, mythology, even in real life, there have been numerous heroes in every culture and time since the dawn of history. There are heroes that have given encouragement or inspiration. Some fill the person with religious, passionate, triumphant or romantic feelings of awe and wonder. Some have made us laugh. Others have made us feel a deep sense of tragedy. But whatever needs they meet, purposes they serve or effects they have, the hero and his stories have pleased and provided comfort to people for thousands of generations.¹ Despite the many heroes and stories throughout history, there is a common model to the life of the popular hero to which humanity has repeatedly returned. One may find distinctly different models for various heroes throughout history, but there is a basic model of the life-journey for the popular hero to which at least one or more heroes in each millennium have returned. This model has not changed throughout the centuries and the heroes that have followed this model have been unusually popular in the culture and the period of their origin, and throughout history.

What exactly is a hero? The word, "hero", is related to the Latin word *servare*, which means to protect or, more clearly, to serve. In a classic theory by P. Foucart, the hero is the lowest of three classes of beings that are superior to humanity, ranking third to gods and demons. The hero is human, yet he achieves deification after his death.² Carl Jung describes the hero's nature as "human, but raised to the limit of the supernatural." In effect the hero is "semi-divine."³ A synthesis of the definitions of the hero, which apply to this topic, found in Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, is: A mythological or legendary figure of divine descent endowed with great strength or ability, who shows great courage, is an illustrious warrior and/or is admired for his noble qualities. Basically, heroes are "defenders of the earth, the protectors of civilization, and the champions of the weak and helpless."⁴ He is a powerful god-man who vanquishes evil in the form of monsters, and liberates his people from destruction and death.⁵

The hero yearns for immortality, and it is his goal to meet the demands that the gods and/or society make upon him with dignity, courage, unselfishness and excellence so as to

¹Gerald Clarke, "The Empire Strikes Back," *Time*, 19 May 1980: 73.

²E. de Places, "Hero-Cult," Vol. VI of *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1967) 1079.

³Carl Jung, and C. Kerényi, *Essays on a Science of Mythology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949) 85.

⁴Donna Rosenberg and Sorelle Baker, *Mythology and You: Classical Mythology and Its Relevance to Today's World* (Lincolnwood, Ill: National Textbook Co., 1990) 195.

⁵Carl G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964) 68.

achieve fame during his life and immortality after his death.⁶ Joseph Campbell describes the mythological hero as one who “ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder... the hero comes back from his mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”⁷ But in all cases, the hero becomes a hero by overcoming adversity.⁸

All this is evident in the four heroes reviewed in this paper. These heroes have been taken from four periods in human history. They were chosen because they have a life-story to their adventures. They have also been popular both in their day and in ours. I will show how the model and elements of their life-journeys are extremely similar and in some instances *exactly* the same. Although some stages most definitely come before others, my focus will not be on the *sequence* of these stages in the life-journey of the hero, but on their *occurrence*.

The heroes I have chosen begin with Heracles, from the millennium before Christ, who was considered the ideal hero throughout ancient Greece. With the exception of the city of Athens, whose citizens admired Theseus for his qualities of intelligence and compassion, Heracles was considered the ideal hero throughout the whole of Greece.⁹ The second hero is Jesus, himself, who lived at a time when his home country, Israel, suffered under the occupation of the Roman Empire. During the first century and the millennium following, his story had a tremendous impact on the society of his time and on the history of Europe. The third hero is King Arthur according to the tradition of Sir Thomas Malory. The Arthurian legend is the last mythology to come out of Europe.¹⁰ Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur* combines the legends of the Middle Ages with the literature of the middle part of the second millennium after Christ. Finally, from our immediate period in history -- the later half of the twentieth century -- the fourth hero I am presenting is Luke Skywalker, from the popular movie trilogy Star Wars (A New Hope, The Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi). Star Wars: A New Hope became, in 1977, the highest grossing film in movie history up to that point and the Star Wars Trilogy has become a classic in its day. In the story, Skywalker joins and helps to lead a rebellion against a high-tech dictatorship known as the Galactic Empire.

All four of these heroes fit into a common model that has made them appealing to us throughout history. This model is based on the modes and stages presented by Jean and Wallace B. Clift in their work, The Hero Journey in Dreams, Donna Rosenberg and Sorelle Baker in Mythology and You: Classical Mythology and its Relevance to Today’s World, and Joseph Campbell in his work The Hero With A Thousand Faces. I have also added a couple of stages that I myself discovered as recurring in these heroes.

⁶Rosenberg & Baker, 274.

⁷Joseph Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University, Press, 1949) 30.

⁸Rosenberg & Baker, 275.

⁹Edith Hamilton, Mythology (London: The New English Library, Ltd., 1940) 159-160.

¹⁰Elizabeth Cook, The Ordinary and the Fabulous: An Introduction to Myths, Legends and Fairy Tales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) 31.

Part II: The Life-Journey of the Popular Hero

The first stage of the hero's life seems to be the event of the hero's *conception*. Campbell tells us that in many hero adventures "the tendency has always been to endow the hero with extraordinary powers from the moment of birth, or even the moment of conception...This accords with the view that hero-hood is predestined."¹¹ This is true in the stories of Heracles, Jesus and Arthur who are conceived under very similar circumstances. There is a distinction between the paternal father of the hero and the one by whom the hero's mother conceives. The conception of Luke Skywalker is not covered in the Star Wars Trilogy, but the similarity of the other three heroes' conceptions is important to note.

In the story of Heracles, the god Zeus becomes infatuated with Alcmene. Realizing that the woman is virtuous, Zeus disguises himself as her husband Amphitryon, in order to seduce her. "*Alcmene, recognizing her husband, let him enter her private rooms. The disguised god told her all the news about Amphitryon's adventures and remained with her for three days*"¹² during which Heracles was conceived. In a similar way, the Gospel of Luke tells the tale of Jesus' conception. The angel, Gabriel, tells Mary "*the Holy Spirit will come upon you...hence the holy offspring to be born will be called Son of God.*"¹³ In this story, Mary conceives Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. However, throughout the Gospel Jesus distinguishes God the Father from God the Holy Spirit and it is to God the Father, not the Holy Spirit that Jesus refers to paternally. In the tale of King Arthur, Malory tells of the event of Arthur's conception: "*Now make you ready, said Merlin [to King Uther Pendragon], this night ye shall lie with Igraine in the castle of Tintagil; and ye shall be like the duke her husband....So after the death of the duke, King Uther lay with Igraine more than three hours after [the duke's] death, and begat on her that night Arthur...*"¹⁴

In all three of these stories we see the hero's conception by the Father in a person distinct from the Father himself: Zeus as Amphitryon, God the Father in the person of the Holy Spirit, and King Uther Pendragon in the image of the Duke of Cornwall. By these means the mother conceives the hero, and the hero is conceived of royal or divine parentage.

The second stage of the hero journey is the hero's *childhood and upbringing*. A prominent feature in all legend and myth is the "infant exile."¹⁵ These four heroes are no exception. All four are raised apart from their paternal father by one or two foster parents. Alcmene, realizing that Zeus is the father of Heracles and fearing the wrath of Hera, Zeus' jealous wife, is persuaded by the goddess Athena to raise Heracles. Her husband, Amphitryon, agrees to raise him as his stepson.¹⁶ The upbringing of Jesus is similar in that he is raised by his paternal mother and his legal father, Joseph. Jesus and Heracles are raised by his mother and a foster or legal father, physically apart from the divine Father.

In the stories of Arthur and Luke Skywalker, the hero is taken from both parents to be

¹¹Campbell (1949) 319

¹²Rosenberg & Baker, 215.

¹³Luke 1:35.

¹⁴Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*. Book 1, Chapter 2.

¹⁵Campbell (1949) 323.

¹⁶Rosenberg & Baker, 216.

raised by two foster parents. In the tale of Arthur: *“The child was delivered unto Merlin and so he bare it forth to Sir Ector, and made an holy man to christen him, and named him Arthur; and so Sir Ector’s wife nourished him with her own pap.”*¹⁷ In Star Wars, Luke is told that he was hidden from his father when he was born so as to protect him from the Emperor.¹⁸ He is raised by Owen and Beru Lars as a farm boy on the planet Tatooine, ignorant of his Jedi parentage and his own potential with the intergalactic Force.

Rosenberg and Baker explain that an event or accomplishment indicates the hero’s potential.¹⁹ It is in the stories of conception and the childhood that the hero’s destined greatness is recognized. As an infant, Heracles, the son of a god, strangles two serpents sent by Hera to kill him. As a child, Arthur, the son of a royal figure, pulls the sword from the stone. Jesus is the Son of God and it is during his childhood that Luke’s Gospel presents early themes regarding Jesus and his Father. When Jesus is found in the temple at age twelve, he asks his scolding parents: *“Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”*²⁰ Finally, Luke Skywalker is the son of a Jedi, a dying breed of warriors able to use the all-powerful Force to defend and protect peace and justice in the universe. He shows interest in the life and history of his father. Unlike Jesus, however, Luke is deceived about the true identity of his father. His ‘uncle’ Owen suppresses Luke’s interest in his father and his powers as the son of a Jedi. When Beru comments, *“Luke’s just not a farmer.... He has too much of his father in him.”* Owen replies: *“That’s what scares me.”*²¹

During the early years of the hero’s life various **prophecies** are made which reveal his potential and predict his greatness.²² In the case of Heracles, the prophet Teiresias reveals that Heracles would kill monsters, aid the gods, perform twelve labors and earn immortality after his death.²³ At the Annunciation, Gabriel tells Mary, *“Great will be [Jesus’] dignity and he will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David...and his reign will be without end.”*²⁴ Later in the Gospel of Luke, Simeon tells Mary: *“This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel, a sign that will be opposed.... so that the thoughts of many hearts shall be laid bare.”*²⁵ Before Arthur’s conception, Merlin tells King Uther that *“the first night that ye shall lie by Igraine, ye shall get a child on her.... it shall be your worship, and the child’s avail as mickle as the child is worth.”*²⁶ Finally, in Star Wars, numerous prophecies made during Luke Skywalker’s childhood are spoken of. The spirit of slain Jedi Obi Wan Kenobi relates to Luke that *“the Emperor knew....if Anakin [Skywalker] were to have any offspring, they would be a threat to him.”*²⁷ Early in Luke’s adventure, the evil Lord Darth Vader reveals to him: *“Luke, you can destroy the Emperor! He has foreseen this! It is your destiny!”*²⁸

¹⁷Malory, Book 1, Chapter 3.

¹⁸Star Wars: Return of the Jedi, Dir. Richard Marquand, 20th Century Fox, 1983.

¹⁹Rosenberg & Baker, 195.

²⁰Luke 2:49.

²¹Star Wars: A New Hope, Dir. George Lucas, 20th Century Fox, 1977.

²²Rosenberg & Baker, 195.

²³ibid., 217.

²⁴Luke 1:32-33.

²⁵Luke 2:34-35.

²⁶Malory, Book 1, Chapter 2

²⁷Return of the Jedi

²⁸Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back, Dr. Irvin Kershner, 20th Century Fox, 1980.

The conclusion of the hero's childhood cycle is the recognition of the hero when, after a long period of obscurity, his true identity is revealed.²⁹ The revelation of his identity and destiny involves the next two stages.

The third stage of the hero's life-journey, indicating the end of the childhood cycle is the hero's *call to adventure*. In this stage the hero is invited into the adventure, usually by means of a **herald**.³⁰ The hero either willingly accepts or refuses the invitation. In the end, however, he is either lured, carried away, forced or voluntarily proceeds to the threshold of adventure.³¹

In the story of Heracles, "*King Eurystheus became jealous of Heracles' growing fame and commanded him to come to Tiryns and perform the promised labors.*"³² His father, Zeus, demanded these labors of Heracles in order for him to win fame and earn immortality.³³ At first, Heracles stubbornly refuses to accept the summons of an inferior man. Even at the command of Zeus he still is reluctant to subject himself to the degrading labors Eurystheus has chosen for him. It is not until Hera infects him with a madness that results in his murdering his own children that Heracles finally is moved by the magnitude of his crime to appear before Eurystheus.³⁴ In the story of Heracles, the hero is unwillingly forced into the adventure.

In the stories of Jesus and Arthur, both heroes willingly accept their calling. The event of Jesus' call is his own baptism by John.³⁵ After that event, he takes on his role as the teacher and Messiah destined to come after John the Baptist.³⁶ In the story of Arthur, the young Arthur pulls the sword from the stone indicating his destiny to rule England as its king. "*Now, said Sir Ector to Arthur, I understand ye must be king of this land... for there should never man have drawn out this sword, but he that shall be rightwise king of this land.*"³⁷ Arthur, with the help of Merlin, willingly accepts the position as king and begins to establish his reign.

Luke Skywalker, too, has a call to adventure; however, his response is more like that of Heracles. Shortly after purchasing two droids, R2-D2 and C3P0, he stumbles across a hologram recording in one of them of the Princess Leia Organa, begging the help of Obi Wan Kenobi in the rebellion's struggle against the evil Galactic Empire. Later, after discovering that Obi Wan is his good friend Ben Kenobi, a nearby hermit, Luke is invited by Obi Wan to "*learn the ways of the Force*" to become a Jedi like his father. Obi Wan asks Luke to accompany him to the planet Alderaan, where they will aid the Princess. At first Luke refuses, believing that there is nothing he can do about the Empire at this point in his life. However, when Imperial troops, in their search for the two droids and the data they contain, kill Owen and Beru one day while Luke is not home, Luke finally agrees to accompany Obi Wan to Alderaan. "*There's nothing for me here now,*" he declares. "*I want to learn the ways of the Force and become a Jedi, like my father.*"³⁸ Here again, the hero, after first refusing the call, is eventually forced into his

²⁹Campbell (1949) 329.

³⁰Campbell (1949) 51.

³¹ibid., 245.

³²Rosenberg & Baker, 218.

³³ibid., 216.

³⁴ibid., 218.

³⁵Luke 3:21-22

³⁶Luke 3:16

³⁷Malory, Book 1, Chapter 5.

³⁸[A New Hope](#).

adventure by unfortunate circumstances.

It is in this stage of the hero's journey that the **mentor** makes his appearance. Being human, the hero usually needs help from another to guide his development and lead him to the threshold of adventure. The mentor teaches the hero, or lends him their shrewdness through an apprenticeship so that he can emerge victorious.³⁹ The mentor is usually the first encounter of the hero after the initial call and is often an old crone or an old man.⁴⁰ Often the mentor is portrayed as a divine helper.⁴¹ His appearance may be ugly or loathsome when he is first encountered,⁴² and he is not infrequently portrayed as a wizard or hermit.

In the stories of Heracles and Jesus, it is a divine figure that takes on the role of mentor. It is the goddess Athena who rescues Heracles from the field his mother left him in as an infant, because she feared the wrath of Hera. Athena presents Heracles to Hera and deceives her into adopting him as her son before returning him to Alcmena.⁴³ In the Gospel of Luke, God the Father advocates the status of his Son at Jesus' baptism⁴⁴ and it is the Holy Spirit who leads Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil.⁴⁵

In the stories of Arthur and Luke Skywalker it is a wizard and/or hermit who aids the hero. Merlin appears shortly after the miracle of the sword in the stone to advocate Arthur's coronation.⁴⁶ He further advises Arthur as he fights against opposition and establishes his kingdom.⁴⁷ Obi Wan Kenobi is an old Jedi Knight, and a hermit, who draws Luke Skywalker into the adventure, helps Luke to avoid trouble from threatening Imperial troops in the city of Mos Eisley, begins Luke's training as a Jedi⁴⁸ and eventually directs Luke to Yoda, the Jedi master in hiding on the planet Degobah, who takes over the role of mentor from his deceased predecessor.⁴⁹

Once the hero has received and accepted his calling, he must then proceed to the *threshold of adventure*. "The hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the 'threshold guardian' at the entrance to the zone of magnified power..."⁵⁰ The guardian is the shadow presence that the hero must defeat or conciliate so as to go alive into the kingdom of the unknown. If he fails, he is slain by the opponent and descends into death.⁵¹ If he crosses the threshold, the "hero is faced with a series of **trials**, or a succession of tasks to be accomplished," frequently portrayed as physical obstacles or undertakings.⁵² Some of these obstacles may

³⁹Rosenberg & Baker, 274.

⁴⁰Campbell (1949), 69.

⁴¹Campbell (1949) 72.

⁴²Jean D. Clift and Wallace B. Clift, *The Hero Journey in Dreams* (New York: Crossroads, 1988) 77.

⁴³Rosenberg & Baker, 216.

⁴⁴Luke 3:22.

⁴⁵Luke 4:1.

⁴⁶Malory, Book 1, Chapter 8.

⁴⁷ibid., Book 1, Chapter 10.

⁴⁸A New Hope.

⁴⁹The Empire Strikes Back.

⁵⁰Campbell (1949) 77.

⁵¹ibid., 245-246.

⁵²Clift & Clift, 90.

threaten him. Some may give aid as helpers.⁵³ In any case, the hero's adventure only begins with the struggles involved in crossing the first threshold of adventure, and enduring the trials that follow.

With twelve labors to perform, Heracles has a number of thresholds to cross before encountering the object of his task. In labor number four, Heracles becomes involved in a struggle with the centaurs before he encounters the Erymanthian Boar. The struggle ends in tragedy and grief for Heracles and he sadly completes his task.⁵⁴ In the Eighth Labor, Heracles agrees to rescue the wife of King Admetus of Pherae from the Underworld. Heracles wins a wrestling contest with Hades, winning the wife of Admetus. After performing this extra task, Heracles completes his labor and brings back the Mares of Diomedes.⁵⁵ Before performing the Tenth Labor (the Cattle of Geryon) he helps rid Libya of wild animals that threaten the people of that region.⁵⁶ In labor eleven, he is interrupted by an encounter with Antaeüs, with whom he must wrestle in order to continue on and retrieve the Golden Apples of Hesperides.⁵⁷

The event in which Jesus crosses the threshold of adventure is when he is "*conducted by the Spirit to the desert for forty days where he [is] tempted by the devil.*"⁵⁸ Here, the threshold guardian is the devil himself, and the trials are his three temptations. Although there are no immediate helpers who aid Jesus in his trial against the devil, the Holy Spirit, who leads Jesus into the desert for the purpose of confronting the devil, can be seen as fulfilling this role.

In the story of Arthur a group of knights and kings who oppose Arthur's coronation gather themselves together, "*and now they swear that for weal or woe they should not leave other, till they had destroyed Arthur.*"⁵⁹ Arthur is faced with the task of overcoming this opposition before he is able to establish his kingdom.⁶⁰

In Star Wars, Luke Skywalker must first break away from the care of his foster parents. The subtle reprimands of Owen discourage Luke's hopes for entering the academy and leaving his moisture farm homestead. When Luke later leaves the farm to search for R2-D2, the fierce Tusken Raiders, or Sand People, almost prevent Luke's encounter with Obi Wan Kenobi who first calls Luke to enter into his adventure. Next, Luke must escape the Imperial troops in the city of Mos Eisley, Tatooine. Finally, he must escape from the Death Star battle station when it captures him after destroying his and Obi Wan's destination, the planet Alderaan. Here, the Death Star can be seen as the ultimate threshold guardian in Luke's adventure, as after escaping the Death Star, Luke must aid the rebellion in destroying the battle station before it destroys the rebel's hidden base on the third moon of the planet Yavin.⁶¹ Luke must go through all these trials before beginning his formal training as a Jedi. His helpers are an inter-galactic smuggler, Han Solo, and his Wookiee co-pilot, Chewbacca.

"When [the hero] arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme

⁵³Campbell (1949) 246.

⁵⁴Rosenberg & Baker, 221.

⁵⁵ibid., 224.

⁵⁶ibid., 226.

⁵⁷ibid., 229-230.

⁵⁸Luke 4:1-2.

⁵⁹Malory, Book 1, Chapter 12.

⁶⁰ibid., Book 2, Chapters 14-17.

⁶¹A New Hope.

ordeal and gains his reward.”⁶² It is after he overcomes the trials following the encounter at the threshold that the hero enters the *adventure’s core*. Here, the primary ordeal of the hero’s adventure, or the hero’s life, is encountered and achieved. With its completion, the hero achieves one of a number of rewards. The first is what Campbell calls a “**Sacred Marriage**.” This can take place in a literal marriage with the central woman figure of the hero’s story, or in a union with the divine. The woman or the union of the Sacred Marriage symbolizes the hero’s total mastery of life.⁶³

Another thing the hero may achieve with the completion of the ordeals at the adventure’s core is an **Atonement with the Father**;⁶⁴ the final recognition of the hero by his father, or the completion of that which the father expects of the hero. It is easy to notice that the adventures of Heracles, Jesus and Luke Skywalker are heavily laden with themes of the hero’s Father. This knowledge of or mystery surrounding the father strongly influences the lives and adventures of these three heroes. “For the son who has grown really to know the father, the agonies of the ordeal are readily borne.”⁶⁵ Campbell further explains that having been blessed by the father, the hero “returns to represent the father among men” as a teacher, or as a ruler.⁶⁶

Finally, the hero is blessed with **Apotheosis**, an achievement of divinity. In most cases, the hero is awarded this after his death. In some, however, he is assured of his impending divinity after having survived the ordeals of the adventure’s core.

The adventure’s core is the most important of all the stages of the hero’s life with the very destiny of the hero being fulfilled along with all its ramifications and consequences. The hero also undergoes a transformation. He becomes greater, wiser, stronger and ready to take on a position of greatness upon his return.

In the story of Heracles, Heracles fulfills the labors that his father, Zeus, demands of him (Father Atonement).⁶⁷ Heracles is promised a place among the gods (Apotheosis) and, upon his divine entrance into Olympus, he is wedded to Hera’s daughter, Hebe (Sacred Marriage).⁶⁸

The core of Jesus’ life-journey is his preaching, his suffering and his death. All this is in accordance with his father’s will as is seen in his prayer in Gethsemane: “*Father, if it is your will, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*”⁶⁹ Again at his death he prays: “*Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.*”⁷⁰ At the climax of his adventure, when Jesus is before the Sanhedrin, he indicates his apotheosis when he declares: “*From now on the Son of Man will have his seat at the right hand of the Power of God.*”⁷¹

The core of Arthur’s adventure follows the victory over his opposition. He establishes his reign, after which he marries Guenever, who comes to symbolize the unity of his kingdom (Sacred Marriage).⁷² In honor of the wedding, Guenever’s father, King Leodegrance, gives Arthur the Round Table, which King Uther Pendragon had constructed and had given to

⁶²Campbell (1949) 246.

⁶³ibid., 120.

⁶⁴ibid., 126.

⁶⁵ibid., 148.

⁶⁶ibid., 347.

⁶⁷Rosenberg & Baker, 216.

⁶⁸ibid., 325.

⁶⁹Luke 22:42.

⁷⁰Luke 23:46.

⁷¹Luke 22:69.

⁷²Malory, Book 3, Chapter 5.

Leodegrance as a gift (Father Atonement).⁷³

Finally, in Star Wars, Luke must learn from Yoda the ways of the Force so as to become a Jedi with the Force as his ally (Sacred Marriage).⁷⁴ To be fully a Jedi, Luke must face his father, the evil Darth Vader, and resist the Dark Side of the Force that seduced him. The climax of Luke's adventure is when he faces the Emperor who rules the Galactic Empire, who is the master over Luke's father and who is the Sith master of the Dark Side of the Force. Luke makes it his task to try and draw Vader back to the Good Side. Luke draws upon Vader's love and compassion for him as his son in the face of his death at the hands of the Emperor (Father Atonement).⁷⁵

One last important aspect in the adventure's core is the role of the **boon**, the lesson or the prize of the adventure. If it is a lesson or value learned, it is to be taught to others.⁷⁶ If it is a material prize or treasure it usually gives the hero special powers to be used as a "life transmitting trophy" for the benefit of society.⁷⁷ Heracles claims the impenetrable skin of the Nemean Lion and the poisonous blood of the hydra as prizes from two of his labors.⁷⁸ Jesus offers the Eucharist,⁷⁹ the forgiveness of sins⁸⁰ and the hope for eternal life.⁸¹ Arthur is given the sword Excalibur as a weapon,⁸² and the Round Table, which symbolizes the unity of his kingdom. Finally, Luke Skywalker gains the values and skills of a Jedi, which he must use to restore and protect peace and justice in the galaxy, and pass on to the next generation.

The next stage of the hero's journey is the **return**. "When the hero quest has been accomplished.... the adventurer still must return with the treasure, the life-transmitting trophy."⁸³ Therefore, the final task of the hero's adventure is to return to his own people from the land of the unknown. Whether the return is favored or opposed, the supernatural or "transcendental powers must remain behind"⁸⁴ at the threshold as the hero returns to the outside world "having achieved honor and fame."⁸⁵

There are two common types of return. If the powers of divinity involved in the hero's story favor the hero, or if the trophy of the adventure has been attained with the blessing of the god or goddess, the hero sets forth under their protection (**emissary**).⁸⁶ The hero is "explicitly commissioned to return to the world with some elixir for the restoration of society, the final stage of his adventure is supported by all the powers of his supernatural patron." If, however, the boon has been obtained against the **opposition** of its guardian, against the wishes of the gods or

⁷³ibid., Book 3, Chapter 1.

⁷⁴The Empire Strikes Back.

⁷⁵Return of the Jedi.

⁷⁶Campbell (1949) 246.

⁷⁷Clift & Clift, 126.

⁷⁸Rosenberg & Baker, 219.

⁷⁹Luke 22:19-20.

⁸⁰Luke 24:47.

⁸¹Luke 10:25; 16:9; 18:18/30; 24:6.

⁸²Malory, Book 1, Chapter 25.

⁸³Clift & Clift, 126.

⁸⁴Campbell (1949) 246.

⁸⁵Rosenberg & Baker, 196.

⁸⁶Campbell (1949) 246.

demons, or “if the hero’s wish to return to the world has been resented,” then the hero flees and is pursued. His return becomes a flight from the opposition that may wish to hold him back.⁸⁷

In the story of Heracles and his labors, Heracles experiences various forms of opposition, but no emissaries. In the Second Labor, while carrying back to Eurystheus the Ceryntian Hind, Heracles encounters Artemis and Apollo who make sure that the hind he is carrying back has not been killed.⁸⁸ There is a return of flight in the Ninth Labor when Heracles must escape the Amazons of Themiscyra after stealing the Belt of Hippolyte, the Queen of the Amazons. He also, on his return from Themiscyra, agrees to kill a sea monster sent by Apollo and Poseidon to terrorize the city of Troy.⁸⁹ In labor ten, the Cattle of Geryon, Heracles has to deal with the opposition of Geryon. The menace Cacus also hinders his return to Eurystheus.⁹⁰

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus rises from the dead and reveals himself to his disciples and to the men traveling on the road to Emmaus.⁹¹ His resurrection is an example of a favorable return, being a part of his heavenly Father’s plan.

In the tale of King Arthur, the process of return is in the establishment of Arthur’s kingdom after overcoming the opposition afore mentioned. To finally establish his kingdom and retain that establishment, King Arthur must face new opposition: “The five kings,”⁹² Sir Accolon of Gaul,⁹³ Morgan le Fe⁹⁴ and the Emperor Lucius.⁹⁵ Dealing with each of these opponents is a form of escape in Arthur’s return in that they *oppose* the establishment of his kingdom after he has laid claim to his throne. Since Merlin is murdered in the first chapter of book four, there is no emissary to aid Arthur in these conflicts. Having overcome the opposition, *King Arthur* is then crowned emperor.⁹⁶

Finally, once Luke Skywalker confronts the Emperor and successfully resists the Dark Side of the Force, Luke must escape the Emperor’s wrath as he calls upon all of the powers of the Dark Side to destroy Luke. Here, Luke’s return is opposed. He escapes by means of an emissary when Darth Vader, having been drawn back to the Good Side by his son’s cry for help, kills the Emperor before the Dark Side can prevail. After the Emperor’s death, Luke and Vader must escape the new Death Star before it is destroyed in an attack by the rebellion.⁹⁷

The final phase of a successful return for the hero is the hero’s use of the boon as an elixir for society. Campbell explains that the true hero is one who bestows boons on his fellow man.⁹⁸ Therefore, in order for the victory of the adventure’s core to be complete, the hero must bring the boon back to his own people where it can renew the community.⁹⁹

The skin of the Nemean Lion and the arrows tipped with the Hydra’s blood, which were brought back by Heracles, are used by him when he aids the gods in their struggle against the

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 196-197.

⁸⁸ Rosenberg & Baker, 220.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 225.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 227-228.

⁹¹ Luke 24:13-45.

⁹² Malory, Book 4, Chapters 2-3.

⁹³ *ibid.*, Book 4, Chapters 8-12.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, Book 4, Chapters 11 & 14.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, Book 5.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, Book 5, Chapter 12.

⁹⁷ Return of the Jedi.

⁹⁸ Campbell (1949) 30.

⁹⁹ Clift & Clift, 126.

giants that threaten Olympus.¹⁰⁰ In the tale of King Arthur, the Round Table maintains the unity of Arthur's kingdom. It is a place where all the knights and kings of Arthur's kingdom can meet as equals under the rule of Arthur. It is also symbolic of the fellowship of the knights with Christ and his disciples.¹⁰¹

The elixir of Jesus' boon is seen in the commissioning of his disciples to preach "*penance for the remission of sins.... to all the nations beginning in Jerusalem.*"¹⁰² Further, after he gives the disciples the Eucharist at the Last Supper, he commands them to "*do this as a remembrance of me.*"¹⁰³ Although the hero, Jesus, does not use the boon himself to restore the world, the boon of his life-journey is left behind to be used and preached by the apostles for the restoration of the world and the salvation of souls.

Luke Skywalker's Jedi powers are used as elixir when he single-handedly plans and executes the rescue of his friend Han Solo from the gangster Jabba the Hut, destroying Jabba's gangster empire in the process.¹⁰⁴ Also, in A New Hope, Obi Wan explains, "*for over a thousand generations the Jedi knights were the guardians of peace and justice in the old republic.*" After the Galactic Empire is destroyed, Luke, with his Jedi skills, is able to re-establish the Jedi knights to be the guardians of peace and justice in the post-imperial republic.

The next stage in the life-journey of the popular hero is that of the *decline* or *downfall*. This event is present in the life-journeys of all four heroes and usually involves a **shortcoming**. In Heracles' case, his temper and pride lead to the downfall. After completing his labors, he plots revenge against King Eurystus of Oechalia for his refusal to allow Heracles to marry his daughter, Iole. This infatuation, mingled with his anger against Eurystus sparks jealousy in Deianeira, the second wife of Heracles. This leads to incurable physical pain for Heracles.¹⁰⁵

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' downfall has an important role in the fulfillment of his destiny and is interwoven with the adventure's core. It begins with his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane¹⁰⁶ and is touched off by the betrayal of Judas.¹⁰⁷ This leads to Jesus' arrest and Peter's denial,¹⁰⁸ which Jesus had predicted.¹⁰⁹ Jesus is tried before the Sanhedrin where he is denounced by the elders of the Jewish community¹¹⁰ and finally by his own people.¹¹¹

King Arthur's downfall is foreshadowed by the quest for the Holy Grail¹¹² in which he loses two of his best knights, Galahad and Perceval.¹¹³ After the Grail Quest, the catalyst of the downfall is the affair between Lancelot and Guenever.¹¹⁴ At first Arthur ignores this scandal.

¹⁰⁰Rosenberg & Baker, 232-233.

¹⁰¹Richard Cavendish, ed., Legends of the World (New York: Schocken Books, 1982) 240.

¹⁰²Luke 24:47-49.

¹⁰³Luke 22:19.

¹⁰⁴Return of the Jedi.

¹⁰⁵Rosenberg & Baker, 234-235.

¹⁰⁶Luke 22:39-46.

¹⁰⁷Luke 22:47-48.

¹⁰⁸Luke 22:54-62.

¹⁰⁹Luke 22:34.

¹¹⁰Luke 22:66-23:27.

¹¹¹Luke 23:13-25.

¹¹²Malory, Books 13-17.

¹¹³Cavendish, 244.

¹¹⁴ibid., 246.

His reluctance to deal with it could be considered his shortcoming. The affair is publicly revealed to him by Mordred and Aggravain¹¹⁵ resulting in civil war between Arthur and Lancelot and the loss of more knights on the battlefield.¹¹⁶

The hero's decline often occurs when "the taste of the fruits of temporal knowledge draws the concentration of the spirit away from the center of the [long term benefits] to the peripheral crisis of the moment. The balance of perfection is lost, the spirit falters and the hero falls."¹¹⁷ Or, if the hero simply darts straight to the goal, without submitting to all the proper initiations, "the powers that he has unbalance may react so sharply, that he will be blasted from within and without."¹¹⁸ This is certainly the case in the story of Luke Skywalker. Luke experiences a downfall while being trained as a Jedi. Sensing, through the Force, that his friends Princess Leia Organa and Captain Han Solo are in danger, Luke leaves Yoda before his training is complete. He sets off for Bespin's Cloud City, in order to confront Darth Vader and rescue his friends. Because of his recklessness and inexperience, Luke is badly defeated by Vader who severs the hand Luke uses to wield his light saber. Luke tries to commit suicide when he is torn between submitting himself to Vader in order to live and remaining true to himself and his ideals as a young Jedi. He also reaches a profound level of despair when Vader reveals that he himself is Luke's father! This knowledge haunts Luke until his training is complete and becomes a potential weakness in his efforts to win out over the Dark Side of the Force.

To escape Bespin after his defeat at the hands of his own father, Luke requires a **rescue from without**.¹¹⁹ Leia, sensing through the Force that Luke is in danger comes to Luke's rescue.¹²⁰ This event marks the end of Luke's innocence and boyish idealism. He reaches a level of maturity that will be necessary in order to fulfill his destiny and complete his adventure.

"Needless to say, the hero would be no hero if *death* held for him any terror."¹²¹ This is the final stage of the actual life of the hero. Every hero, being mortal, must die. Heracles dies on a pyre of flames, built by him and ignited by Zeus. He allows himself to be killed so as to escape the burning torture of the hydra's blood now affecting his body, the result of Deianeira's jealousy.¹²² Jesus is crucified in disgrace, surrendering himself to the will and power of his Father.¹²³ This, like his downfall, plays a role in the core of Jesus' adventure, and the adventure does not end with Jesus' death. King Arthur is mortally wounded in battle by the usurper Mordred. With death rapidly approaching, he commands the boon, Excalibur, to be returned to the Lady of the Lake, symbolically ending his reign.¹²⁴ In the Star Wars Trilogy the event of Luke's death is not covered. However, the death of the Jedi is and this foreshadows the event of Luke's death.

¹¹⁵Malory, Book 20, Chapters 1-2.

¹¹⁶ibid., Book 20, Chapters 10-22.

¹¹⁷Campbell (1949) 223-224.

¹¹⁸ibid., 37.

¹¹⁹ibid., 207.

¹²⁰The Empire Strikes Back.

¹²¹Campbell (1949) 356.

¹²²Rosenberg & Baker, 235.

¹²³Luke 23:46.

¹²⁴Mallory, Book 21, Chapters 4-5.

The final stage of the life-journey is the hero's *apotheosis*, or the final reality and manifestation of the promises regarding that apotheosis. Campbell explains that the ultimate triumph of the hero may be represented by the hero's own divination.¹²⁵ Heracles, after his death, is adopted by Hera and immortalized on Mount Olympus.¹²⁶ Jesus is "taken up to heaven" where he takes his place at the right hand of the Power of God.¹²⁷ King Arthur is taken away on a barge to Glastonbury to recover from his wounds.¹²⁸ "Yet some men say in many parts of England that king Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu into another place, and men say that he shall come again....But many men say that there is written upon his tomb this verse: Hic iacet Arthurus, Rex quondam, Rexque futurus," (*here lies Arthur, the Once and Future King*).¹²⁹ In the Star Wars Trilogy, "with the power of the Force behind them, old Jedi Knights never die, it seems; they just fade in and out."¹³⁰ Being absorbed by the Force, the Jedi becomes a part of it, living and acting within it. The apotheosis of Luke Skywalker is foreshadowed in the deaths of Obi Wan Kenobi, Yoda and Anakin Skywalker (Darth Vader).

Part III: Other Elements in the Story of the Hero

There are two important elements in the story of the popular hero that are present in these four heroes. They are the role of the *woman* and the role of the *father* in the hero's life-journey. Both play an important part in the hero's development, his focus on life and the way in which he fulfills his destiny.

Campbell states, "*woman*, in the picture language of mythology, represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know."¹³¹ He goes on to say that nothing can defend against the female presence¹³² and he is quoted as saying: "[Women] represent life. Man doesn't enter life except by woman, and so it is woman who brings us into this world of pairs of opposites and suffering."¹³³ On the whole, the woman is the image of the hero's destiny¹³⁴ beginning always with the mother (Alcmene, Mary, Igraine). In all four of the above heroes, the woman plays an important role, for better and/or worse, in the hero's life.

In the tale of Heracles, Hera causes the madness that drives him to kill his children. In shame, he accepts the summons of Eurystheus to perform the Twelve Labors. Iole plays a role in sparking the jealousy of Deianeira, who accidentally causes Heracles' great pain in a vain effort

¹²⁵Campbell (1949) 246.

¹²⁶Rosenberg & Baker, 235.

¹²⁷Luke 24:51.

¹²⁸Malory, Book 21, Chapter 5.

¹²⁹ibid., Book 21, Chapter 7.

¹³⁰Clarke (1980) 67.

¹³¹Campbell (1949) 116, emphasis added.

¹³²ibid., 125.

¹³³Betty Sue Flowers, ed. "Joseph Campbell: The Power of Myth with Bill Moyers (New York: Doubleday, 1988) 48.

¹³⁴Campbell (1949) 342.

to magically win his love. After Heracles' death, he is wedded to Hebe, Hera's immortal daughter, as part of his final apotheosis.

In the Gospel of Luke, the Pharisees criticize Jesus' treatment of sinners, and Jesus' reputation suffers because of it. This is clearly seen in the episode in which he forgives the sins of the penitent woman. His hosts, who witness this, say to each other: "*If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is that touches him --*"¹³⁵ and later: "*Who is this that he even forgives sins?*"¹³⁶

In the tale of King Arthur, Queen Guenever plays an important symbolic role. The marriage of Arthur to Guenever occurs after Arthur has achieved unity among the knights of his realm and stability in his kingdom. Yet, her affair with Lancelot triggers the collapse of that kingdom, resulting in civil war, usurpation of Arthur's throne by Mordred (who publicly revealed the affair) and the eventual death of Arthur himself.

Finally, in the Star Wars Trilogy, Princess Leia Organa plays a strong role in Luke's adventure. Her hologram message to Obi Wan Kenobi draws Luke's interest into the adventure as he takes interest in her plight. Knowledge of her presence on the first Death Star draws Luke out of hiding in the enemy battle station.¹³⁷ As Vader's bait, she draws Luke away from his training on Degobah to near death at Bespin's Cloud City, but later rescues him after she manages to escape without his aid.¹³⁸ Through insight, Luke realizes that Leia is his twin sister. Yet in the face of a threat against her, his recklessness almost allows the Dark Side of the Force to overcome him.¹³⁹

Campbell states the importance of the *father* in the legend of the hero: "Even in a simple folk tale a depth is suddenly sounded when the son... one day asks: 'Who is my father?'"¹⁴⁰ From that point on, the character or image of the father figure takes on a major role in the life of the hero. This theme varies in predominance between the stories of these four heroes, but it is still present.

The adventure of the first two heroes is sparked and influenced by the demands the father makes on his son. Zeus creates the Twelve Labors and commands Heracles to answer Eurystheus' call to perform them. Once Heracles completes the labors, he earns formal recognition by his father and immortality after his death. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus states: "*Everything has been given over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son -- and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.*"¹⁴¹ Jesus' father gives the mission of his life to him and at his death, Jesus surrenders himself into the father's hands.¹⁴²

In the last two heroes, the adventure is somehow sparked by an interest in the mystery of the father's identity. In the tale of Arthur, as mentioned above, Arthur's atonement with his

¹³⁵Luke 7:39.

¹³⁶Luke 7:49.

¹³⁷A New Hope.

¹³⁸The Empire Strikes Back.

¹³⁹Return of the Jedi.

¹⁴⁰Campbell (1949) 346.

¹⁴¹Luke 10:22.

¹⁴²Luke 23:46.

father is seen in his receiving, as a wedding gift, the Round Table that his father, King Uther Pendragon had constructed and given as a gift to King Leodegrance.¹⁴³ The circle from Pendragon to Arthur is completed in that event. Finally, in Star Wars, the most predominant theme in the life and adventure of Luke Skywalker is that of the father. Luke is hidden from his father, Anakin Skywalker (Darth Vader) at his birth so as to protect him from the Emperor. Owen and Beru dread Luke's learning about his father's history. Rather than being told the truth, Luke is told in a half-truth that his father, Anakin, was killed by Darth Vader.¹⁴⁴ In The Empire Strikes Back Darth Vader becomes obsessed with finding his son, Luke, revealing to Luke in their confrontation on Bespin, that he is his father. Finally, in Return of the Jedi, Yoda tells Luke that to truly become a Jedi knight, he must confront Vader a second time. It becomes an obligation to Luke's training: "*I have to face him...he's my father.*" Luke takes his destiny a step further, making it his task to win his father back to the Good Side of the Force.

Part IV: A Psychological Proposition as to the Popularity of this Model of the Popular Hero Throughout the Ages

Joseph Campbell is quoted as saying "there is a certain typical hero sequence of actions which can be detected in stories from all over the world and from many periods in history."¹⁴⁵ Despite the different heroes and hero-models throughout history, humanity has repeatedly returned to the above model. The hero whose life follows that role has been unusually popular, more so than its contemporaries. But why has this model, as illustrated by these heroes, been so appealing throughout the ages? Campbell himself states, "the mighty hero of extraordinary powers...is each of us: not the physical self visible in the mirror, but the king within."¹⁴⁶ In the story of the hero, there are certain aspects and features with which we can identify.

Carl Jung states that "the narration or ritual repetition of sacred texts and ceremonies, and the worship of such a figure [as the hero]... grip the audience with numinous emotions as if with magic spells and exalt the individual to an identification with the hero."¹⁴⁷ For example, the special role of the mentor in the heroic myth is seen as similar to those of parents. "As [the hero] achieves a sense of autonomy, he no longer requires the guardianship of helpful figures. He is now an active and combative adult."¹⁴⁸ There is, therefore, a strong identification with the hero. We often see, directly or symbolically, similar trials that we encounter in our own lives.

The human psyche is the same all over the world. Campbell is quoted as saying that "the psyche is the inward experience of the human body, which is essentially the same in all human beings...Out of this common ground have come what Jung has called the archetypes, which are common ideas of myths."¹⁴⁹ They are "a typos [or imprint], a definite group of archaic character containing, in form as well as in meaning, mythological motifs."¹⁵⁰ Jung further describes

¹⁴³Malory, Book 3, Chapter 1.

¹⁴⁴A New Hope.

¹⁴⁵Flowers, 136.

¹⁴⁶Campbell (1949) 365.

¹⁴⁷Jung (1964) 68.

¹⁴⁸Rosenberg & Baker, 274.

¹⁴⁹Flowers, 51.

¹⁵⁰Carl G. Jung, Analytical Psychology: Its Theory and Practice (New York: Vintage Books, 1968) 41.

archetypes as identical in all human beings, being of a collective, universal and impersonal nature. They can only become secondarily conscious, and give definite forms to certain psychic contents.¹⁵¹ The hero figure is one of these archetypes.¹⁵²

One motif of archetypes is that of the *dual mother*, seen in the legend of Heracles in the figures of the goddess Hera and the mortal Alcmena. Jung describes this motif to be an archetype found in many legends of mythology.¹⁵³ Similar to this duality, more common among the other three heroes is the motif of the *dual father* (Zeus and Amphytryon, God the Father and Joseph, King Uther Pendragon and Sir Ector, Anakin Skywalker and Owen Lars). So the duality of parents may not be limited to only the mother figure. Also, the death of the hero, whether it is violent or peaceful, heroic or disgraceful, “reflect[s] the imperfect nature of man and the world in which he live[s].”¹⁵⁴ It is in this that we are able to sympathize and identify with the hero’s human weakness.¹⁵⁵

Another motif is the hero and the Dragon, or the descent of the hero into a cave. These express the psychological introversion of the conscious mind into the deeper layers of the unconscious. From the unconscious are derived the contents of an impersonal mythological character. Jung calls them “the impersonal or *collective unconscious*”¹⁵⁶ which is made up essentially of archetypes.¹⁵⁷ He holds that the contents of this collective unconscious “owe their existence exclusively to heredity.”¹⁵⁸ They have never been in the human consciousness, but have become engraved into our psyche by means of repetition. Campbell quotes Jung as writing: “When a situation occurs which corresponds to a given archetype, that archetype becomes activated and compulsiveness appears.” Like an instinctual drive, it produces “a conflict of pathological dimensions, that is to say, a neurosis.”¹⁵⁹ Jung “reduces the hero to a manifestation of the ego, though he emphasizes the ‘collective’ nature of the psyche.”¹⁶⁰

The specific hero then corresponds to our various heroic archetypes. An unsuccessful hero tends to disappoint us and repel us. Successful heroes, who achieve monumental standards and status with the success of their adventures are innately appealing and tend to remain our popular heroes. This is truly the case with Heracles, Jesus, King Arthur and Luke Skywalker. Heracles was considered the ideal hero throughout Ancient Greece because he was strong, self-confident, aggressive and favorable to the gods.¹⁶¹ During the first century, the Jews, under Roman domination, desperately needed a Savior to deliver them from their oppression and return them to God’s favor. For many, Jesus was the hero who most perfectly fit the role of the promised Messiah, who liberated not from Rome, but from the cosmic forces of sin and death. King Arthur is a hero who saves his people from the threat of the heathens and establishes a stable kingdom during the Middle Ages.¹⁶² Luke Skywalker made his appearance during a time when many real-life ‘heroes’ had failed the public who idolized them. In the shadow of the

¹⁵¹Joseph Campbell, ed, The Portable Jung (New York: The Viking Press, 1971) 60.

¹⁵²Jung (1964) 61.

¹⁵³Campbell (1971) 63.

¹⁵⁴Rosenberg & Baker, 196.

¹⁵⁵ibid., 195.

¹⁵⁶Jung (1968) 41, emphasis added.

¹⁵⁷Campbell (1971) 60.

¹⁵⁸ibid., 60.

¹⁵⁹ibid., 66-67.

¹⁶⁰Walter Reed, Meditations on the Hero (London: Yale University Press, 1974) 3.

¹⁶¹Hamilton, 160.

¹⁶²Cook, 32.

assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., the resignation of President Richard Nixon and failure in Vietnam, Luke Skywalker achieved popularity as a successful hero. He leads the rebellion to victory against the evil Galactic Empire, while learning that if he only has faith in himself, he can prevail against all odds.¹⁶³

The habitations of the gods (heaven, hell, Mt. Olympus, etc.) are all psychoanalytically interpreted as symbols of the unconscious.¹⁶⁴ For Carl Jung the hero is a self-representation of the desire of the unconscious for the light of consciousness.¹⁶⁵ The story of the hero -- his journey and adventure -- refers, then, to the struggles involved in the breaking out of the confines of the unconscious. In this task, sacrifice is often a prominent motif. The task may involve the submission of oneself to a higher power, and/or focus on a symbolic death and rebirth from childhood to adulthood.¹⁶⁶ This is seen in the adventure's core in which the trials encountered are so trying for the hero himself, that he is never the same person he was before the adventure began. In the apotheosis, the hero becomes more than he was in life.

"These...figures are, in fact, symbolic representations of the whole psyche, the larger and more comprehensive identity that supplies the strength that the personal ego lacks."¹⁶⁷ The god personifies what Jung calls the collective unconscious, which is not yet integrated into the consciousness of the human being. The hero's humanity, mixed with supernatural parentage, ability or assistance "represents a synthesis of the unconscious and human consciousness. Consequently, he signifies the potential anticipation of an individuation process which is approaching wholeness."¹⁶⁸

The road of trials in the hero's journey is about the individual's interior experience. It is a matter of inner growth and development. "The symbolic meaning of those episodes in the hero's journey is the process by which the hero becomes someone more than he or she was before the journey."¹⁶⁹ Therefore, the essential function of the hero-journey is to surface to the level of consciousness that which is hidden in the unconscious. It is the development of the individual's awareness of his own strengths and weaknesses, thereby equipping him for the tasks and encounters that will confront him in the real world.¹⁷⁰

Part V: In Summary

Although there may be more than one model that the story of the hero may follow, there appears to be one model that has appeared more frequently since at least the millennium before Christ. This model consists of various stages that make up the life journey of the hero. The stages of the hero-journey begin with the hero's conception. His life includes his childhood and upbringing away from at least his blood-father, the prophecies made of his impending greatness, his call to adventure, his crossing of the threshold of adventure, the trials of the crossing and the adventures core. The hero returns from his adventure and the boon or elixir he brings back saves

¹⁶³Gerald Clarke, "Great Galloping Galaxies," *Time*, 23 May 1983: 62-66.

¹⁶⁴Campbell (1949) 259.

¹⁶⁵Reed, 11.

¹⁶⁶Clift, 22.

¹⁶⁷Jung (1964) 101.

¹⁶⁸Jung & Kerenyi, 85.

¹⁶⁹Clift, 90.

¹⁷⁰Jung (1964) 101.

the world -- or at least the society from which he came. He at some time experiences a decline or downfall -- which involves a particular shortcoming the hero has -- and ultimately, like all human beings, dies. However, his death does not end his journey, for he then achieves divinity (apotheosis), which in some cases had been promised him while he was alive. This model has proven to be appealing to humanity and is seen in the stories of Heracles, Jesus, King Arthur and Luke Skywalker, who, amid other heroes of their times, have been outstandingly popular. With regard to the first three heroes, their popularity has stood the test of time, surviving for centuries.

The popularity of such a model of the successful hero may have much to do with the human psyche itself. The psyche consists of archetypes of the collective unconscious, which contain motifs similar to the images, characters, and figures of popular mythology. These unconscious archetypes create a neurosis in us when situations occur which correspond to certain archetypes. Being acquired unconsciously and only through heredity, the archetypes are universal to all humanity. Hence, the universal popularity and positive appeal of these heroes.

Therefore, in order to understand the value of heroic figures, it must be understood that they are symptoms of the unconscious. They are “controlled and intended statements of certain spiritual principles, which have remained as constant throughout the course of human history as the form and nervous structure of the human psyche itself.”¹⁷¹

Part VI: In Conclusion

Carol Pearson states: “We never really stop journeying, but we do have marker events when things come together as a result of the new reality we have encountered.”¹⁷² Heroism is about finding a new truth, and gaining the new treasure of our true selves. Our identification with the successful hero, therefore, enables us to journey into the caves, the labors, the kingdoms, the “Death Stars” and Degobahs of our own unconscious. Upon our return to the outside world of the conscious, we gain a new insight into our own abilities, which hopefully makes us, better people than we were before we made our journeys.

The journey of the popular hero is the journey of ourselves. We find encouragement in the successful hero to set out on our own journeys and return with that boon that makes us more aware of ourselves, thereby enabling us to take that boon and use it in our dealings, encounters and adventures of our everyday lives. It is for this reason that the above model of the hero-journey has re-appeared and remained popular throughout the centuries.

¹⁷¹Campbell (1949) 257.

¹⁷²Carol S. Pearson, *Awakening the Heroes Within* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991) 3.

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